

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Bylaw Amendments

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4441(c) which states:

“When considering an amendment to a bylaw, the planning commission shall prepare and approve a written report on the proposal. A single report may be prepared so as to satisfy the requirements of this subsection concerning bylaw amendments and subsection 4384(c) of this title concerning plan amendments..... The report shall provide(:)

(A) brief explanation of the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal and shall include a statement of purpose as required for notice under §4444 of this title,

The purpose of the amendments to the Westford Land Use & Development Regulations is to revise the regulations based on feedback from the Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Administrative Officer, and members of the public; to ensure compliance with current Vermont legislation; and to correct and clarify certain spelling, grammatical, punctuation, and reference errors that have been identified in the regulations. The following findings address the proposed amendments collectively, recognizing that individual amendments address different provisions and purposes within the Westford Land Use & Development Regulations.

(A)nd shall include findings regarding how the proposal:

- 1. Conforms with or furthers the goals and policies contained in the municipal plan, including the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing:*

The proposed amendments conform with and further the goals and policies of the 2021 Westford Town Plan. The Town Plan identifies the Westford Land Use & Development Regulations as a primary means of implementing the Plan and calls for the Regulations to be updated and amended as needed to further the Plan's goals and policies.

The proposed amendments are particularly consistent with the Town Plan's housing goals and policies. The Plan calls for the Town to encourage a diverse housing stock that is affordable and accessible to a wide range of current and future residents and specifically identifies diverse housing options, including accessible, senior, affordable, and entry-level housing, as a Town goal. The Plan also calls for the Town to work to ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Westford residents.

Several of the proposed amendments support these objectives by reducing regulatory barriers and providing greater flexibility for residential development, including amendments addressing accessory dwelling units, parking requirements, the R5 scoring system, and subdivision procedures. The proposed amendments also incorporate current State housing requirements. Collectively, these changes support the availability and diversity of housing opportunities in Westford, including opportunities for smaller, accessory, entry-level, and other housing types.

The proposed amendments also further the Town Plan's goals of managing growth while maintaining Westford's rural character and protecting working lands, open space, and natural resources.

Amendments that clarify existing provisions, correct errors, incorporate State requirements, or improve administrative procedures will help ensure that the Westford Land Use & Development Regulations remain clear, current, and effective tools for implementing the Town Plan.

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

The proposed amendments are compatible with the future land uses and densities identified in the 2021 Westford Town Plan. The amendments do not establish new future land-use categories or alter the land-use framework established by the Town Plan. Rather, they revise and clarify the regulatory standards and procedures used to implement that framework.

The amendments support appropriate residential growth while maintaining the Town Plan's distinction between the higher-density, mixed-use Town Center Area and the lower-density rural areas. They are therefore compatible with the Town Plan's goals of directing appropriate growth to areas suitable for development while maintaining Westford's rural character and protecting working lands, open space, and natural resources.

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

The proposed amendments do not carry out or otherwise affect any specific proposals for planned community facilities identified in the municipal plan.