

The Purpose of Enhanced Consultation

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission's contract with the Department of Economic, Housing, and Community Development (Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development), and Vermont Statutes require the Commission to carry out consultation meetings with all of the towns in the region. The goals are to develop a more consistent and meaningful relationship between the RPC and the Municipality, and to improve the effectiveness of municipal and regional plans, and planning programs by achieving the goals of Title 24, §4302.

Outcome of Consultation

Through this consultation process we hope to better understand the needs of our communities and to have our communities understand how we can work together to advance better planning. Consultations will involve the discussion of important local and regional issues, local planning and training needs, new statutory requirements, planning programs and opportunities available through the TRORC, and importantly, consideration of how effectively the municipal plan addresses Vermont's statutory planning goals.

This consideration will include a qualitative review of the municipal plan, with suggestions as to how the plan might be improved to more effectively satisfy the statutory goals referenced above. Specific findings are reported on each of the following questions:

1. Which parts of the plan are particularly effective in implementing the statewide goals?
2. In which areas do we believe the plan falls short in advancing those statewide goals?
3. What specific opportunities exist to improve the town plan so that it more effectively addresses the statewide goals?

This consultation and plan review is separate and distinct from the formal municipal plan approval process carried out pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4350, but it does contribute to the municipal confirmation action specified under that section of the Planning and Development Act.

Enhanced Consultation Agenda Items for Wednesday, April 8th, 2012

- Important local & Regional issues
- Local planning and training needs
- New statutory requirements
- Planning programs and opportunities
- TRORC services
- Qualitative review of Municipal Plan

Vershire Town Plan Review

The Vershire Town Plan was adopted on December 20th, 2011. The Plan was approved by the Regional Planning Commission.

Required Elements

1. **Statement of Objectives, Policies, and Programs:** The Plan contains goals, policies and recommendations for action. Policies are fairly general in nature.
2. **Land Use Plan:** The Plan identifies land use areas, discusses types of use in general terms. Density is addressed in the Village Area but not in other land use areas.
3. **Transportation Plan:** The present-day road system is discussed. Access management is addressed. Uses that require intensive use of roadways are encouraged to locate on existing roads.
4. **Utility and Facility Plan:** The Utilities and Facilities plan contains limited information regarding future needs of facilities, potential costs of maintenance or upgrades and potential financing methods as is required by statute.
5. **Natural Areas, Scenic and Historic Features:** The Plan discusses natural areas, but limited detail as to how they will be protected. Historic and scenic resources are identified and development that would negatively impact them is discouraged.
6. **Educational Facilities Plan:** Education is adequately addressed.
7. **Implementation Plan:** The Plan contains an inventory of potential implementation methods, but no specific recommendations regarding *how* to implement the Plan.
8. **Relationship to adjacent towns and the region:** The Plan does evaluate compatibility with neighboring plans, specifically pointing out a potential conflict in land use policy with the town of Strafford.
9. **Energy Plan:** The Plan adequately addresses energy. It should include more detail with regard to energy needs of the community, scarcities or costs of energy.
10. **Housing Element:** The Housing element addresses housing affordability in a limited fashion.
11. **Economic Development Plan (new):** The Plan contains an economic development element. The scale and location of commercial development is not clearly discussed in all land use areas.

Statewide Planning Goals

1. **Land Use:** The pattern of land use proposed in Vershire appears to be consistent with state planning goals, although greater specificity with regard to intensity and density of development is needed.
2. **Economic Development:** The Plan encourages a pattern of economic development that is consistent with State Planning Goals.
3. **Education:** Adult education and vocational education are addressed.
4. **Transportation:** The Plan discusses transportation but does not address multi-modal transportation.

5. **Natural, Scenic, and Historic Resources:** The Plan identifies some natural areas, and includes a natural resources map. However, the Plan does not identify rare or endangered species.
6. **Air, Water, Wildlife, and Land Resources:** The Plan contains limited policy which indicates how it would effectively preserve or protect any of these resources.
7. **Energy:** The plan adequately addresses renewable energy and energy conservation.
8. **Recreation:** The proposed pattern of development will continue to protect and preserve recreational opportunities.
9. **Agriculture and Forestry:** Agriculture and Forestry are not discussed in sufficient detail.
10. **Efficient use of natural resources/extraction and restoration of earth resources:** Mineral resources are minimally addressed.
11. **Safe and affordable housing:** While the Housing element does discuss affordable housing, there is no mention of where multi-family housing would be appropriate. Accessory dwelling units are addressed.
12. **Community Facilities and Services:** The Plan seeks to maintain a pattern of growth that does not exceed the community's ability to provide services.
13. **Child Care:** Child care is minimally addressed.

Regional Plan

There does not appear to be any conflicts with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan

Summary

Strengths

- Uses that require intensive use of roadways are encouraged to locate on existing roads.
- The Plan effectively evaluates compatibility with neighboring plans, specifically pointing out a potential conflict in land use policy with the town of Strafford.
- Historic and scenic resources are identified and development that would negatively impact them is discouraged.
- The pattern of land use proposed in Vershire appears to be consistent with state planning goals.

Weaknesses

- Density and intensity of use is addressed in the Village Area but not in other land use areas.
- The scale and location of commercial development is not clearly discussed in all land use areas.
- The Plan does not identify rare or endangered species or discuss how to protect these resources.
- The Plan contains limited information regarding future needs of facilities, potential costs of maintenance or upgrades and potential financing methods as is required by statute.

Opportunities

- Work with the Regional Planning Commission to add additional detail to the Town Plan during the next revision.
- Collect information regarding community facilities from the Selectboard to provide further detail to Utilities/Facilities chapter.
- Utilize TRORC energy chapter template to expand the energy chapter.
- Add additional information regarding the protection of natural resources.