

**RE: TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE, VERMONT  
PLAN REVIEW  
CASE # 25-3**

**BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A., Section 4350, the Town of Stockbridge, Vermont requested TRORC to review and approve the Stockbridge Town Plan adopted on 01/02/2025. The Plan encompasses all land in the Town of Stockbridge and is referred to hereinafter as the Plan.

Section 4350 provides that prior to approving a Plan, the Regional Commission find that the Plan meets four tests. These tests are that the Plan is:

- A. Consistent (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(1)) with the planning goals in Section 4302 of Chapter 117;
- B. Compatible (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(2)) with the Regional Plan;
- C. Compatible (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(2)) with the approved plans of other municipalities within the Region; and
- D. Inclusive of all elements required of a plan as set forth in 24 V.S.A., Section 4382.

Staff have reviewed this Plan and offer the following information and staff recommendations to the Board. TRORC has scheduled and will hold a Public Hearing on this review on March 26th, 2025, in Bethel, VT. Based upon the hearing and the Board's action, this review will be finalized as a decision for approval or disapproval.

**This review is based upon the Town Plan as adopted.**

**FINDINGS**

**A. Is the Plan consistent with the planning goals?**

*NOTE: "Consistent with the goals" requires substantial progress toward attainment of the goals, unless the planning body determines that a particular goal is not relevant or attainable. If such a determination is made, the planning body shall identify the goal in the plan and describe the situation, explain why the goal is not relevant or attainable, and indicate what measures should be taken to mitigate any adverse effects of not making substantial progress toward that goal. The municipal determination of relevancy of a goal is itself subject to regional review.*

**General Goals**

**1. Is a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework established to guide decisions?**

Yes, the Stockbridge Planning Commission utilized the assistance of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission to conduct a planning process that included a public survey and a series of forums to address key areas of concern in the Plan. The result is a comprehensive planning document that is divided into fifteen discrete chapters, covering the range of topics required by statute as well as other subject matter areas that enhance the overall Plan. The Plan meets the requirements set forth in 24 VSA § 4382.

**2. Is citizen participation encouraged at all levels of the planning process?**

Yes. In addition to regularly warned public meetings (including the statutory public hearings prior to adoption) of the Stockbridge Planning Commission, this Plan's public process included a survey of residents and several public forums.

**3. Is consideration being given to the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development to the municipality, region, and state?**

Yes. The Plan outlines Stockbridge's vision for the future, which includes an analysis of resources ranging from natural, historic, and energy resources, to municipal resources. The Plan recognizes the consequences of future growth in Stockbridge and its potential impact on resources and provides policy to effectively protect and sustain these resources into the future.

**4. Is the municipality working creatively together with other municipalities to develop and implement plans?**

Yes. The Plan sets a goal to "work with neighboring towns and the region to encourage sustainable land use and environmental policy that benefits the citizens of Stockbridge" (103). As such, the Town has set policies that encourage continued communication, cooperation, and the exchange of planning information and development data with its neighboring communities.

### **Specific Goals**

A plan for a municipality shall be found to be consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302, and consistent with the regional plan for regional approval.

**1. Is development planned to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside?**

**a. Is intensive residential development being encouraged primarily in areas that are identified as community centers, and is strip development along highways being discouraged?**

Yes. Residential development is encouraged at higher densities within Stockbridge's Hamlet and Village Areas (17-20). The Plan sets a goal to have a "density and distribution of housing throughout the town that allows for continued maintenance of the working landscape (51)," which furthers the pattern of development indicated in §4302.

This version of the Stockbridge Town Plan establishes a policy to cluster commercial development in Hamlet and Village Areas, Stockbridge School Hamlet, and Mixed-Use Light Industrial Areas, and discourage sprawl altogether. The Plan specifically indicates that "it is the policy of this Plan to prohibit the pattern of development most associated with sprawl, which is to allow primary commercial development in a strip along main roads (18)."

**b. Is economic growth being encouraged in locally-designated and any state-designated growth areas, and/or employed to revitalize existing urban or village centers?**

Yes. Stockbridge does not have a formal central village. Instead, there are a number of smaller hamlet-sized developments in town, Gaysville and Stockbridge Common, both of which offer limited opportunity for growth. Recognizing the need to focus economic development in compact centers, this Plan creates two new mixed-use land use areas that are intended to guide economic growth into more central locations in the community: the Stockbridge School Hamlet and Mixed-Use Light Industrial Areas (19-20). The primary purpose of creating these new land use areas is to discourage strip development or sprawl while allowing for orderly economic growth.

**c. Do plans for public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area?**

Yes. The Town establishes a policy to “provide residents with safe, effective, responsive and affordable municipal infrastructure, facilities and services,” (39). The patterns of development proposed in this Plan are clearly intended to reinforce the rural character of the community, while discouraging expansion that outpaces Stockbridge’s ability to provide services. The Plan further establishes a policy to “maintain the existing road system, while discouraging the expansion or addition of new roads.” (77)

**d. Does the plan support development being undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 2791(13))?**

Yes, development policies throughout the Plan are in accordance with the State’s definition of smart growth principles as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 2791(13). The Plan calls for maintaining the historic development pattern of compact village and hamlet centers, while encouraging new development in the Stockbridge School Hamlet and Mixed-Use Light Industrial Areas. The plan calls for rural areas defined by low density and agricultural, silvicultural, residential, or recreational land uses to be preserved in between these more compact areas. The Plan sets an overall goal to “to protect the rural character of Stockbridge as defined by our Town Plan while providing for economic growth aligned with rural Vermont (7).”

**2. Does the Plan support providing for a strong and diverse economy with satisfying and rewarding job opportunities that maintain high environmental standards; and expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes?**

Yes. Many policies in the Stockbridge Town Plan focus on improving economic development within the community while ensuring that such development is balanced with the protection of rural character. The Plan sets a goal to “to attract diverse and sustainable businesses in Stockbridge which contribute to the small-town quality of life (31).” Likewise, the Plan established a policy to “support the development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services (31).” The

creation of the Mixed Use Light Industrial Area “is intended to provide an appropriate location for mixed use development with a focus on job-producing light industrial establishments (20).”

**3. Does the Plan support broadened access to education and vocational training opportunities sufficient to realize the full potential of residents?**

Yes. The Town has set a goal to “provide the opportunities and environment that will enable our students to investigate, master and apply the knowledge, skills, values and behaviors necessary for lifelong learning and meaningful participation in a global society.” (83). The Plan addresses the needs of adult and vocational education opportunities in the narrative of the Education chapter (82-83).

**4. Does the Plan support the provision of a safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.**

**a. Does the Plan provide that highways, air, rail, and other means of transportation be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated?**

Yes. The Plan specifically sets a goal “to provide and maintain a safe, energy efficient and well-maintained transportation network, in a cost-effective manner, integrating all modes of travel (auto, pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit) (77).”

**5. Does the Plan identify and support the protection and preservation of important natural and historic features of the community’s landscape, including: significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways, and views; and important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas?**

Yes. The Plan’s Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources chapter covers the following resource areas: water resources, wetlands, flood plains, flora, fauna, natural communities, habitats, and mineral resources (52-63). The “Significant Natural and Historic Areas” section includes a discussion on historic properties and structures of significance throughout the Town (52-63).

**6. Does the Plan seek to maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources?**

**a. Are air, water, wildlife, mineral and land resources being planned for development and use under the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A section 6086(a) (Act 250))?**

Yes. While the Plan does not specifically address efforts to curb adverse impacts to air quality from proposed land development activities, the goals and policies stated within the “Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources” chapter do directly address development impacts to water, wildlife, mineral, and land resources throughout the Town (52-63). If

all of these impacts are mitigated, the net effect ought to yield cleaner air in addition to conserving other natural resources. Preserving the quality of the Town's water resources, wetlands, flood plains, flora, fauna, natural communities and habitats from pollution and degradation is a goal of the Plan.

**b. Is the maintenance and improvement of water quality supported in accordance with the policies and actions set forth in the basin plans?**

Yes. The Plan sets a goal to “maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of non-polluted surface and sub-surface water resources (53).” This goal is in accordance with the White River Tactical Basin Plan.

**c. Are forestlands proposed to be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors?**

Yes. The Plan supports the management and preservation of forest blocks and habitat connectivity blocks. The Plan establishes a policy that “long term protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors is encouraged in the Upland Conservation Area (24).” The stated purpose of this district is to “protect and preserve areas which are ecologically important or fragile” and to “enhance and maintain Stockbridge’s highest priority interior forest blocks and habitat connectivity blocks (23).”

**7. Does the Plan support the development of renewable energy resources, efficient use of energy, and reduced emissions of greenhouse gases?**

**a. Does the plan list any general strategies for achieving these goals, such as: increasing energy efficiency of new and existing buildings; identifying areas suitable for renewable energy generation; encouraging the use and development of renewable or lower emission energy sources for electricity, heat, and transportation; and reducing transportation energy demand and single occupancy vehicle use?**

Yes. The Plan sets several goals to reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficient construction or reconstruction, site renewable energy facilities, and reduce transportation energy. Specifically, the Plan sets a goal to “ensure the long-term availability of safe, reliable and affordable energy supplies, to increase energy efficiency, and to promote the development of renewable energy resources and facilities in the Town of Stockbridge (99).”

Additionally, the Plan seeks to “promote the construction of energy efficient residential and commercial buildings and increase awareness and use of energy conservation practices through educational outreach to the public (99).”

The Plan also establishes a policy to “to support the development and use of renewable energy resources – including but not limited to wind, solar, biomass, micro hydro and cogeneration – at a scale that is sustainable, that enhances energy system capacity and security, that promotes cleaner, more affordable energy technologies, that increases the energy options available locally, and that avoids undue adverse impacts of energy development on the local community and environment. (100).”

And the Plan also sets a goal to “to increase public transportation opportunities throughout the community, including park-and-ride access, bus service, biking paths, and sidewalks (99).”

**b. Does the plan list any specific strategies and recommendations for achieving these goals, such as those identified in the State energy plan?**

The Plan includes several recommendations for achieving these goals, including appointing a volunteer energy coordinator or energy committee, increasing public awareness of energy consumption and conservation, and evaluating municipal buildings for their energy use, and considering developing community-based renewable energy generation (101).

**8. Does the Plan seek to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors?**

**a. Is growth being planned so as not to significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities?**

Yes. It is Town goal to “maintain, enhance and expand recreational opportunities in Stockbridge” by encouraging “patterns of land use that maintain and enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation (34).” The overall pattern of development proposed in this Plan is consistent with the state goal of compact villages and urban centers surrounded by open countryside, a pattern that is specifically designed to maintain Stockbridge’s rural recreational opportunities.

**b. Has public access to non-commercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, been identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate?**

Yes. The Plan sets a goal to “enhance and maintain Stockbridge’s outdoor environment for both active and passive recreational uses including hiking, fishing, boating, camping, hunting, music and the arts (52).”

**9. Does the Plan encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries?**

**a. Does the Plan encourage strategies to protect long-term viability of agriculture and forestlands, including maintaining low overall density?**

Yes. The Plan sets a goal to “encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the town’s agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features (70).” Furthermore, the Plan establishes a policy that “where high value agricultural and forested land are identified, clustered or peripheral development is especially encouraged to protect such resources and prevent fragmentation and sprawling settlement patterns (71).”

**b. Has the manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products been encouraged?**

Yes. The Plan establishes a policy to “support the development of value-added farm and forestry products (68).”

**c. Is the use of locally-grown food products encouraged?**

Yes. The Town has demonstrated support for locally-grown food products through its support of value-added industry as well as its effort to keep high value agricultural or silvicultural lands open. The Plan also documents that 80% of respondents to the Town Planning Survey answered that they strongly agree or agree with the statement that they “value locally sourced, community supported food available for everyone (71).”

**d. Are sound forest and agricultural management practices encouraged?**

Yes. The Plan establishes a policy that “farmers, loggers, and foresters should use Accepted Management Practices (AMP) and are encouraged to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) in their operations and to minimize point and non-point source pollution (71).”

**e. Are public investments planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land?**

Yes. The Plan establishes a policy that “contiguous forest and significant agricultural areas should remain largely in non-intensive uses unless no reasonable alternative exists to provide essential residential, commercial and industrial activities for the Town’s inhabitants,” and that developments generally do not fragment agricultural and forest lands (71).

**10. Does the Plan provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetics of the area?**

Yes. The Plan supports the “extraction and processing of mineral resources only where such activities are appropriately sited...managed, and where the public interest is clearly benefited (62)”. Furthermore, the Plan establishes a policy that “existing and proposed mineral extraction and processing facilities be planned, constructed, and managed to reclaim and re-vegetate sites following extraction” while minimizing impacts to adjacent uses, the environment, habitats, and the overall rural character of the Town (62).

**11. Does the Plan ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing?**

**a. Is housing encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income?**

Yes. The Plan sets a goal “to encourage innovative planning, design and construction of primary housing which minimizes the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of housing (51).” Furthermore, the Plan establishes a policy to “encourage the development of affordable housing options in all areas of town open to residential

development. The Town and private developers are encouraged to work together to provide housing that meets the needs of the residents within the community (51).”

- b. Does the plan provide for new and rehabilitated housing to be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities?**

Yes. The Plan sets a goal to “encourage safe and affordable shelter for present and future populations (51)” The Plan also sets a goal to “to encourage innovative planning, design and construction of primary housing which minimizes the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of housing (51).” Lastly, the Plan establishes a policy to “allow for growth of housing for all income levels and at a rate consistent with the community’s ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner and consistent with the other goals and policies expressed in this Plan (51).” These goals together show that the Plan calls for new and rehabilitated housing to be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary facilities and utilities.

- c. Does the Plan support sites for multi-family and manufactured housing that are readily available in similar locations to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings?**

Yes. The Plan establishes a policy to “encourage the development of affordable housing options in all areas of town open to residential development. The Town and private developers are encouraged to work together to provide housing that meets the needs of the residents within the community (51).” The Plan also promotes multifamily housing in the Gaysville Village Area, the Stockbridge Common Area as permitted uses (18-19). The Plan also calls for multifamily housing on a case-by-case basis in the rural residential area (21-22). The Plan also supports the provision of a diversity of housing options, including cohousing, multigenerational dwellings, accessory dwelling units, and tiny homes.

- d. Does the plan allow for accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences allowing close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons?**

Yes. The Plan discusses accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a form of affordable housing that provides the elderly with an opportunity to age-in-place. The Plan establishes a policy to “encourage innovative planning, design, and construction to keep pace with evolving housing formats and needs, e.g. cohousing, multigenerational dwellings, ADU’s, tiny homes, seasonal camps, etc. (51).”

- 12. Does the Plan for the provision and financing of an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs?**

- a. Does the Plan include services such as fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal in its planning for facilities and services?**



Yes. The Plan does address the needs for public facilities and services throughout both the “Public Facilities and Utilities” chapter (35-40) and the “Health and Emergency Services” chapter (41-44).

**b. Does the planned rate of growth exceed the ability of the town and the area to provide facilities and services?**

No. The Plan’s stated Overarching Goal is to encourage the “appropriate use of all lands in the Town of Stockbridge in such a manner as will promote the public health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience, sustainability, self-sufficiency, economy and general welfare of the town (7).” The Plan sets a goal to “promote development within the Town of Stockbridge consistent with the ability of the Town to provide services (7).”

**13. Does the plan work to ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and integrate child care issues into the planning process, including childcare financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development?**

Yes. The Plan outlines the existing level of childcare service available in the community, noting that many families/parents opt to utilize other family members or childcare opportunities outside of the Town for their childcare needs (82). The Plan establishes a policy to “support the development of additional local childcare facilities, as is needed, and may assist with seeking funding to develop these facilities (83).”

**14. Does the Plan encourage flood resilient communities?**

**a. Is new development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas avoided? If new development is to be built in such areas, are policies in place to not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion?**

Yes, in part. The Plan allows for new development in flood hazard areas but prohibits any land use activity that would result in “in the net loss of flood storage, increased or diverted flood levels, or increased risk to adjacent areas (57).” The Plan establishes a policy that “preferred uses for flood hazard areas shall be for open space, greenways, recreation, pastureland, agricultural land, and renewable energy facilities (58).”

The Plan notes the high risk that development carries in fluvial erosion areas but does not call for the prohibition of development in these areas (56-57). The Plan does not outline any policies to ensure that development in these areas does not exacerbate flooding or fluvial erosion.

**b. Is the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion encouraged?**

Yes, in part. The Plan recommends that the Planning Commission “examine additional protections for the Flood Hazard Area, and areas outside the Flood Hazard Area that are prone to flooding or flood damage (26).” The Plan does not specifically encourage the

protection and restoration of floodplain or flood hazard areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.

The Plan also calls for the protection of upland forest areas within the Upland Conservation Area (22-25). Specifically, the Plan establishes a policy “to recognize that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at-risk of erosion during floods (55).”

**c. Are flood emergency preparedness and response planning encouraged?**

Yes. The Plan encourages emergency preparedness and response planning in the Health and Emergency Services Chapter (41-44). The Town has an Emergency Management Director and maintains an Local Emergency Management Plan. The Plan sets a goal to “strengthen and maintain strong emergency management capabilities (40).” Furthermore, the Plan establishes a policy to “make its emergency management capabilities/preparedness, responsiveness, recovery, and hazard mitigation an ongoing priority (43).”

**B. Is the Municipal Plan Compatible with the Regional Plan?**

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan was adopted on February 26, 2025 and it will remain in effect until February 26, 2033.

The Stockbridge Town Plan is found to be compatible with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan. As used in this review, the term "compatible with" has been defined (in Section 4302) as meaning: that the Plan in question, as implemented, will not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan (emphasis added). If a Plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other Plan (in this case, the Regional Plan), the Plan may be considered compatible if it includes the following:

- (a) a statement that identifies the ways that it will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other Plan;
- (b) an explanation of why any incompatible portion of the Plan in question is essential to the desired effect of the Plan as a whole;
- (c) an explanation of why, with respect to any incompatible portion of the Plan in question, there is no reasonable alternative way to achieve the desired effect of the Plan; and
- (d) an explanation of how any incompatible portion of the Plan in question has been structured to mitigate its detrimental effects on the implementation of the other Plan.

**C. Is the Plan Compatible with Approved Plans of other Municipalities in the Region?**

At the time of review of this Stockbridge Town Plan, the following municipalities have Plans approved by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission that are in effect:

Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Braintree, Bridgewater, Chelsea, Corinth, Fairlee, Granville, Hancock, Hartford, Hartland, Newbury, Norwich, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Randolph, Rochester,

Royalton, Sharon, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, Tunbridge, Vershire, West Fairlee, and Woodstock.

These approval decisions and Plans have been reviewed in the context of the above question. Based on this, we find the Stockbridge Town Plan to be compatible with these Plans.

#### **D. Municipal Plan Elements - Are They Included?**

A plan for a municipality shall include the following required elements. These elements or components are, in summary:

- (a) a statement of overall objectives and policies;
- (b) a current and future land use plan and maps;
- (c) a current and future transportation plan and maps;
- (d) a current and future utility and facility plan and maps;
- (e) a statement of policies for "special resources";
- (f) a current and future education plan and maps;
- (g) an implementation program;
- (h) a statement on relationship of plan to trends and plans for adjacent towns and the region;
- (i) an energy plan; and
- (j) a housing plan.
- (k) an economic development plan
- (l) a flood resiliency plan

#### **1. Does the Plan include a statement of objectives, policies and programs of the municipality, to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment?**

The Plan, in its entirety, serves as a statement of objectives, policies, and activities that will guide future *growth* and development while also ensuring environmental protection of Town resources and landscapes. Included in Appendix A is an Implementation Chart that lists specific action items (policies/recommendations) that summarize the policies and recommendations given in each chapter of the Plan.

#### **2. Does the Plan include a land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land use, that:**

- A. indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture, (using 6 VSA Section 8), residence, commerce, industry, public and semi-public uses and open spaces; areas reserved for flood plain; and areas identified by the State, the regional planning commission, or the town that require special consideration for aquifer protections, for wetland protection, for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors, or for other conservation purposes?**

The Plan includes several maps, among those are: (1) a Current Land Use Map, and (2) a Future Land Use Map. The Land Uses Chapter sets forth current and future land use patterns for the community.

- B. sets forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services?**

The Plan's stated Overarching Goal is to encourage the "appropriate use of all lands in the Town of Stockbridge in such a manner as will promote the public health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience, sustainability, self-sufficiency, economy and general welfare of the town (7)." The Plan sets a goal to "promote development within the Town of Stockbridge consistent with the ability of the Town to provide services (7)."

- C. identifies those areas, if any, proposed for designation under chapter 76A of Title 24, together with, for each areas proposed for designation, an explanation of how the designation would further the plan's goals and the goals of 24 V.S. A. section 4302, and how the areas sought meets the requirements?**

At this time, the Town has not pursued any Village Center Designations. The Plan discusses the benefits that enrolling in the Village Center Designation program would bring to village areas within Stockbridge (30). The Plan also calls for pursuing a Village Center Designation for Stockbridge Common and Gaysville hamlet areas (32).

- D. and indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests?**

The Plan establishes a policy that "long term protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors is encouraged in the Upland Conservation Area (24)." The stated purpose of this district is to "protect and preserve areas which are ecologically important or fragile" and to "enhance and maintain Stockbridge's highest priority interior forest blocks and habitat connectivity blocks (23)."

- 3. Does the Plan include a transportation plan, consisting of a map and a statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities showing existing and proposed highways and streets by type and character of improvement, and where pertinent, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, with indications of priority of need.**

The Plan includes a Transportation Map depicting present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities. The Plan's Transportation Chapter includes inventory of transportation facilities and a discussion of transportation's probable impacts on land use and the community, as well as goals, policies, and recommendations relating to transportation.

- 4. Does the Plan include a utility and facility plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective community facilities and public utilities showing existing and proposed educational, recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage and other**

**similar facilities and activities, and recommendations to meet future needs for community facilities and services, with indications of priority of need, costs and methods of financing.**

The Plan includes a Utilities and Facilities map and combines this map with Education facilities.

The Plan provides a description of utilities, facilities, and services currently existing within Stockbridge. The Plan also adequately offers recommendations for specific future needs and how future needs will be financed.

**5. Does the Plan include a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.**

The Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources chapter provides policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic, and historic features and resources in the Town. It is accompanied by a Natural Resources Map.

**6. Does the Plan include an educational facilities plan consisting of a map and a statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system.**

The Plan includes a chapter dedicated to Education. It describes the current educational resources of the Town and includes language to support the educational system in the future.

Education facilities are included on the Utilities and Facilities map.

**7. Does the Plan include a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan?**

Goals, policies, and recommendations are included in each chapter. The Implementation Table in Appendix A contains the recommendations included in the Plan, the responsible party, and the timeline for implementation.

**8. Does the Plan include a statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under Title 24?**

The Plan includes discussion of its relationship to adjacent municipalities in the Relationship of Municipal Plans Chapter.

**9. Does the Plan include an analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems within the municipality, a statement of policy on the conservation of energy (including programs, such as thermal integrity standards for buildings, to implement that policy), a statement of policy on the development of renewable energy resources, and a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.**

The Plan's Energy Chapter includes an analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs, and problems within the municipality, as well as a goal to conserve energy and a goal to develop renewable energy resources. Numerous policies throughout the Plan support patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.

- 10. Does the Plan include a housing element that shall include a recommended program for public and private actions to address housing needs as identified by the regional planning commission pursuant to Section 4348a (a)(9) of Title 24. The program should use data on year-round and seasonal dwellings and include specific actions to address the housing needs of persons with low income and persons with moderate income and account for permitted residential development as described in section 4412 of this title.**

The Plan discusses the need for more affordable housing within the Housing Chapter (47-49). One of the goals of the Housing chapter is "to continue to promote sufficient affordable primary housing by revitalization of existing or construction of new housing (51)." The chapter includes a Housing Profile section that provides data on year round and seasonal dwellings.

- 11. Does the Plan include an economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.**

The Economic Development Chapter describes the present economic conditions in Stockbridge. It also utilizes policies and recommendations to further support the size and types of economic development appropriate to Stockbridge's rural identity.

- 12. Does the Plan include a flood resilience plan that:**

**identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas based on river corridor maps provided by VT ANR or other maps recommended by the Secretary of Natural Resources, and designates those areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property?**

Flood resilience is addressed in the Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources chapter (Water Resources, Wetlands, and Flood Plains), which addresses floodplains, river corridor areas, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, upland areas, and major flood events. The Future Land Use Map and Current Land Use Map includes wetlands, 100-year floodplains, and floodways. The Future Land Use Map also displays the boundaries of the Upland Conservation district.

**and recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments?**

The Emergency Management section of Health and Emergency Services, further discusses hazard mitigation. The need for municipal investments in transportation improvements that will mitigate against future damage is discussed in the Culverts and Bridges section of the Transportation chapter.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based upon the above findings, it is the conclusion of TRORC that the Stockbridge Town Plan be approved. This approval shall remain in effect until the date that the Plan expires, or until it is amended or readopted and reviewed pursuant to these provisions, whichever occurs first.

## **DISCUSSION**

Comments and suggested improvements for the next iteration of the Stockbridge Town Plan:

1. The Plan should adopt a policy to encourage the protection and restoration of floodplain or flood hazard areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.
2. The Plan should adopt policies to ensure that development in river corridors does not exacerbate flooding or fluvial erosion.
3. To fully align with the goals of 24 V.S.A. § 4302, the childcare section of the Plan should be expanded to discuss and support childcare financing, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development to meet the area's needs.
4. There is no discussion on air quality or air resources in the Plan. Future iterations of the Plan should include a section discussing air quality and air resources and their related goals, policies, and recommendations.

Dated this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2025 at Bethel, Vermont.

By: Peter G. Gregory

Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director

