



**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
WESTFORD TOWN OFFICE & ZOOM  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026**

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://zoom.us/j/94052797756?pwd=Xjs1YgcF7hToKD4BFvS69JBUcW51yH.1>

**Meeting ID: 940 5279 7756 | Passcode: 5B6PMY**

*Please note that agenda times are approximate and subject to change.*

1. **(6:30) – Call to Order**
  - a. Roll Call
  - b. Amendments to the Agenda
2. **(6:33) – Citizens to be Heard - *Items not on agenda***
3. **(6:35) – Approval of Minutes (Action Item)**
  - a. October 5, 2026
4. **(6:40) – Discussion: FY’27 Municipal Planning Grant**
  - a. Application Review and Resolution Recommendation (Action Item)
  - b. Source of Matching Funds
5. **(7:10) – Discussion: Budget**
  - a. Identification of and Funding for Future Projects
  - b. FY’28 Budget Proposal (Action Item)
6. **(7:30) – Discussion: Town Report**
7. **(7:45) – Discussion: VOREC Community Grant Program (VCGP)**
8. **(8:00) – Update: Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Projects**
9. **(8:05) – Correspondence**
10. **(8:15) – Work Plan Review**
11. **Adjournment**

***Next Regular Meeting: Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30pm***

**Disclaimer:**

If a quorum of the board is present in person, the meeting will continue even if electronic participation is disrupted or disconnected.

The Vermont Department of Health advises individuals to assess their own risk and decide whether to take precautions, such as wearing a mask. Please stay home if you are feeling unwell.

Individuals requiring reasonable accommodation may request assistance from the Planning & Zoning Department. The Town will evaluate each request to determine if the accommodation is necessary for access to a Town service, program, or activity; if an alternative accommodation could provide equivalent access; if the requested accommodation would cause an undue financial or administrative burden; or if the accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the Town’s service, program, or activity.

**TOWN OF WESTFORD  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 5TH, 2026  
APPROVED ON \*\*\*, 2026**

**Commissioners Present:** Max Tyler, Art Woolf, Will Dunkley, Kirsten Tyler, Ben Bornstein

**Commissioners Absent:** None.

**Also Present:** Harmony Cism (Planning Coordinator & Zoning Administrator),  
Maria Barden (Minute Clerk), Barb Peck, Lori Johnson

*The meeting began at 6:30pm*

**Public Hearing for Amendments to Westford Land Use & Development Regulations**

**M. Tyler** reads the notice of the public hearing, which discussed the purposes for amending the Westford Land Use & Development Regulations and what sections they are looking to amend.

**M. Tyler** read the Rules of Procedure for the Planning Commission's public hearing.

No commissioners declared a conflict of interest.

No commissioners had comments or concerns about the current amendments they are discussing.

**B. Peck** feels extremely disappointed that it's only herself and Lori Johnson present from the public. She appreciates all the work the board is doing and wishes that more community members were present for these discussions.

**A. Woolf** Moved to close the hearing, **M. Tyler** seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

**M. Tyler** motioned that the Planning Commission advances the amendments to the Land Use and Development Regulations as outlined in the notice of the public hearing, and reviewed at previous Planning Commission meetings, to the Selectboard for their consideration. **A. Woolf** seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

**Amendments to the Agenda**

None.

**Citizens to be heard** – Items not on the agenda

None.

**Approval of Minutes** – September 21st, 2026

**M. Tyler** motioned to approve the September 21st minutes as amended. **W. Dunkley** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**B. Bornstein** chose to abstain since he was not at the last meeting.

**Updates**

- a. Town Planner Search - **H. Cism** says T. O'Connor has been talking with the Town of Fairfax to hopefully share a town planner so that person can be full-time rather than part-time. Last week the Fairfax Town Manager, Zoning Admin and Planning Commission Chair met to discuss this, but the Town of Westford has not yet received an

update. **H. Cism** believes Fairfax is wanting to move forward with this, but we haven't received an official update since their meeting.

b. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Projects –

- i. **1705 Property Engagement:** **H. Cism** met with Maya and Anne Nelson (CCRPC) earlier today, they went over the 1705 Property Existing Conditions document. CCRPC is incorporating the Planning Commission and Selectboard's comments into the document and map. They want the Planning Commission to consider which types of engagement activities should be prioritized. **B. Bornstein** says they went into considerable detail at their meeting with CCRPC, he thinks they have a good idea of what the Planning Commission is asking for.

**K. Tyler** says they were told by CCRPC that there is not enough time or resources to do all the engagement activities so they would like the board to choose what they would like to prioritize. **M. Tyler** would like to look at them offline; **K. Tyler** can collect the ideas on which activity each commissioner feels can be dropped and which should be prioritized from them, and they can discuss at the next meeting with Maya and Anne Nelson.

There was an email from H. Cism on the status of the WW permit. We have a design from Krebs & Lansing, but it hasn't been submitted to the state yet. They also received an email from T. O'Connor and VLCT about the implications of river access for the town's insurance package.

**B. Bornstein** says in terms of the delineation on the 1705 property (the wetlands and WW area), he's wondering if the town has been able to move forward with a demarcation, so people have an idea on what areas are off limits. **H. Cism** says this was discussed briefly at the meeting this morning, they're planning to have Melanie (CCRPC) add in the wetland buffer and the general area of the brownfields location to the map. Someone will be staking it out but there is no date for it yet. **B.**

**Bornstein** would be happy to reach out to Anne Nelson Stoner.

**K. Tyler** says there are two planned activities to bring the public on a tour around the property, she thinks it would be good for **B. Bornstein** to call but isn't sure who it would be. **M. Tyler** thinks we should talk to the GIS person from CCRPC to find out the best way to move forward.

- ii. **Brookside Road Path Study** – **W. Dunkley** says CCRPC issued Hoyle Tanner the Notice to Proceed, this allows them to get started. The Planning Commission learned from CCRPC that since it is related to "complete streets and safety" it can be 100% funded from CCRPC. **H. Cism** sent out a letter to residents/landowners along the affected area of Brookside Rd., posted it to FPF, and posted it to the newsletter.

**H. Cism** also responded to a couple of residents who had already reached out with concerns/comments.

- iii. **Grant Writing Assistance** - Municipal Planning Grant application has opened. **H. Cism** and **M. Tyler** are meeting with Maya Balassa about this tomorrow. She will have a first draft for them to discuss, and she plans to come to the Planning Commission meeting on October 19th.

## **Correspondence**

- a. Documents from the Town of Milton relative to updates to their regulations.
- b. Email thread discussing housing and affordability.
- c. Information sharing regarding the hypotheticals about what it would take for an enterprise like Boyden Valley Winery/wedding venue to be in Westford.
- d. DRB hearing on the 28th - W. Dunkley was curious about the process for that; H. Cism expands on the process.

#### **Work Plan Review**

- a. The next Planning Commission meeting will be on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026 - Maya Balassa from CCRPC will be present.
- b. The Commissioners will get their thoughts to K. Tyler regarding which ideas they like and dislike for community engagement activities by next Monday.
- c. H. Cism will send the *Westford Land Use & Development Regulations* amendments to the Selectboard for their consideration. The Selectboard will have 120 days to hold their own public hearing. They can provide amendments if they choose and once the document gets approved by the Selectboard it will go into effect 21 days after the approval.
- d. B. Bornstein will put in a phone call to CCRPC for the physical delineation for the property of the brownfields and wetlands.
- e. H. Cism will investigate who did our wetland delineation previously and reach out to them.
- f. M. Tyler reminds the commissioners that budget season is coming up so if anyone is aware of items that could be an expenditure for them next year to please bring that with them to the meeting on October 19th. The 12th of November is when the Planning Commission is scheduled to meet with the Selectboard for their budget presentation.
- g. H. Cism will investigate past Planning Commission budget requests and bring the information back to the board.
- h. M. Tyler says he will entertain agenda items that the commissioners feel important to discuss. For example, he would like to discuss other land use and development regulations at upcoming meetings.
- i. W. Dunkley and A. Woolf will work together for the FPF update.

*M. Tyler motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:23pm. B. Bornstein seconded.  
Motion carried 5-0.*

*The meeting adjourned at 7:23pm.*

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Westford Planning Commission  
From: Maya Balassa, CCRPC  
Date: October 19, 2026  
Re: Municipal MPG Application drafted for Westford

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### Purpose

CCRPC is asking the Planning Commission to review the draft Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) application included in your packet, provide feedback on the application language, and consider recommending the Selectboard to sign a resolution in support of the application. The Selectboard will then review the application and sign the required municipal resolution on Thursday, October 22.

### What is the Municipal Planning Grant?

The MPG program, administered by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, supports local planning and revitalization projects that advance statewide planning goals. Grants are awarded annually and can fund projects such as municipal plans, bylaw updates, and other planning initiatives. The maximum grant amount any Town can request is \$50,000, with a 10% match required by the Town. More information is available on the State's MPG webpage.

### Key dates for the FY27 round:

Application opened October 1, 2026  
Application due December 2, 2026  
Award decisions announced in December  
Grant term runs January 1, 2027 through December 31, 2028  
Closeout materials due January 31, 2029

### CCRPC Support for Westford

CCRPC staff are supporting the Town of Westford by drafting the grant application, which is included in your packet. CCRPC staff will complete the application. Westford staff will serve as the final submitter in the State's online grants system before the deadline. The Town remains the applicant and would be the grantee if funded.

### Requested Action

**Feedback.** CCRPC is seeking Planning Commission feedback on the application language, including the project description, goals, scope, and budget. Please share comments at the meeting so they can be incorporated before the application goes to the Selectboard.

**Resolution Recommendation.** CCRPC asks the Planning Commission to recommend the Selectboard to sign a resolution in support of the application. The State requires a separate Municipal Resolution, signed by a majority of the Selectboard, to be submitted with the application.

**Agent.** Westford is designated a rural town under the Municipal Planning Grant program, which applies to towns with a population under 2,500. Rural town status allows the regional planning commission to serve as the Town's agent for the grant. As agent, CCRPC supports grant administration and may serve as the project consultant without a competitive selection process. The Town of Westford remains the applicant and the financial administrator of the grant. CCRPC is seeking guidance on if the Westford Planning Commission wants to use CCRPC as the consultant on the project, if funded.

Please contact Maya Balassa at [mbalassa@ccrpcvt.oeg](mailto:mbalassa@ccrpcvt.oeg) with any questions.

Thank you for your time!

Be well,

Maya

# Municipal Planning Grant FY27 Application Guide

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**2.2 Project Title:** Name the project as concisely as possible:

Westford Town Plan and Future Land Use Engagement

**2.3 Project Subtitle:** Provide a very brief statement of what the project will accomplish and produce:

Westford will conduct robust public engagement on Town Plan topics, focused on where and how development should happen, and produce a report of community priorities and recommendations to inform a future Town Plan update. The final report will also include a draft Future Land Use map.

**2.4 Project Description:** Provide an overall summary of the 1) issue, 2) approach to solving the problem, 3) project deliverables, and 4) intended long-term outcomes:

Issue: Westford's 2021 Town Plan names the Town Center as the growth area, supported by a community wastewater system. In November 2023 voters rejected the bond for that system, 532 to 488, and the community remains divided about the Town Center's role, where housing belongs, and what development Westford can support. Meanwhile, the HOME Act (2023) and Act 181 (2024) changed plan requirements, including housing targets and future land use maps. In 2025, Westford's Act 181 working group concluded it could not recommend land use changes to the municipal or regional Future Land Use map without more robust public input.

Approach: This project funds the engagement phase that will inform Westford's future Town Plan update. Westford will hire a consultant to perform community engagement covering key topics in the Town Plan, focused intentionally on the Future Land Use Map. This process will ask residents to consider where development should happen, what type of development (residential, commercial, mixed use, etc.), and at what pace. The engagement will also collect overall goals and priorities of residents for the following decade. CCRPC is separately conducting an initial review of the current Town Plan for conformance with state statute. The findings will reference the initial review where available.

Deliverables: An engagement plan, a report of findings and recommendations for the Town's subsequent Town Plan update, and a replicable toolkit for other small towns.

Outcomes: A report capturing community priorities and a community-informed direction for the Future Land Use Map that the Westford Planning Commission can carry directly

into the Town's subsequent Town Plan update, adoption, and RPC confirmation process.

## **2.5 Project Location:** Describe the geographic area(s) the project will address:

Entire Town of Westford, focused on the Town Center (Common and Village districts, about 650 acres, including the designated Village Center and Neighborhood Development Area) and other areas residents identify as possible development locations.

## **Section 4: Project Readiness & Need**

### **4.1 Project Issue & Urgency:** What timely community issues, problems, challenges, or obstacles will the project address?

Westford's 2021 Town Plan (Goal 4 and Priority 1e) makes the Town Center the growth area, supported by a community wastewater system. That premise is now contested. In November 2023 voters defeated the wastewater bond 532 to 488, and the Town Center has no community wastewater system. During Regional Future Land Use map engagement, a small working group of residents raised the concern that the Future Land Use map from the 2021 plan may no longer be representative of resident interests. CCRPC's June 2025 Act 181 summary memo documents divergent views on whether the village should remain the development focus, be treated as a hamlet, be expanded, or be joined by a Village Center on Plains Road.

Housing pressure adds to the need. The median-home price of a primary residence in 2025 in Westford, according to housingdata.org, was \$480,000. In 2024, the median household income in Westford was \$113,600 (+/- \$12,699). Westford has not yet decided how it will respond to regional housing needs and rising costs.

The Westford Town Plan expires in February 2029. Westford is planning to begin engagement on the updated plan and maps in 2027.

### **4.2 Funding Need:** What other funding sources, if any, were considered, and why is the MPG program the best source to fund this project?

The Town considered several sources. Westford's planning budget supports staff and routine operations but doesn't have the resources to support a broad engagement process and plan update. VCDP planning grants are another funding avenue. Westford received one in 2020 for the 1705 VT Route 128 property; this grant funds feasibility work for specific projects, not town-wide plan engagement. State infrastructure programs, including DEC water infrastructure funding, support engineering and construction and depend on a community-supported plan that Westford does not yet have.

The MPG is the best fit because it is one of the few sources that funds community-wide planning and engagement. Westford last received an MPG in 2016. The Town's FY26 MPG application was not funded. The project fills a funding gap and supports planning and implementation work in the future that is supported by the community. Without it, land use decisions risk being made by default, through regional maps built on a plan the community no longer fully supports.

#### **4.3 Must answer either (a) or (b), depending on your project:**

**4.3(a) Municipal Plan - Project Readiness:** If the application is for a municipal plan adoption or amendment project, how will the project address the issues described earlier and any recommendations made by the RPC to bring the municipal plan into compliance with statutory requirements?

#### **X Municipal plan project**

This project is the engagement phase in preparation for Westford's routine Town Plan update, brought forward from the 2029 expiration date to spring 2027 so that engagement can happen before the update is drafted. The 2021 Plan is confirmed by CCRPC. This phase, while limited to engagement, is designed to address more than a routine update would.

First, state law has changed. The HOME Act requires municipal plans to include housing goals and actions consistent with municipal housing targets (24 V.S.A. 4382(a)(10)). Act 181 revised the state planning goals to direct dense residential growth primarily to centers and village areas, added a goal to equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens, and changes how designated areas are mapped. Updated Act 174 energy standards and CCRPC energy data also apply.

Second, the community's action demonstrated that the Plan's land use direction needs revisiting. The 2023 wastewater vote and the 2025 Act 181 working group (Section 4.1) show that the Town Center development strategy no longer has clear community consensus. Engagement will inform validation, revision, or replacement of the existing policy.

The scope of the engagement covers all sections of the town plan. This project will produce a report of engagement findings and recommendations, not the plan amendments themselves.

The Town's subsequent Town Plan update will address all regulatory changes since 2021 and the comments and recommendations in CCRPC's initial review. That review is being conducted separately from this project and is planned to reach Westford in late winter/early spring 2027. This project's report will reference it where applicable so the two efforts stay aligned.

**4.4 Other Background (Optional).** Are there any additional community efforts or activities leading up to this application that would provide extra context for this project?

Westford has invested in Town Center planning for over a decade. It received Village Center designation in 2010, renewed in 2019, adopted a Form Based Code in 2016, and secured a Neighborhood Development Area designation in 2019. Under the state's new designation framework, these are now held as a Center designation and a Neighborhood designation. A 2019 Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit and community survey showed support for small-scale commercial development in the Town Center. In 2020 the Town received a VCDP planning grant and Clean Water State Revolving Fund Step 1 approval, and assembled nearly all the funding for a roughly \$4 million community wastewater system.

The 2023 bond vote showed that some residents worried the system would lead to development that would change the Town Common and the town's rural character. Since then, the Selectboard paused the Wastewater Alternatives Committee and, in March 2025, purchased 1705 VT Route 128 next to the Town Office to partially address septic needs for municipal buildings.

From October 2024 through May 2025, CCRPC and the Town convened an Act 181 working group and held joint Planning Commission and Selectboard meetings, with 5 to 22 participants each. Participants agreed on respecting landowner choice and the need for attainable housing, but not on where compact housing should go. The Town opted into Tier 1B only for existing Neighborhood Development Area parcels and expressed openness to more after a broader public process.

The Town has three projects with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission in FY27 to do engagement to determine the future of the town-owned property in the Town Center, to apply for grants to complete necessary planning and implementation work, and to a scoping study for a pathway between the school and the village.

**4.5 Project Overlap:** *If a municipality received an MPG last year – or if the project is part of a larger or phased project – explain how the projects are related and address your capacity to complete the proposed project.*

**X** Not Applicable (single project with no overlap)

**4.6 Project Management & Collaboration:** How will the project and consultant(s) be managed and who will make decisions about the project and final products? Please identify one or two individuals in the community who will lead the project (for example: the Planning Commission Chair)

Max Tyler, Planning Commission Chair, will lead the project, serve as the consultant's primary contact, hold regular check-ins, and review all products. Harmony Cism,

Westford's Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator will also attend regular check-ins, review products, maintain the project webpage, and coordinate notices. The project will result in a final report with findings and recommendations, which the Planning Commission will use, together with CCRPC's separate initial plan review, to guide the Town's subsequent Town Plan update and adoption process.

In future years, the Planning Commission will utilize the engagement report, drafted Future Land Use map, and CCRPC's initial plan review to draft the updated 2029 Westford Town Plan and move it through Planning Commission and Selectboard hearings to adoption and regional approval.

## Section 5: Statewide Priorities

**5.1 Project Outcomes & Goal Consistency:** Beyond the project itself, what long-term outcomes would demonstrate the success of the project and further statewide planning goals?

Success means Westford has a clear, well-documented record of community priorities and an informed backing for the drafted Future Land Use Map, delivered in a report the Planning Commission can carry directly into the Town's subsequent Town Plan update. The Future Land Use Map, compatible with the Regional Future Land Use Map, will be one that residents helped create and that shows where development belongs, what type of development, and how to best implement development opportunities.

This project's engagement will surface community priorities to help inform Westford's future municipal housing target and specific actions to expand attainable housing in areas planned for development. This is consistent with the HOME Act and the revised state goal directing intensive residential development to centers and village areas (24 V.S.A. 4302).

The process advances the citizen participation goal (24 V.S.A. 4302(b)(2)) and the principle of meaningful participation in Vermont's Environmental Justice Law by involving residents who rarely engage in planning. The plan will continue to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact centers separated by rural countryside (4302(c)(1)) and conserve forests, farms, and natural resources, consistent with the regional plan and smart development principles (24 V.S.A. 2791(13)).

In the near term, progress will be measured by delivery of the engagement report and participation by underrepresented groups. Over the longer term, progress will be measured by the Town Plan update, adoption, and RPC confirmation it informs, and by additional projects launched to implement the plan.

**5.2 Priority Project Categories:** Which of the following statewide priorities does this project address? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Planning for a Step Up: Downtown Designation: Step 3 Center or Village Designation: Step 2 Center application (with a pre-application consultation with program staff)☐ Specific-Area Physical Improvement (Master) Plans for Designated Centers & Neighborhoods, including pre-engineering water/wastewater, multi-modal streets visioning, or neighborhood development for homes
- ☐ Comprehensive Capital Programming to support climate resilient development in Designated areas per 24 VSA 4430
- ☒ Statewide innovative project that includes a replicable template other communities can use as a work plan deliverable
- ☐ Projects in very small towns with populations of 1,000, and under or projects in municipalities that are not regularly/recently funded.
- ☐ Not Applicable (N/A) – Project is a local priority only

**5.3 Priority Project Explanation:** Explain how the project furthers the selected statewide priorities

Westford is a town that is not regularly or recently funded. Westford last received an MPG in 2016, has no open MPG, and its FY26 application was not funded.

In addition, the project creates a replicable template. Many small towns without wastewater infrastructure must now make Act 181 future land use decisions, often after contentious infrastructure votes. Creating an in-depth engagement process in a small town that asks residents to plan for development that supports the housing target could create a template for other small towns in Vermont to do the same.

Because housing is the state's highest priority, the project is focused on attainable housing. To accommodate Westford's municipal housing target, it will identify where housing can be accommodated in centers and village areas, and recommend specific actions that lay the groundwork for bylaw changes.

**5.4 Designated Areas:** Please select all legacy designations held by the municipality and explain how the project will relate to the designated area(s).

☒ Village Center

**5.5 Designated Area Projects:** If the project relates to any of the designated area(s) selected above, please explain how.

Projects that relate to state designated areas receive priority in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A

☐ Not Applicable (no designation)

In the legacy designation, Westford had a Village Center designation. Since CCRPC had their ECOS Plan and Regional Future Land Use map approved by the Land Use Review Board, Westford holds a Center designation and a Neighborhood designation. The central Future Land Use question is whether this area remains the primary development area, is reframed as a hamlet, is expanded to include more village center area, or is joined by another area. The answer determines the boundaries that the regional map and the state designation programs will use.

Tier 1B currently applies only to the legacy Neighborhood Development designation, and the Town has said it is open to including more eligible land after a broad public process. The 2021 Plan also calls for expanding this area (Economic Development Goal 4). This project provides a way to confirm and implement that goal.

This project's engagement will gather community input on whether to keep, expand, or change these designated areas, which the Town's subsequent Town Plan update will use to align the Future Land Use Map with them and identify how designation benefits can support attainable housing.

## Section 6: Past Performance

**6.1 Project History and Performance:** Please list any Municipal Planning Grant projects or grants from the past 5 years, with key actions identified and implemented. This will inform ongoing status of projects beyond grant closeout.

Westford has not received a Municipal Planning Grant in the last five years. Westford applied in FY26 and was not funded.

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## Section 7: Municipal Resolution, Grant Roles & Good Standing Certification

**7.1 Grant Roles:** Identify the officials who hold the grant roles that correspond to those identified in the Municipal Resolution Form.

Municipal/Authorizing Official: [Select from drop-down list in GEARS-IGX]

Municipal/Authorizing Official Title:

Alternate Municipal/Authorizing Official: [Select from drop-down list in GEARS-IGX]

Alternate Municipal/Authorizing Official Title:

Grant Administrator: [Select from drop-down list in GEARS-IGX]

Grant Administrator Title:

# Work Plan & Budget Form

## Section 1: Work Plan, Public Outreach & Budget

Outline the project approach by listing the major tasks and associated costs in the table.

**Local Match Waiver (for a bylaw implementation project):** I certify that the Municipality does not have the type of Bylaw(s) proposed for this project? The match is waived for first-time bylaws.

| Task Name                                                   | Task Description                                                                                                                                                                         | Task Category: outreach/engagement, analysis, writing/drafting, mapping/GIS, public meeting, other | If other, specify | Type of Expense:    | Unit Cost (hourly rate/item cost) | Quantity (number of hours/materials) | Total Cost (auto-calculates unit cost *quantity) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Consultant Time</b>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                   |                     |                                   |                                      |                                                  |
| Collaborative Design with Community and Planning Commission | Develop an engagement strategy in collaboration with the Westford Planning Commission, Town staff, and local partners.                                                                   | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Labor; consultant   | 70/hour                           | 20                                   | \$1,400                                          |
| Situation Assessment                                        | Research the community context in Westford leading up to this town plan update and review previous engagement efforts with Westford residents' since 2021 to avoid duplicative outreach. | Analysis/research                                                                                  |                   | Labor; consultant   | 70/hour                           | 10                                   | \$700                                            |
| Planning and Coordination                                   | Staff coordination with Westford Planning Commission, staff, and partners. Develop engagement materials. In addition, coordinate to schedule and advertise engagement activities.        | Writing, coordination                                                                              |                   | Labor; consultant   | 70/hour                           | 40                                   | \$2,800                                          |
| Engagement Activities                                       | Conduct engagement activities including, small group conversations, one-on-one interviews, public meetings, attend community events, host a public survey.                               | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Labor; consultant   | 70/hour                           | 250                                  | \$17,500                                         |
| Report and Recommendations                                  | Synthesize feedback, provide a summary and report of feedback with recommendations for integrating feedback into the Town Plan, and share a drafted Future Land Use map.                 | Analysis                                                                                           |                   | Labor; consultant   | 70/hour                           | 80                                   | \$5,600                                          |
|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                   |                     |                                   |                                      | Total Labor: \$28,000                            |
| <b>Direct Expenses</b>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                   |                     |                                   |                                      |                                                  |
| Engagement materials                                        | Posters, printing, etc.                                                                                                                                                                  | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Materials; printing |                                   |                                      | \$500                                            |
| Snacks for tabling events                                   | 3 events                                                                                                                                                                                 | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Materials           | \$33 per event                    |                                      | \$100                                            |
| Stipends for focus group and interviews                     | 5 focus groups with 12 people/event and 10 interviews                                                                                                                                    | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Materials           | \$40 per person                   |                                      | \$2,800                                          |
| Food for focus groups                                       | 5 focus groups                                                                                                                                                                           | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Materials           | \$275 per event                   |                                      | \$1,400                                          |
| Space rentals                                               | 2 events                                                                                                                                                                                 | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Materials           | \$150 per event                   |                                      | \$300                                            |
| Childcare for events                                        | 2 events                                                                                                                                                                                 | Outreach/engagement                                                                                |                   | Materials           | \$100 per event                   |                                      | \$200                                            |
|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                   |                     |                                   |                                      | Total Direct: \$5,300                            |
|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                   |                     |                                   |                                      | <b>Total: 33,300</b>                             |

☐ **Yes:** no match required

☒ **No:** match required

**Local Match Waiver (for a municipal plan project):** I certify that the Municipality does not have an existing Municipal Plan? The match is waive for first-time municipal plans.

☐ **Yes:** no match required

☒ **No:** match required

- *The local match requirement is waived for applications for a first municipal plan or bylaw project enabled in 24 VSA Chapter 117.*

**State Grant Funds:** Enter the amount of state grant funds you are requesting.

Total Project Cost: (will auto-calculate in online form)

State Grant Funds (Grant Amount Requested): \$

Total Match Funds: (will auto-calculate in online form)

Minimum Required Cash Match Funds (10% of Total Project Cost): (will auto-calculate)

Optional Additional Match Funds: (will auto-calculate in online form)

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## Section 2: Budget Documentation

**Source of Match:** Describe source(s) of match funds:

**Budget & Cost Estimates:** Explain how you developed a realistic budget.

The budget was developed by using prior projects that CCRPC has worked on with similar scope and budgets.

## Section 3: Accounting

**Accounting System:** What type of accounting system does your municipality use?

☒ Automated

☐ Manual

☐ Combination of both

**Accounting System:** Does your organization have an accounting system that will allow you to completely and accurately track the receipt and disbursements of funds related to the award?

☒ Yes

☐ No

# Municipal Resolution Form

**WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Westford is applying for funding as provided for in the FY27 Budget Act and may receive an award of funds under said provisions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Housing and Community Development may offer a Grant Agreement to this Municipality for said funding; and

**WHEREAS**, the municipality is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes or that the municipality has voted at an annual or special meeting to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes,

## Now, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the Legislative Body of this Municipality enters into and agrees to the requirements and obligations of this grant program including a commitment to match funds.
2. That the Municipal Planning Commission recommends applying for said Grant;

Max Tyler

*(Name of Planning Commission Chair)*

*(Signature)*

- 3a. That (Name) Tommy O'Connor Title Town Administrator  
who is either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as defined by 10 VSA §683(8), or is a Select Board Member, the Town Manager, the City Manager, or the Town Administrator, is hereby designated to serve as the Municipal/Authorizing Official (M/AO) for the Grant Electronic Application and Reporting System (GEARS), and to execute the Grant Agreement and other such Documents as may be necessary to secure these funds.

**3b.** (Alternate Authorizing Official for redundancy)

That (Name) Pat Haller Title Selectboard Chair

who is either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as defined by 10 VSA §683(8), or a Select Board Member, is the Town Manager, the City Manager, or the Town Administrator, is hereby designated to serve as the Municipal/ Authorizing Official (M/AO) for the Grant Electronic Application and Reporting System (GEARS), and to execute the Grant Agreement and other such Documents as may be necessary to secure these funds.

**3c.** That (Name) Harmony Cism Title Administrative Officer

is hereby designated as the Grant Administrator, the person with the overall Administrative responsibility for the Municipal Planning Grant program activities related to the application, and any subsequent Grant Agreement provisions.

Passed this 22nd day of October, 2026.

- ☐ **(For rural towns or consortia only)** The regional planning commission will serve as agent for the municipality or consortium. *(Check the box if the municipality authorizes its regional planning commission to prepare the application, support grant administration and be exempt from competitive selection if serving as project consultant.)*

## LEGISLATIVE BODY

(Name)

(Signature)

Pat Haller

Julia Andrews

Casey Mathieu

Deb Sawyer Jorschick

Nick Nichols

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESOLUTION FORM

- A.** The Legislative Body of the Municipality must adopt this resolution. This Form requires filling in the name of the municipality, the Legislative Body (e.g. Selectboard), and the name and title of the Municipal/ Authorizing Official(s) (M/AOs); and the Grant Administrator.
- B.** Following formal adoption, a majority of the legislative body must sign the Resolution. The Chair of the Planning Commission must also sign upon endorsement by vote of the Planning Commission.
- C.** This form must be either uploaded to the online application or grant, or in the event the form cannot be uploaded, it may be emailed to:  
[accd.cpr@vermont.gov](mailto:accd.cpr@vermont.gov)
- D.** If emailed, an electronic copy of the submitted Resolution document will be uploaded by DHCD staff and available online.
- E.** Please note that the designated Municipal/Authorizing Official(s) and Grant Administrator must also register for an account in the online grants management system, if they have not done so already, before the application can be considered complete.

### CONSORTIUM APPLICATIONS:

For a consortium, each municipality must complete a separate Resolution form. All municipalities in a consortium must designate the same Municipal/Authorizing Official(s) and grant Administrator.



**To:** Selectboard

**From:** Planning Commission

**Date:** \*\*\*

**Re:** FY '28 (July 1, 2027 - June 30, 2028) Planning Commission Budget Request

**PLANNING COMMISSION BUDGET:**

| Source of Expenses             | FY 24-25<br>Budget | Actual<br>Expenditure<br>FY 24-25 | FY 25-26<br>Budget | Actual<br>Expenditure<br>FY 25-26 | FY 26-27<br>Budget | FY 2026-2027<br>(Proposed & % Change) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| PC – Stipend                   | \$2,000            | \$700                             | \$2,000            | \$267                             | \$2,000            | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| PC – Legal Notices             | \$750              | \$118                             | \$750              | \$0                               | \$750              | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| PC – Education                 | \$300              | \$0                               | \$300              | \$0                               | \$300              | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| PC – Legal & Professional Fees | \$1,000            | \$0                               | \$1,000            | \$0                               | \$1,000            | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| PC – Maps & Miscellaneous      | \$500              | \$179                             | \$500              | \$120                             | \$500              | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| PC – Special Projects          | \$4,000            | \$0                               | \$4,000            | \$4,000                           | \$7,000            | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| PC – Minute Clerk              | \$2,000            | \$558                             | \$1,700            | \$627                             | \$1,800            | \$\$\$ (0%)                           |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>\$10,550</b>    | <b>\$1,555</b>                    | <b>\$10,250</b>    | <b>\$5,014</b>                    | <b>\$13,350</b>    | <b>\$\$\$ (0%)</b>                    |

**Special Projects Reserve balance as of July 1, 2026: \$30,978**

**Request:** The PC requests [increased/decreased/level] funding for FY '28.

# 2021 PC Town Report

Fifty years ago, the Town of Westford created and adopted a Town Plan. Periodically the town is required by State statute to review and amend the Town Plan. The process of review and receiving public comment is done through a series of public meetings and then the plan is adopted by the selectboard after a public hearing and comment period. The Westford Town Plan is the principal policy statement for the Town of Westford presenting a snapshot of existing conditions and a vision for the future. Specifically addressed in this plan are the following subjects: demographic trends, housing, economic development, natural resources, energy, facilities, utilities, services, education, transportation, historic resources, future land use, flood resiliency and implementation strategy. The most recent town plan was amended in 2021 and can be found here; <https://westfordvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-Town-Plan-Adopted.pdf>.

2021 has been an eventful and busy year for the Planning Commission. In addition to our regular work, we have two major projects underway. The projects are currently in the planning and design phase.

The first is the community wastewater project. As of September 2021, Westford has received nearly \$600,000 in grant funding for our community wastewater project. The Town was awarded a \$466,194 grant by the Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) and Economic Development Administration. We were also granted a Step 2 State Clean Water Revolving Fund (CWRF) loan for \$250,351 with \$125,000 forgiven upon issuance. The \$125,000 forgiveness amount will be used to move the final design forward. Once we have a more detailed design, updated budget, and potential funding stack, we will present a bond vote to the voters for their consideration. As of the writing of this submittal, we anticipate a bond vote being presented to the voters on the ballot Tuesday March 1, 2022. The Planning Commission formed the Community Wastewater Public Engagement Working Group in early 2021 to facilitate public engagement and provide inputs to the final design process. Visit <https://www.westfordsfuture.com/> to find the latest information on the project.

The second project is 1705 Route 128, also known as the Pigeon property, and represents a unique opportunity for the Town. The Planning Commission and 1705 Route 128 Steering Committee are leading an effort funded by a Vermont Community Development Program Planning Grant and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) Brownfield Program. The Steering Committee will be studying opportunities such as public river access, affordable housing, brownfield remediation, stormwater improvements, town office expansion or replacement, and US Post Office relocation. In early 2022, the Steering Committee will present a preliminary site plan for 1705 that is based on their findings and public input. Look for more information in upcoming newsletters and on the town's website.

Hip, Hip, Hooray.....Westford now has campgrounds as a use. Organizations like Hipcamp have become popular over the last few years. The campground idea was brought to us by a resident in 2020. After a series of public meetings and through research of similar uses, the town drafted and adopted campground language that is now part of the Westford Land Use and Development Regulations.

The Planning Commission would like to personally thank the following: Westford residents Eric Ford, Pat Haller and Heather Armata for their contributions to the Community Wastewater Public Engagement Working Group Liz Curry, Town Grant Writer, for helping the town secure the NRBC/EDA Grant; and Taylor Newton CCRPC Senior Planner and Steve Libby, VRC Executive Director, and other members of the 1705 Route 128 Steering Committee. We would also like to express appreciation to the Pigeon Family for working with the Town and being patient with us while we explore possibilities for the 1705 Route 128 property. The Planning Commission is grateful for the support of the Selectboard in the pursuit of long-term interests and benefits for the Town. Most notable, thank you to residents for your comments, questions and engagement.

Respectfully submitted,

Town of Westford Planning Commissioners;

Koi Boynton, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere and Mark Letorney

## 2022 PC TOWN REPORT

The Planning Commission thanks Koi Boynton for her many years of service on the Commission. Mo Reilly has filled the vacated position, welcome Mo.

During the past fiscal year, the Planning Commission has reviewed and amended the Westford Land Use and Development Regulations and Westford Town Plan. The Westford Town Plan and related maps can be found here: <https://westfordvt.us/town-plan/>. The Westford Land Use and Development Regulations can be found here: <https://westfordvt.us/documents/planning-zoning/>.

The study and feasibility of a town center wastewater system remains a priority for the Commission. Significant research over several decades has highlighted the importance of clean potable water, wastewater capacity and adequate treatment of wastewater in the Town Center Area. The project funding stack continues to grow, to date, the Town has been awarded \$2,377,136 in State ARPA funds, \$466,194 in Northern Border Regional Commission/Economic Development Administration (NBRC/EDA) funds, and more than \$150,000 for early project planning from the State of Vermont. The project experienced a setback in early 2022 when the Commission was notified that the project engineer was terminating business operations. The Commission is working closely with the State of Vermont and Stone Environmental to secure Stone as the replacement Project Engineer. All parties have worked tirelessly over the past several months to update the Environmental Information Document (EID) in order to receive Facility Plan approval and Engineering Services Agreement (ESA) in order to hire Stone Environmental as the project lead/engineer. The Commission's next steps include final design, building out the funding stack, community engagement on the project details, and preparing for a bond vote in 2023. The goal of the Commission is to offer the voters of Westford a wastewater solution for the Town Center Area that has minimal impact on taxpayers and is sustainable through user fees. For information about the community wastewater project planning and implementation visit: <http://www.westfordsfuture.com/>

In 2019, the Commission began working on a conceptual plan for the possible redevelopment of the 1705 property, also known as the former bus garage. The property landowner, Chittenden County Regional Planning, Vermont River Conservancy, Champlain Housing Trust and Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity all committed to working together on the project. The goals and objectives of the project included; addressing stormwater runoff into the Browns River, providing community access to the Browns River, brownfield assessment and cleanup, acquiring additional land for town office expansion or replacement, and construction of perpetually affordable housing, while maintaining the Town's rural character. In 2022 the project did not receive funding from VHCB in order to allow the project to move forward. The property is now for sale. Any future redevelopment will need to align with the Westford Land Use and Development Regulations. One very positive outcome of the Commission's efforts led to a better understanding of the brownfield site, removal of multiple underground storage tanks and petroleum contamination remediation. Visit <https://www.westford1705.com/> to learn more about what was accomplished.

The Planning Commission meets the 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Offices as well as the 1st Monday of the month when necessary.

Respectfully submitted,  
Town of Westford Planning Commissioners;  
Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere, Mark Letorney and Mo Reilly

## 2023 PC TOWN REPORT – period July 1 2022 until June 30, 2023

**The Town Plan** - Westford is not rural by accident. The rural character of our Town is due to well thought out, comprehensive Land Use and Development Regulations that are supported by our Town Plan. The Westford Town Plan is the principal policy statement for the Town of Westford presenting a snapshot of existing conditions and a vision for the future. Specifically addressed in this plan are demographic trends, housing, economic development, natural resources, energy, facilities, utilities and services, education, transportation, historic resources, future land use, flood resiliency and implementation strategy. The primary goal of the Town Plan is to maintain and enhance the rural character of Westford. Additional land use goals and objectives are to revitalize the town center to serve as the civic and commercial core of the town, and to encourage and implement techniques that conserve the working landscape and natural resources while enhancing the rural, historical, and cultural resources of the town.

The Town Plan provides a guide for planning the future of the Town, serves as a policy document in the Act 250 process, provides a framework from which the Westford Land Use and Development Regulations are amended, and serve as a resource for town residents, potential residents, town officials, and business owners. Among other things, the Town Plan recommends studies or other programs to address specific community needs and provide energy compliance documentation to the Public Utility Commission.

The Town Plan is the primary document used by the Planning Commission to guide their work plan and strategic objectives. The Town Plan was last updated in February 2021. The Planning Commission continuously receives community feedback on the Town Plan. As we develop a work plan for FY 2024/5, the Planning Commission will provide the Westford community with an update on when the next Town Plan review and revision process will take place.

**Wastewater** - Access to affordable wastewater and the protection of safe drinking water in the town center has been identified as a priority by many in the community. The Planning Commission has spent over a decade understanding this need, listening to the community and considering solutions. At the time of this writing, the town was preparing for a bond vote in support of a subsurface drip disposal community wastewater system at the Maple Shade Town Forest. Independent of the bond vote outcome, the Planning Commission would like to thank everyone in the community who participated and helped advance the project to the bond vote.

**Goodbye to old friends** - After nearly 20 years of service, Melissa Manka the town planner has taken a new opportunity in a neighboring county. Melissa has made numerous beneficial contributions to the town and community that will continue to live on for generations. Melissa has been an active and vocal supporter of town trails, town forest, civic buildings and community events. The Planning Commission wishes her all the best, on behalf of the town, thank you Melissa!

Nanette Rogers, the town administrator has also taken a new position in a neighboring community. The Planning Commission has enjoyed working and collaborating with Nanette. We wish Nanette continued success and thank her for her support and guidance over the years.

John Roberts, the Town road foreman has also moved on. John has made many improvements and leaves us in much better shape than when he first started. Thank you, John, for improving our quality of life and enhancing our safety.

The Planning Commission meets the 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Offices as well as the 1st Monday of the month when necessary.

Respectfully submitted,  
Town of Westford Planning Commissioners  
Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere, Mark Letorney and Mo Reilly

## **2024 PC TOWN REPORT – period July 1 2023 until June 30, 2024**

### **Wastewater Bond Vote**

In November of 2023 the Westford voters said no to a new community wastewater system at the Maple Shade Town Forest. The Planning Commission is disappointed in the outcome and that there is no long-term wastewater solution for the town center. The PC looks forward to working with the Selectboard and residents on alternative solutions that align with our rural character while also preserving our cherished natural resources.

A special thank you to; Amy Macrellis and Peter Lazorchak from Stone Environmental, Emily Hackett and Lynnette Claudon from the State of VT, all members of the Wastewater Outreach Committee, JB Hinds along with many community members and project supporters.

### **Zoning and Planning Changes**

Based on feedback from residents, the PC reviewed the Zoning and Development fee schedule last revised in 2019. The revised fee schedule was approved by the PC on April 15th and approved by the Selectboard on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The new fees took effect July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

In the spring and summer of 2024 the Planning Commission worked with local residents and businesses on zoning bylaw amendments related to internally illuminated signs. Throughout several meetings and administrative work outside of meetings, the new sign regulation was approved by the Planning Commission on April 15, 2024 and adopted on May 13, 2024 by the Selectboard. The regulation amendments took effect on June 14, 2024.

The Mobile Food Vendor Ordinance amendment to allow for Food Trucks anywhere in town, not just the town center was approved by the Planning Commission on March 18, 2024 and adopted by the Selectboard on May 13, 2024.

In collaboration with the Development Review Board and community input, Section 244.C of the Land Use and Development Regulation was amended for clarity and the ease of applicants. The PC approved these amendments on July 15, 2024 and they were adopted by the Selectboard after a public hearing on October 10, 2024.

### **What to Expect**

The PC holds ongoing discussions on The Town Plan and Land Use and Development Regulations. Near-term, 3-18 months, the PC will continue to look for ways to make incremental improvements and amendments to the land use and development regulations. Mid-term, 1-3 years, we will review and identify areas of land use and development regulations that will involve broad research and community discussions. In the long term, 3-5 years, the PC will begin a review of the Town Plan and map a transparent and collaborative process for revision.

### **With Gratitude**

The PC thanks Seth Jensen and Mark Letorney for their service and long-standing commitment to the Westford community.

### **Welcome Aboard**

The PC welcomes 2 new members, Ian Gehlbach and Max Tyler. The PC is pleased to announce that Harmony Cism has taken a full time position as Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator for Westford.

The Planning Commission meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the Month at 6:30 PM. When necessary, additional meetings may be held following Town policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Town of Westford Planning Commissioners;

Gordon Gebauer, Ian Gehlbach, George Lamphere, Mo Reilly and Max Tyler

## 2025 Town Report

This fiscal year, the Planning Commission said goodbye to an experienced public servant, with Gordon Gebauer stepping down from his role as commissioner. His knowledge of and deep experience with the many challenges facing Westford and the region are missed, and the commission thanks him for his many years of dedicated service.

In an ongoing effort, the Planning Commission has been working with the Development Review Board and the Zoning Administrator on examining various aspects of the town's land use and development regulations. In the summer of 2024, the commission recommended changes to the Rural 5 point system. These interim changes were subsequently adopted by the Selectboard on October 10, 2024. The commission is continuing this work, and additional changes may be forthcoming in the future.

The winter meetings saw members of the commission, the Selectboard and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission working toward the adoption of the regional commission's future land use map, associated land use designations, and housing targets as required by the legislature's ACT 181 of 2024. ACT 181 reforms certain aspects of Vermont's landmark ACT 250. The Planning Commission will continue to work with the Selectboard and the regional planning commission as ACT 181 implementation unfolds.

The commissioners have acted in a supporting role to the Selectboard relative to the town's acquisition of the 1705 property. We look forward to continuing in this role at the direction of the Selectboard.

Two new commissioners, Max Tyler and Will Dunkley, have been appointed this year. In addition, the commission reorganized in May, with George Lamphere stepping down as chair and Max Tyler assuming that role. Mo Reilly continues as commission vice chair, and Ian Gehlbach has assumed the role of clerk. We thank George for his leadership and his continued service as a commissioner.

Respectfully submitted,  
Town of Westford Planning Commissioners  
Will Dunkley, Ian Gehlbach, George Lamphere, Mo Reilly, and Max Tyler

FY '26 PC Town Report Potential Topics  
(July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026)

- Farewell/thanks to:
  - George Lamphere (2019 – 2026)
  - Mo Reilly (2022 – 2026)
  - Ian Gehlbach (2024 – 2026)
- Welcome new members:
  - Benjamin Bornstein
  - Kirsten Tyler
  - Art Woolf
- Continued review of WLUD/proposed updates
- Tier 1B Opt-In
- 3 UPWP applications submitted and approved (approved in FY26, projects begin in FY27)
- 1705 wetland delineation completed

# VOREC Community Grant Program

*The VOREC Community Grant Program (VCGP) is intended to fund community projects that support and grow local economies by leveraging outdoor recreation.*

- **Current status:** 2027 grant round is now open. Pre-Application materials are due December 13, 2026
- **Eligible applicants:** Municipalities, non-profit organizations and other governmental entities
- **Funding source:** One-time State General Funds, Vermont Recreational Trails Fund
- **Total funds available:** \$285,000+

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program, also known as VCGP, supports outdoor recreation projects that drive economic growth and enhance community well-being. Funded by one-time allocations by the Vermont General Assembly, this is the fifth VCGP grant round.

**In order to maximize the impact of the available funding, the upcoming grant round will focus on project development and promotion.** This grant will fund projects that will support local outdoor recreation economies, but need design, scoping, or planning work done to unlock other funding. This program will also help communities and organizations share information about their amazing recreation resources and businesses by supporting marketing, branding, and other promotion.

The grant round will be closely tied to the vision, common objectives, and themes of [Move Forward Together Vermont](#). The scoring system will be designed to elevate projects that address equity and climate resilience.

Please use the links below to locate information on this page:

- [Timeline](#)
- [Eligibility and Requirements](#)
- [Application Process and Resources](#)

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## 2027 Grant Round Anticipated Timeline

- Pre-applications open and application materials released by Tuesday, October 6, 2026
  - Pre-application submission deadline: Sunday, December 13, 2026
  - Full application submission deadline: Wednesday, February 17, 2027
  - Grant application review and selection: mid-February – late March 2027
  - Compliance reviews and grant agreement development: April – June 2027
  - Anticipated project implementation period: July 1, 2027 - December 31, 2028
- 

## Eligibility and Requirements

### Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants will include municipalities and nonprofits. New grantees will be prioritized, but previous successful grantees will still be eligible to apply. Current VCGP grantees with active grants as of Dec 13, 2026, will not be eligible.

### Project Eligibility

Example eligible projects that might score well could include:

- Contracting a landscape architect to complete a park design for a FEMA buyout property
- Creating a regional outdoor recreation marketing plan to attract outdoor recreationists to downtown businesses
- Community-informed planning for both building and sharing information about accessible trails
- Program development for classes or community events focused on building confidence in the outdoors
- Creating a town-wide outdoor recreation wayfinding plan and installing signs/kiosks using accessible signage principles
- Developing a community economic recovery plan focused on supporting local businesses, and outdoor recreation resources following emergencies and natural disasters.
- Developing a climate risk mitigation plan and preparing permit applications for identified trail improvement projects.

All projects must be successfully completed within the designated implementation period.

## **Award and Match Requirements**

Grant amounts will range from \$7,500 recommended minimum to \$50,000 maximum. Holding true to VCGP history, no match will be required.

This round will be supplemented by Vermont Recreational Trail Funds. This portion of the funding will be available only to trail planning projects, due to statutory funding constraints.

## **Reimbursement Requirements**

VCGP is a reimbursement program, and grantees must be capable of financing the project and (after a grant agreement is fully executed) first paying for expenditures and then submitting a request to the State for reimbursement using the required documentation.

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## **Application Process and Resources**

To apply for VCGP funding, there is a two-step application process that begins with a short pre-application submission. Pre-application submissions will be reviewed for compliance with the VCGP program. Selected applicants will then be invited to submit a proposal for full review.

### **How to Submit a Pre-Application**

Pre-application submissions will close at 11:59 PM on December 13, 2026. Email all of following required documents to [ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov) by the deadline to submit a pre-application:

- [VCGP Pre-Application Form](#)
- [VCGP Workplan](#)
- [VCGP Budget](#)

Pre-applications must include all of the required documents. Grants staff will screen submissions received before 5 pm on Wednesday, December 9, for completeness and notify applicants of any missing documentation that still needs to be submitted by 11:59 pm on Sunday, December 13, 2026.

For proposals submitted after 5 pm on December 9, applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully review their email submission to ensure all required materials are submitted by the deadline as incomplete proposals will not be considered for moving to the Full Application stage.

### **How to Submit a Full Application**

If invited to submit a full proposal, the full grant application will be offered through the ANROnline portal. To complete your full grant application, you will need to follow the steps below.

1. Download, review, and complete all other required templates and supplemental materials for your project.
2. Complete the 2027 VCGP Grant Application Form and submit it online.

### **Upcoming Webinars and Open Office Hours**

VOREC Community Grant Program Webinar: Project Planning | Thursday, October 8, 2026, 2:00-3:00PM – See [webinar recording](#) and [slides](#)

- The webinar will include a presentation explaining the goals of the grant program, an overview of the process, and eligible activities to help inform project planning. There will be time at the end of the session for questions from attendees related to project planning and design. The webinar will be recorded and posted on this webpage afterward.

VOREC Community Grant Program Webinar: Pre-Application Materials | Thursday, October 29, 2026, 10:00-11:00AM – [Register for this webinar](#)

- The webinar will provide technical and content guidance about how to complete the specific materials required for the pre-application phase, including the workplan and budget. There will be time at the end of the session for questions from attendees related to the templates and resources. The webinar will be recorded and posted on this webpage afterward.

### **Open Office Hours**

Staff at FPR will host virtual open office sessions for prospective applicants to learn more details about the grant program and ask questions. Open office hours will be recorded and posted on this webpage afterward.

- Tuesday, November 10, 2026, 2:00-3:00PM – [Register for this session.](#)
- Thursday, December 3, 11:00AM-12:00PM– [Register for this session.](#)

Our goal is to give everyone an equal opportunity to connect with us. We are unable to meet 1:1 with every prospective applicant during the pre-application phase. If the webinars and open office hours don't work for you, please email your questions to us at [ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov). We will only meet 1:1 with applicants if we are unable to fully address questions via email.

## **Application Resources**

## 2027 Pre-Application Resources

- [VCGP Pre-Application Guidance](#)
- [VCGP Pre-Application Form](#)
- [VCGP Workplan](#)
- [VCGP Budget](#)
- [2027 VCGP Grant Agreement Sample](#)

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### **VOREC Community Grant Program**

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**GRANT MANAGEMENT RESOURCES**

**GRANT PROGRAM IMPACTS AND PAST AWARDS**

## Contact Us

### Outdoor Recreation Grants Team

[ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov)

Or [subscribe to our mailing list](#) to stay up to date about outdoor recreation grant opportunities and resources.

**WHEN IN DOUBT, REACH OUT!**

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## Contact Information

**Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation**

**Commissioner Danielle Fitzko**

1 National Life Drive, Davis 2

Montpelier, VT 05620-3801

[Email](#) | [802-828-1534](tel:802-828-1534)

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# 2027 VOREC COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM PRE-APPLICATION



## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Use this form to submit part of your Pre-Application for the 2027 VOREC Community Grant Program (VCGP) managed by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. To submit a Pre-Application:

1. Complete the form below.
2. Email this form along with completed workplan and budget to [ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.FPRRecreationGrants@vermont.gov).

**All materials MUST be submitted by 11:59 pm on December 13, 2026 for consideration.** Incomplete proposals will not be considered after that date, so be sure to complete BOTH the form and email your additional documents before that time.

Learn more about this program at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>

## Apply Entity Information

1. Applying Entity Name
2. Applicant Entity Eligibility
  - ☐ Nonprofit
  - ☐ Municipality
  - ☐ Other Governmental Entity
3. Main Office Full Address

## Application Contact

4. First and Last Name
5. Email
6. Phone Number

*Enter the 10-digit phone number, plus any extensions if relevant. Ex: 802-XXX-XXXX, ext. XXX*

# 2027 VOREC COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM PRE-APPLICATION



## Project Overview

In this section, tell us about your project. See Pre-Application Guidance for additional information.

### 7. Project Title

Please choose a project title that concisely describes the project. Ex: "ABC Trail: Reroute and Maintenance" or "XYZ Trail Spur Construction"

### 8. Project Location

Please list the cities/towns where your project will occur. If your project is statewide, enter that.

### 9. Brief Project Description (100 words or less)

### 10. Project Activities (please select all that apply)

- ☐ Project Conceptual Planning (e.g. scoping, feasibility study, community engagement)
- ☐ Project Design (e.g. architectural design, engineering design, professional trail design/assessment, map design, signage design, wayfinding plan)
- ☐ Promotion (e.g. marketing, branding, web content development, advertising)
- ☐ Pre-Construction Assessments (e.g. permitting, wetland delineation, appraisals)
- ☐ Wayfinding/Kiosk/Signage Installation
- ☐ Outdoor Recreation Curriculum Design
- ☐ Other

### 11. Recreation Type (select all that apply)

- |                                               |                                                   |                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Courts/Fields | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing/Hunting/Shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Gardens             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playgrounds          | <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Sports            | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Facilities         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Facilities    | <input type="checkbox"/> Camping                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Support Facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trails               | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Interpretive     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming/Boating     | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits                 |                                                        |

**2027 VOREC Community Grant Program Workplan Template:**

The Workplan must describe the activities that will be undertaken to accomplish the project, the expected time frame for accomplishment in order of work, the projected results (measurable final products, projected improvements, etc.). Be sure to include all activities funded by your grant request. Put the steps in timeline order! *Refer to the Application Guidance documents for additional information.* **NOTE: Applicants should plan for grant-funded work to occur July 1, 2027-December 31, 2028.**

|                                            |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Project Name                               |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| Location - City(ies)/Town(s)               |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| Activity (Briefly describe work component) | Description (What tasks are included? In general terms, who will do the work?) | Anticipated Results (List of what you will accomplish/how you will define success) | Anticipated Start Date (Month/Year) | Anticipated End Date (Month/Year) |
| A.                                         |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| B.                                         |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| C.                                         |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| D.                                         |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| E.                                         |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
| F.                                         |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |
|                                            |                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                     |                                   |

Budget Form for 2027 VOREC COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM Applications

**See the Grant Application Guidance** for what is eligible and instructions to help you complete the Project Budget. Enter information in the yellow cells only. Only eligible project costs will be allowed.

| Expense Name                 | Description/Calculation Explanation | Requested Grant Amount |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Project/Grant Administration |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |
| Workplan Component A         | Activity Name From Workplan         |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |
| Workplan Component B         | Activity Name From Workplan         |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |
| Workplan Component C         | Activity Name From Workplan         |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |
| Workplan Component D         | Activity Name From Workplan         |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |
| Workplan Component E         | Activity Name From Workplan         |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |
| Workplan Component F         | Activity Name From Workplan         |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
|                              |                                     |                        |
| Sub-Total:                   |                                     | \$0.00                 |

A brief update on the UPWP project for the **Brookside Road Pathway Scoping Study**.

On Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, representatives from CCRPC and Hoyle, Tanner & Associates visited Brookside Road to take measurements and photographs to help inform the study.

A Local Concerns Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at the Westford School**. This meeting will provide an opportunity for residents and affected landowners to learn more about the project, ask questions, and share their comments. Additional information will be shared as the meeting date approaches.

September 29, 2026

**Act 250 Public Information Sessions**  
**Criterion 8(C) – Forest Blocks & Habitat Connectors**

Kirsten Tyler attended and took notes. Copied and pasted some slides. Notes in red throughout.

From the invitation:

The Vermont Land Use Review Board (LURB) will host four public information sessions across the state to introduce Vermonters to a new Act 250 review criterion that goes into effect on January 1, 2028. Criterion 8(C) only applies to projects that already require an Act 250 permit and does not affect when a permit is needed. This criterion is aimed at ensuring forest blocks and habitat connectors are considered in the Act 250 review process. The LURB's formal rulemaking process will begin in 2027, but the LURB would like to inform and hear from Vermonters ahead of time.

The LURB welcomes both in-person and remote participation. More information, including remote connection details, is available online at <https://act250.vermont.gov/modernizing-land-use-review/criterion-8c-forest-blocks-and-habitat-connectors>

**Act 250 101 first:**

**Act 250 Purpose:** Act 250 works to ensure that development contributes to the vibrancy of Vermont's communities and economy, but not at the expense of Vermont's landscape.

- Encourage appropriate development to promote public health, prosperity, efficiency, and general welfare.
- Protect the human and natural environment.
- Maintain Vermont's historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.
- Support land conservation as well as equitable access to infrastructure, including housing.
- Encourage citizen participation.

District commissioners responsible for giving permits in their region. Supported by staff in these offices. Coordinator does admin and decides when projects are appropriate for commissioners to decide on permit.

## Act 250 Permitting Team

### District Commissions

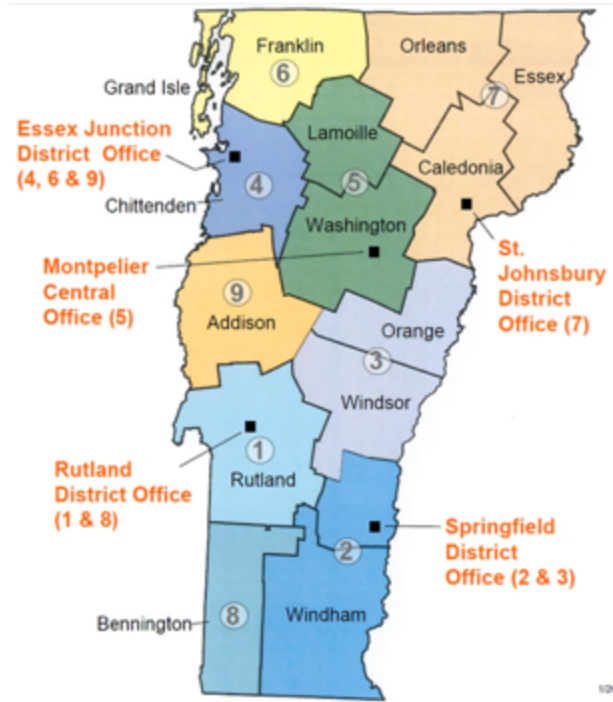
(appointed) review permit applications, issue Land Use Permits.

### District Coordinators

(staff) determine jurisdiction, support the District Commissions

### Offices based in:

- Montpelier
- Essex
- St. Johnsbury
- Rutland
- Springfield



When towns have zoning, they are 10-acre towns. Then act 250 only applies when commercial projects are on parcels 10 acres or more.

### Act 250 Permit Required for certain sizes and types of projects, including:

- Subdivisions of 6+ or 10+ lots (by Town and Act 250 District, 5 years)
- Certain housing projects (10+ units, 5 miles, 5 years)
- Commercial on 1+ or 10+ acres (by Town)
- Municipal, county or state purpose projects involving more than 10 acres

### More here: [Act 250 Jurisdiction Categories Handout](https://act250.vermont.gov/sites/act250/files/documents/Act%20250%20Jurisdiction%20Categories%20Handout.pdf)

(<https://act250.vermont.gov/sites/act250/files/documents/Act%20250%20Jurisdiction%20Categories%20Handout.pdf>)

If projects that are these or have exemptions ...see list... or in the new planning areas tier 1B and 1A

**Act 250 Permit Not Required** for certain sizes and types of projects, including:

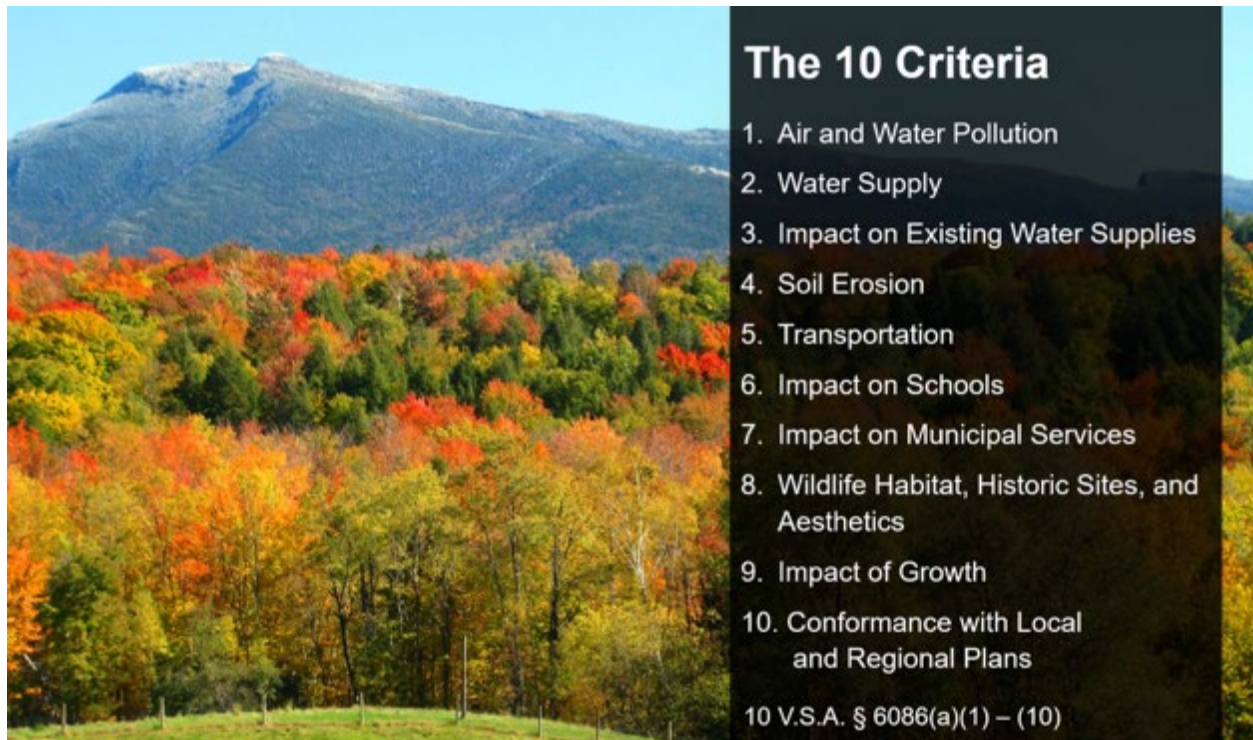
- Farming, Logging, or Forestry below 2,500 ft. elevation
- Certain housing projects
  - interim exemptions (see [Interim Housing Exemptions Guidance](#))
  - in Tier 1B areas: housing or mixed-use development with up to 50 units on up to 10 acres)
- Projects in Tier 1A areas
- Other (see 10 VSA §6081)

**More here:** [Act 250 Jurisdiction Categories Handout](#)

(<https://act250.vermont.gov/sites/acttwofifty/files/documents/Act%20250%20Jurisdiction%20Categories%20Handout.pdf>)

Coordinators can discuss specific projects, specific properties. They are a great resource to advise folks on when act 250 may or may not apply, and guiding people through the process.

When act 250 is needed, criteria:



Note: 10 is related to prime ag soils

Act 250 is a statewide permitting process but doesn't apply to all development. Certain number of lots, development units, or certain size parcel. Most review at municipal level – only these bigger projects that require act 250 review.

The NEW CRITERION FOR 2028:

The project can have no adverse impacts on forest blocks / habitat connectors. You have to mitigate that to get your permit. Question though – who decides if adverse impacts are enough to require 250 review? All the commissioners? Just one?

Effective January 2028

The changes to the act 250 program were contentious. Portions were repealed by the legislature. This one was not repealed but instead extended.

**\*\*\*\*\*This criterion doesn't add more projects / properties into act 250 review.\*\*\*\*\***

The other criteria that were repealed were bringing more projects into the act 250 review. This criterion only is added to the existing criteria and does not change whether or not a project is required to have act 250 review.

### Criterion 8 – 10 V.S.A. § 6086 (a)(8)

**Criterion 8:** Ecosystem protection; scenic beauty; historic sites

- 8(A) Scenic beauty, historic sites, rare and irreplaceable natural areas
- 8(B) Necessary wildlife habitat and endangered species
- 8(C) **Forest blocks and habitat connectors**



Projects located within or partially within a forest block or habitat connector will not result in an undue adverse impact.

If a project would result in an undue adverse impact to forest blocks or habitat connectors, effects must be avoided, minimized, or mitigated in accordance with rules adopted by the Land Use Review Board.

## Criterion 8(C) – Key Components

**Step One:** Does the development have an undue adverse impact?

**Step Two:** If yes, then design the project to do the following:

**Avoid:** First option; easiest if possible

**Minimize:** Second option; design standards

**Mitigate:** Third option; only if avoidance/minimization not possible

The rule will have design standards. There needs to be a mitigation of adverse effects for the project to move forward.

## Criterion 8(C) – Refinements via Rulemaking

**Forest Block & Habitat Connectors:** broadly defined in statute, 10 V.S.A. § 6001 (47,48)

Rules must further define, Act 181 (2024), §14

- Size
- Location
- Function

Note:

Recreational trails and improvements constructed for farming, logging, or forestry purposes **are allowed** within forest blocks and habitat connectors

**Fragmentation:** broadly defined, Act 181 (2024), §14

Rules must further define fragmentation

- For purposes of avoiding, minimizing, mitigating impacts

Definitions for habitat connectors and forest blocks ...also fragmentation is defined bc the whole point is to reduce fragmentation.

The note about farming, logging, and recreation: these things are exempt from act 250 and would not be subject to these things bc they are considered part of a forest block inherently.

In meetings from working groups last year, this is what they talked about and decided would be important for the new criterion rulemaking.

## Criterion 8(C) – Rulemaking Considerations

Working Group of stakeholders noted the following goals of the 8(c) rulemaking

|                          |                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Simplicity:</b>       | identification of forest blocks; ways to avoid and minimize                          |
| <b>Ground Condition:</b> | ensure any mapping may be adjusted for on-the-ground conditions                      |
| <b>Flexibility:</b>      | design standards that allow multiple ways to minimize impacts                        |
| <b>Illustrations:</b>    | include visuals to inform written standards                                          |
| <b>Equity:</b>           | minimize need for paid consultants with straightforward standards and design options |

**We would like to hear your thoughts!**

The pause happened when portions of new act 250 rules were repealed.

## Criterion 8(C) – Timeline for development of 8(C) rule

|                        |                                                                    |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fall 2025:</b>      | initial discussions with a 25-member working group of stakeholders |
| <b>Early 2026:</b>     | research & discussions with ANR partners                           |
| <b>Spring 2026:</b>    | pause, pending legislative action                                  |
| <b>Summer 2026:</b>    | LURB staff discussions                                             |
| <b>Fall 2026:</b>      | public information sessions                                        |
| <b>Late Fall 2026:</b> | prepare draft rule                                                 |

## Criterion 8(C) – Timeline for rulemaking

|                         |                                                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January 2027:</b>    | release of draft rule; public input sessions                       |
| <b>March 2027:</b>      | release of proposed rule                                           |
| <b>May 2027:</b>        | public hearings on proposed rule                                   |
| <b>June 2027:</b>       | finalize rule                                                      |
| <b>August 2027:</b>     | review by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) |
| <b>January 1, 2028:</b> | Criterion 8(C) effective                                           |

Now we learn why forest blocks and habitat connectors are important:



We are 80% private land in Vermont so landowners are key to conservation planning and success.

# VERMONT CONSERVATION DESIGN

*A scientific vision for sustaining Vermont's  
ecologically functional landscape  
for the future.*

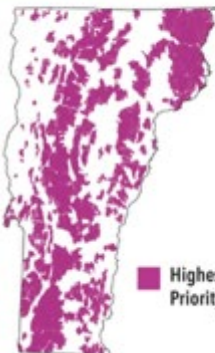
- Identifies the most important places for species & habitats
- Not prescriptive – many strategies maintain nature
- Depends on thoughtful stewardship and management
- Landowners are key to success



■ Highest Priority  
Landscape Blocks  
■ Highest Priority  
Surface Waters &  
Riparian Areas  
■ Highest Priority  
Natural Community  
& Habitat Features



## INTERIOR FOREST



The largest forest blocks in each biophysical region. These are areas of contiguous forest and other natural communities and habitats (such as wetlands, ponds, and cliffs) that are unfragmented by roads, development, or agriculture.



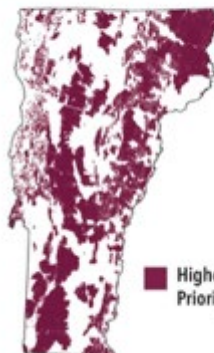
## CONNECTING FOREST



The network of forest blocks that together provide terrestrial connectivity at the regional scale (across Vermont and to adjacent states and Québec) and connectivity with surface waters and areas of geological diversity.



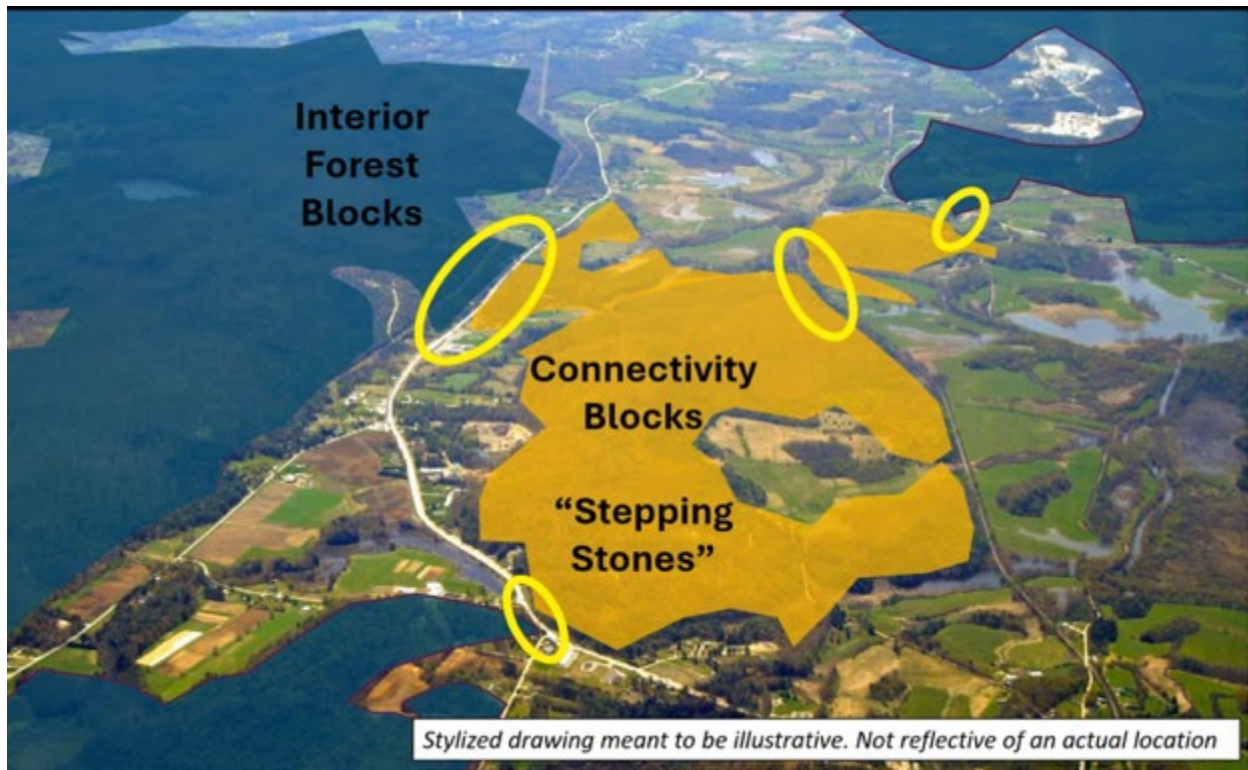
## GEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



A set of forest blocks that reflect the full diversity of Vermont's bedrock, soils, elevations, and landforms (features such as slopes, ridges, flats, and coves). Diversity in the physical landscape is linked to biological diversity, and places that contribute to physical diversity will be important for biological diversity even as the climate changes.



Small blocks can be connected by stepping stones....really critical for species movement.



We in VT are at the crossroads of ADKs and south to really remote places in Canada and Maine  
 VT is important for larger regional connectivity of the northeast region.



This work can help guide criteria and landowners and projects.

## Questions & Comments

Alex Weinhagen, Board Member, Land Use Review Board, 802-480-1885

Kirsten Sultan, Board Member, Land Use Review Board, 802-261-1946

**Send email to:** [act250.rulemaking@vermont.gov](mailto:act250.rulemaking@vermont.gov)  
(put Criterion 8C in the subject line)

## More Information

**Act 250 website -** <https://act250.vermont.gov/>

Criterion 8(C) webpage link on home page

## Harmony Cism

---

**From:** Harmony Cism  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2026 9:36 AM  
**To:** PlanningCommission  
**Subject:** FW: Reminder: ANR Municipal Day 2026 — “Maps, Maps, Maps!” (Fri Oct 30, Montpelier)

Good morning Commissioners!

I just wanted to pass along this invitation to ANR’s Municipal Day on October 30. I’ve attended in several past years, and there are always a number of interesting and informative workshops to choose from. This year’s theme is maps!

I plan to attend this year as well, although I’ll likely have to leave before the final workshop since I’m traveling to Saranac Lake that evening.

Anyway, I thought some of you might be interested. The Planning Commission has a line item in the budget for education, so you can be reimbursed for the registration fee. Just send me your registration confirmation, and I’ll have MJ issue the reimbursement.

Hope to see some of you there!

Sincerely,

*Harmony Cism*

**Administrative Officer & Planning Coordinator**

Town of Westford

(802) 878-4587

*This email message, along with any response or reply, is considered a public record, and thus, subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Law (1 V.S.A. §§ 315-320).*

---

**From:** Vermont Planners Association <VPA@list.uvm.edu> **On Behalf Of** Mojo, Jennifer  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 6, 2026 3:35 PM  
**To:** VPA@LIST.UVM.EDU  
**Subject:** [VPA] Reminder: ANR Municipal Day 2026 — “Maps, Maps, Maps!” (Fri Oct 30, Montpelier)

Please share with your networks!

You’re invited to register for the **Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Municipal Day 2026 (Theme: Maps, Maps, Maps!)**: a practical, partner-rich event designed to help towns and cities use maps to plan better, communicate clearly, and make stronger decisions.

### Event details

- **When:** Friday, October 30, 2026, full-day program (7:45am – 3:45pm)
- **Where:** [National Life Campus, Montpelier, VT](#)
- **Cost:** \$40 per person; breakfast and lunch provided

- **REGISTER:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2026-state-local-government-municipal-day-tickets-1994712361369?aff=oddtcreator>
- **FULL AGENDA:** [2026 Agenda and Workshop Descriptions](#)

### Why attend

- Learn how and why maps matter for municipal planning, permitting, communications, and emergency management.
- Get hands-on with tools and workflows you can use right away (including a preview of the new ANR Atlas).
- Connect with peers and partner agencies (AAFM, ACCD, AOT, VEM, LURB, and others) to solve real-world municipal challenges.

### Plenary speaker

- [Paige Brochu](#), Director of the UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, will deliver the plenary address on the power of spatial analysis for local decision-making.

### What to expect

- Theme: “**Maps, Maps, Maps!**” — exploring why maps are important, what it means when something is mapped, how to interpret and use agency map products, and how to create clear, effective maps.
- Breakout sessions tailored to municipal audiences, with practical use cases and decision-support tools.
- Networking opportunities with municipal officials, regional planners, and conservation commission members.

We look forward to welcoming you to a fun and informative day of learning and collaboration. Please register via Eventbrite and feel free to share this invitation with colleagues.

Sincerely,

The ANR Municipal Day Planning Team  
 Grace Weckesser ([Grace.Weckesser@vermont.gov](mailto:Grace.Weckesser@vermont.gov))  
 Kelly Hughes ([Kelly.Hughes@vermont.gov](mailto:Kelly.Hughes@vermont.gov))  
 Jen Mojo ([Jennifer.Mojo@vermont.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Mojo@vermont.gov))

**Jen Mojo**, AICP (she/her) | Senior Planner  
 Office of Planning and Policy  
 Vermont Agency of Natural Resources  
 1 National Life Dr, Davis 2 | Montpelier, VT 05620-3901  
 802-923-6647 | [Jennifer.mojo@vermont.gov](mailto:Jennifer.mojo@vermont.gov)  
<https://anr.vermont.gov/content/office-planning>

# How Unaffordable is Housing in Vermont?



ART WOOLF  
OCT 04, 2026



4



2



Share

If there's one thing that Vermont's politicians, pundits, and journalists all agree on, it's that Vermont has a severe housing affordability crisis.

Is there anyone who disagrees with this? Well, me, at least to some extent.

In an inflationary time like we have experienced for the past five years, the price of just about everything has gone up. The U.S. consumer price index is up 24%, food is 26% more expensive than it was in 2021, and gasoline is one-third more expensive.

The price of a Vermont house, according to the [Federal Housing Finance Agency](#), is up 57% since 2021, rising more than twice as fast as prices overall and nearly twice as much as the 33% growth in housing prices nationally.

It's clear housing prices have escalated dramatically. But that's not the only factor affecting affordability. People have to buy houses, and they need income. Incomes for the average Vermont family have risen by 35% in the past five years—not as much as house prices, but they have gone up, making the rise in house prices more tolerable.

People don't pay \$360,000, [the median price of a residential house](#) sold in the state last year, by writing a check. They finance it with a mortgage. And mortgage rates have risen over the past five years, contributing to the affordability problem.

For nearly a decade before the pandemic, mortgage rates were at record low levels, generally below 4% for a conventional 30-year fixed rate mortgage. And in 2021, they dipped below 3%, an historic low. That was a great deal for homebuyers, especially millennials who were buying their first homes.

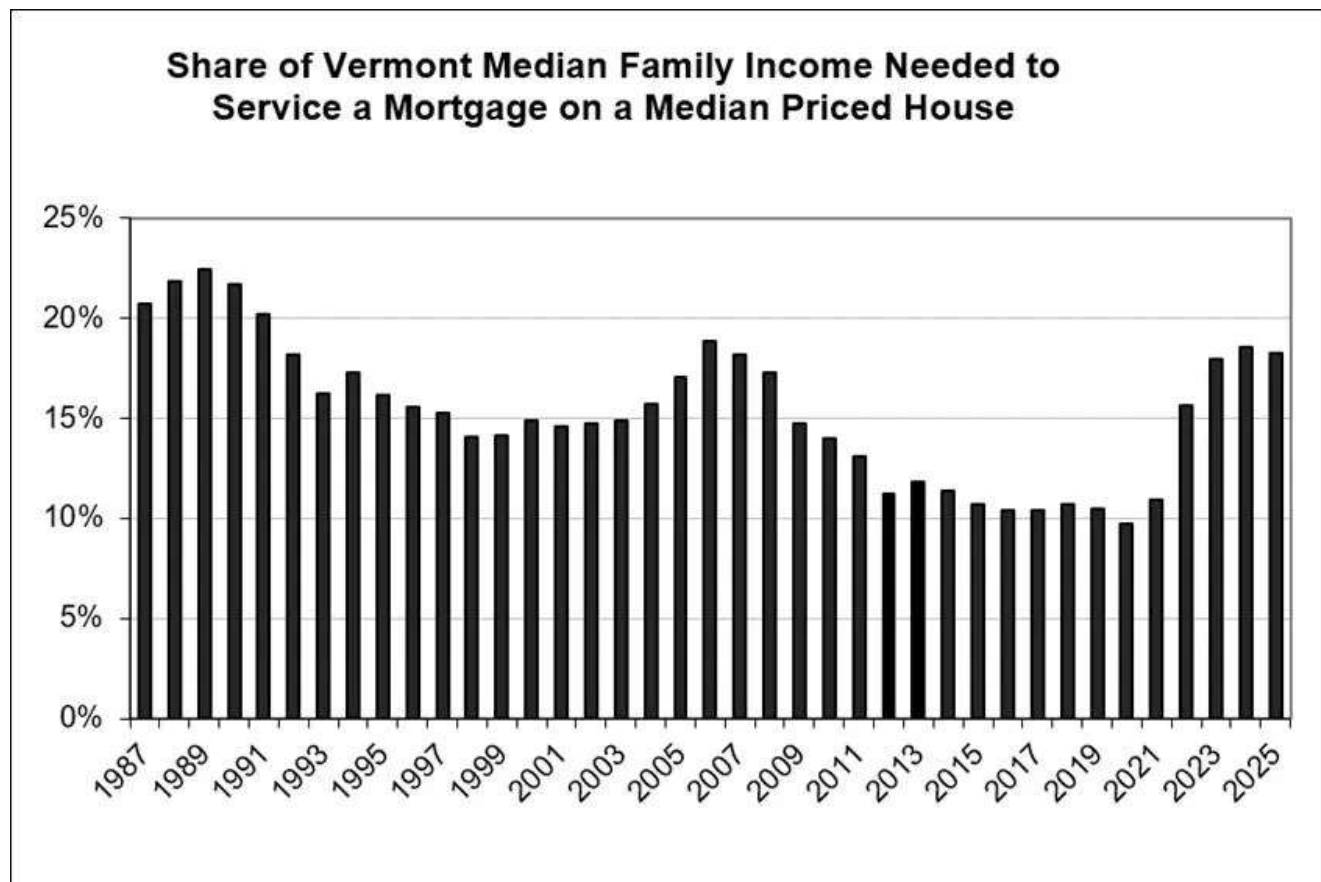
To get a true picture of affordability—or unaffordability—we need to consider all three of these elements: house prices, incomes, and mortgage rates.

I create a hypothetical Vermont family to look at how affordability today compares with past years. Incomes come from Vermont Tax Department data on every Vermont family who filed as married couples filing jointly. I assume that family buys the median priced Vermont house each year and finances it with a 30-year fixed rate mortgage and a 20% down payment.

My measure of affordability is how that family's share of monthly income needed to pay that mortgage has changed over time and is shown in the graph below.

Over the past four years, housing has been much less affordable than at any time between 2009 and 2021. But during the decade of the 2010s, housing was extremely affordable by historical standards.

But, as the graph also shows, housing is just as affordable—or unaffordable—as it was during the housing boom just before the financial crisis of 2008. Two decades ago, Vermont had a housing problem similar to today's and people were complaining about Vermont's housing affordability problem.



Comparing affordability back farther in time, housing is more affordable today than it was in the late 1980s. At that time Vermont was experiencing another housing boom and people complained about our unaffordable housing market.

If we go back even earlier, housing was even less affordable in the late 1970s and early 1980s than it was in the late 1980s or today. At that time, when the baby boomers were buying their first houses, they faced mortgage rates of as much as 17%.

But, you might ask, who can find \$70,000 for a 20% down payment on an average-priced house today that costs \$360,000? That's almost 60% of a typical Vermont family's income. Ten years ago, a typical Vermont family "only" needed 47% of its income for a down payment. In the late 1980s housing boom, potential homebuyers also needed 60% of their income for a 20% down payment so the problem of a high down payment is nothing new.

Yet somehow, Vermont families found ways and continue to find ways to finance the purchase of a house and become homeowners. Financial institutions have come up with a variety of financial instruments to deal with this problem, for example lower down payments and adjustable rate mortgages.

Despite this seeming unaffordability, today 74% of Vermont households own their own homes. That's near a record high and a much higher share of homeownership households than in the 1980s and 1990s.

Are housing prices in Vermont high? Yes. Is there a housing crisis? No. But housing is a problem that can be solved through thoughtful policies.

The solution is to increase the supply of houses. The state does not have enough resources to finance the construction of enough houses to solve the problem. Thoughtful regulatory reform at the state and local levels can help make it less time-consuming and less expensive to develop land and build new houses.

And the more new housing units that are built—at any price—the less upward pressure there will be on prices. Fast-growing Austin, Texas, is a good example of how building more houses lowers housing prices.

Will affordability improve in the future? Look at the three elements of affordability: Vermont families will continue to see their incomes rise, as they have in the past. Housing prices will likely rise, but if we allow builders and developers to build, price rises should moderate, or even fall.

What about mortgage rates? Never ask an economist to forecast interest rates, but my best guess is that mortgage rates will not return to their historically low levels of the 2010s. We are likely to see upward pressure on all interest rates, including mortgage rates, nationally because of our high and rising national debt.

There is little we can do in Vermont about the level of mortgage interest rates, other than elect people who see the high federal deficits and rising level of the national debt as a problem that needs to be dealt with.

Pro-growth state and local economic development policies translate into higher income levels for Vermont families.

Increasing the supply of housing mitigates against rising housing prices.

How much each of these changes in the future will determine if housing becomes more or less affordable in the future.

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By Art Woolf · Launched 2 years ago

I post mostly on Vermont economic issues, but also on other things about Vermont that interest me, Art Woolf, not Davis Dewey. For more about Davis Dewey go to the About tab.

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4 Likes

## Discussion about this post

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## Harmony Cism

---

**From:** Chris Shaheen <CShaheen@jerichovt.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 16, 2026 10:12 AM  
**To:** Tavid Bingham; dsedson225@gmail.com; Larry Lewack; PlanningCommission; Harmony Cism; Community-development@essex.org; Kent Johnson; Matthew Boulanger; Vclarke.pc@gmail.com; Keith Osborne; zoningbolton@gmavt.net  
**Subject:** Town of Jericho - Notice of Proposed Bylaw Amendments

Pursuant to 24 VSA §4441, the Town of Jericho is providing notice to the Chair of the Planning Commission of abutting municipalities of the first hearing on proposed bylaw amendments. The primary purposes of the proposed amendments are to make it easier to build homes, support housing affordability, allow a greater variety of housing types, and direct growth to areas planned for development while maintaining protections of rural areas.

The formal hearing notice, proposed bylaw amendments, and Planning Commission report are available on the Jericho Planning Commission's website [here](#). Contact Chris Shaheen, Town Planner, at (802) 899-2287 x 103 or [cshaheen@jerichovt.gov](mailto:cshaheen@jerichovt.gov) with any questions.

### Chris Shaheen

Town Planner  
Town of Jericho  
PO Box 39  
Jericho, VT 05465  
(802) 899-2287 x 103