

Municipal Plan Approval Checklist

Town: Northfield

Date: 11/6/2014

Reviewer: Emily Nosse-Leirer, Kim McKee

Committee: Bill Arrand (Worcester, absent), Tim Carver (East Montpelier), George Malek (Orange), Janet Shatney (Barre City, absent), Ron Krauth (Middlesex), Julie Potter (East Montpelier, absent), Larry Hebert (Williamstown)

Town Representative(s): Michele Braun (Zoning Administrator), Steve Jeffrey (PC Chair)

Background: The following is a review of the 2014 Northfield Municipal Plan under the provisions and standards of Chapter 117, Section 4350, wherein it is stated “a regional planning commission shall review and approve plans of its member municipalities, when approval is requested and warranted.” Conditions warranting approval include findings that the plan:

- Contains each of the **elements** listed in section 4382 of Chapter 117;
- Is consistent with the **goals** established in Section 4302 of Chapter 117. (“Substantial progress toward attainment” of these goals is the standard by which consistency is evaluated); and
- Is **compatible** with the Regional Plan and the approved plans of other municipalities in the Region.

General Comments/Notes: The previous Town & Village of Northfield Municipal Plan was adopted in 2009 and approved by CVRPC in the same year. The 2014 Town Plan is an update of the previous version. Substantive additions include an expanded Natural Resources chapter with added emphasis on water resources and flood resilience, a proposal to merge and make revisions to zoning districts and regulatory standards, an expanded discussion of Village revitalization and recent related projects and planning, and a proposed prohibition on non-residential development over 1800’. The Plan also incorporates required information regarding the regional housing distribution plan, state childcare goal, and economic development and flood resilience elements. A highlight of this plan was the comprehensive Natural Resources chapter, which thoroughly documented the scenic, water and environmental resources of the town, including a discussion of flood resilience, other environmentally sensitive areas such as habitat blocks, and the effects of climate change that the town will face in the future. In most cases, the implementation strategies proposed for the plan were very thorough, with broad goals, specific policies to be implemented, and tasks assigned to the relevant partners. Other elements of the Plan also discuss recent progress/key projects and recommend specific implementation strategies and partners, such as the recommended hiring of a Community Development Director or discussion of the Vermont Downtown Action Team process and outcomes.

Though changes are proposed to zoning district boundaries, the Land Use chapter could include more significant detail in describing proposed strategies (uses, density requirements, resource protection measures, etc.) for the future Low-Density Residential zone that will help achieve the goals of preserving open land for agriculture and forestry and maintaining traditional settlement patterns. Given the plan’s strong section on conservation and natural resources, more emphasis and/or consistency regarding resource protection goals within the Low-Density Residential proposed district or Rural Character planning area would provide clearer guidance, particularly given the current lack of Subdivision standards. Overall the Plan presents solid past progress and a strong framework for future action steps in priority areas, including village revitalization and economic development, protection of significant water resources and ridgelines, and resilience to future flooding. The continued discussion of a more detailed future land use plan will be of primary importance, particularly in the planning area currently designated Low-Density Residential.

Staff Conclusion(s): The Northfield Town Plan contains the essential elements of a municipal plan and makes progress towards attainment of the statutory goals. Staff encourages the Review Committee to recommend “approval” of the Northfield Town Plan under the standards of Chapter 117 before the full Regional Commission.

On 11/6/2014 the Town Plan Review Committee voted to recommend approval of 2014 Town of Northfield Municipal Plan to the full Regional Commission. On 11/11/2014 the Regional Commission approved the Town Plan Review Committee's recommendation for approval.

Summary of MUNICIPAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS (*under 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, Subchapter 5*)

A Required Plan Elements/Maps [§4382(a)] Each of the elements are required in some form for all municipal plans:	Map	Pages	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Statement of municipal policies, objectives, programs to guide growth and development	-	n/a	Each plan section ends with a section of Goals, Policies and Tasks that will be undertaken by the Town to move forward on the issues discussed in the section.
2. Land use plan (and map) showing proposed land use areas/districts`	y	110-115	<p>This element is addressed in the Land Use chapter, wherein proposed zoning changes and future land use frameworks are discussed – Urban Core Growth Area and Rural Character.</p> <p>A Future Land Use Map is included that now includes both the Village and the Town. The map merges the previous Rural Residential, Secondary Agricultural and Conservation & Forestry zones into one districts. Changes are also proposed in the Urban Core Growth Areas where a Village Center, Mixed Use and Commercial districts are proposed.</p>
3. Transportation plan (and map) showing needed/proposed improvements	y	66-75	There is a discussion of transportation within the plan, which outlines car use in Northfield as well as the potential for expanded public transportation. The transportation map is included in the map of community resources, and shows roads but not the bus route discussed in the plan.
4. Utilities, facilities, services plan (and map) showing present/proposed facilities, including water, sewer, solid waste, libraries, medical facilities, storm water drainage	Y	76-93	The map shows present facilities for water, sewer, solid waste, libraries, medical facilities, and storm water drainage. While there are not any future/proposed facilities located on the map, planned investments over the next five years are listed in the narrative for both the Water Dept and Sewer Dept and a separate Stormwater system is proposed. The plan discusses all current facilities and acknowledges that there may be expanded need should the town's population grow.

5. Educational facilities plan (and map) ; often included with the utilities/facilities element	Y	94-101	There is a separate education chapter that addresses school facilities, the quality of education, enrollment in the town and educational opportunities that exist outside the classroom or for adult or non-traditional students. Current educational facilities are located on the Transportation and Community Facilities Map.
6. Statement of municipal policies on preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources	Y	12-32	This is discussed in the Cultural Resources chapter of the plan, where the town catalogues its historical features and resources and lays out several policies for their continued preservation and maintenance, and in the Natural Resources chapter, which discusses the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas and scenic features.
7. Energy element , including analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs, problems, and opportunities for conservation	-	101-109	The energy element covers current energy use and cost, both building and transportation related. It identifies the problem of high energy use and the need for greater energy efficiency, and explores the potential development and use of renewable energy infrastructure in the town.
8. Housing element , including program for addressing affordable housing needs	Y	41-51	The housing element offers an overview of current housing characteristics and trends, with expanded discussion on Norwich University and student housing trends. It includes goals and policies related to addressing affordable housing needs. The goal for future housing development to be concentrated in high-density areas already served by utilities is mentioned in the housing chapter and in the land use chapter.
9. Implementation program for the plan's objectives		116-118	At the end of each chapter there is a section with Goals, Policies and Tasks outlined to implement what was discussed within the chapter. The Plan also contains an Implementation chapter that describes implementation through ongoing planning activities, revisions to the Land Use & Development Regulations, other municipal policies and programs, participation in state permitting processes and public investment.
10. Statement of how plan relates to development trends/plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region		6	The plan includes a section on "Regional Coordination" which assures that the plans of neighboring towns have been reviewed and that there are no conflicts. Additionally, the plan mentions that all proposed future land use along the borders of other towns is consistent with the current land use in those border areas.

<p>11. 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.</p>		<p>54-65</p>	<p>The economic development section discusses employment in the area, wages and the sectors in which workers are employed. The section also includes an overview of projects being undertaken in the town to grow the area's economy, and has a focus on specific businesses. The plan acknowledges the need for infrastructure improvements for economic development as well as the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection.</p>
<p>12. Flood resilience plan that identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas 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; 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. (effective date of July 1, 2014)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>19-28</p>	<p>The plan discusses types of flooding and areas that are prone to flooding, from the Special Flood Hazard Areas designated by FEMA to the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas and River Corridors in the area that are not in the inundation floodplain but still very likely to flood. It identifies vulnerable properties and structures that are in these areas and discusses and summarizes key issues identified in the 2009 ANR river corridor plan for the Dog River, mentioning that those projects should be undertaken by the town. The plan also prohibits new development in "identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion and river corridor protection areas."</p> <p>Future plan updates could utilize the Floodplains section under Environmentally Sensitive Areas to describe the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains.</p>

B. Inventories, Studies, Analyses [§4302 (d), 4382(c)]. Include as appropriate to survey existing conditions and probable future trends		Page s	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Population characteristics and distribution, including income and employment		36-39	The population characteristics and distribution table includes gender, race, place of birth, veteran status, age, education level, income, family size, and more (Table 4.3). Future plan updates would benefit from more consistent data updates (some charts or mislabeled or not updated) and source referencing.
2. Existing & projected housing needs by type, amount, loc.		41-48	The housing chapter discusses existing and projected housing needs by type, amount and location. There is an updated that shows recently built housing units classified by year.
3. Existing and estimated patterns of growth in various land use classifications, and in relation to facilities & services		n/a	This is discussed throughout the plan. The land use section, local economy section, housing section and community facilities and services section all discuss the estimated and existing patterns of growth in various zoning districts. Desired growth in already dense areas with existing services is referenced throughout the plan, though the Land Use chapter acknowledges that much of the pressure for residential development is anticipated in the rural planning areas due to the availability of land, transportation technology that allows access to remote locations, and a desire of many homebuyers for a rural lifestyle (p. 114).
C. Consistency with Broad State Goals [§4302] Plans must show consideration/evidence of a continuing planning process that includes:		Page s	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Coordinated, comprehensive planning process		7	There is a section on the purpose of the town plan, which lays out the ways that the town plan may be used, including for Act 250 reviews. While it's understood that the Planning Commission developed the majority of the Plan, the Planning Process section could reference other municipal bodies and stakeholders that provided input/assistance, such as the Conservation Commission, etc.
2. Citizen participation at all levels of the planning process		8-9	The majority of citizen participation for this plan took place during citizen forums for the 2009 planning process. For this update, the Planning Commission worked more specifically with residents concerned about the impacts of potential industrial-scale wind energy facilities on Northfield's scenic peaks and ridgelines. Draft chapters of the plan were posted on the municipal web site for public review.

3. Consideration of use of resources, consequences of growth to region and state		n/a	There is a consideration of resource use throughout the plan, notably in the transportation and natural resources section. Additionally, the plan seeks to minimize the consequences of growth by maintaining their compact Village Center and focusing future growth in the urban core.
4. Working creatively with other municipalities to develop, implement plans;		6	The plan mentions that the town plans of neighboring municipalities were reviewed during the planning process. The plan mentions that Northfield works with Roxbury and Berlin to provide education, emergency services, and family, senior and youth services.
D. Consistency with Specific State Goals [§4302] Plans must make substantial progress towards attainment of the following goals: (*or explain why goal is not applicable):		Page s	Comments, notes, suggestions

<p>1. Plan development to maintain historic settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by open countryside, including:</p>		<p>The Land Use chapter narrative describes the following Future Land Use Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-Density Residential: preserve open land for ag & forestry; more protection for source water areas, endangered species habitat and ridgelines. • Medium-Density Residential: reinforce historic residential neighborhoods with an emphasis on single family dwellings. • High-Density Residential: support moderate to high density residential development within and immediately surrounding Northfield's downtown area where services are available. • Village Center: maintain walkable and pedestrian-friendly downtown Village Center with special design considerations, centered on the village common as a public gathering area. • Mixed Use: support a full range of mixed commercial and high density residential uses along the Rte 12 corridor served by water and sewer, while maintaining the downtown as the prominent commercial area. • Industrial: support mixed commercial and manufacturing uses in appropriate locations. • Institutional: diverse uses and multiple structures that support a common institutional mission. <p>The plan could benefit from a strengthened connection between the Future Land Use narrative, which reference existing zoning districts, and the proposed districts with more detail as to strategies that will advance the goals (use provisions, density and/or provisions for resource protection).</p> <p>Given the plan's very strong section on conservation and natural resources, more emphasis and/or consistency regarding resource protection goals within the Low-Density Residential proposed district or Rural Character planning area would provide clearer guidance.</p>
---	--	---

(i) Encouraging intensive residential development primarily in areas related to community centers and discouraging strip development along highways.

52-54

Policy 5 of the Housing section states: “Higher densities of residential development should be considered in areas served by municipal water and wastewater facilities,” and Policy 5 of the Land Use section states that “The downtown area’s central commercial, civic and cultural community function will be reinforced through a concentrated mix of land uses at high densities and an urban pattern of development.” Task 9 of the Housing section offers strategies for achieving those policies, encouraging “Implement[ing] zoning or other ordinances or implementation measures to accomplish the following:

- Density bonus provisions for affordable housing within planned residential or planned unit developments, as allowed under state law,
- The establishment and/or expansion of mobile home parks in appropriate locations,
- Allowing multi-family dwellings and Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) in additional districts (e.g., with a cap on the number of dwelling units per structure in lower density districts or residential neighborhoods),
- Elimination of incompatible or low density residential uses in principally industrial zoning districts,
- Increased density and/or reduced lot size requirements for multi-family dwellings in higher density (e.g., village) zoning districts,
- Provisions for mixed-use buildings that may include apartments, in appropriate districts (e.g., village and commercial districts),
- Reduced parking requirements for elderly and/or affordable housing development, and for accessory apartments,
- Wastewater allocations for elderly and/or affordable housing development within a defined sewer service area, and for pollution abatement (e.g., for mobile home park connections) outside the service area,
- Additional standards for the conversion of single family to multi-family dwellings to address potential infrastructure and neighborhood impacts, and
- Historic or design review criteria (e.g., regulatory standards or advisory guidelines) to encourage the preservation of historic homes, or to require compatible development within historic neighborhoods. [Planning Commission, Selectboard, Staff]

<p>(ii) Encouraging economic growth in growth centers and / or village and urban centers</p>		<p>64-65</p>	<p>The Economic Development section discusses the need to encourage economic growth in the downtown area, and Policy 7 states that the town should “Reinforce, through the capital budgeting and facility allocation policies, existing land use and development policies by focusing economic activity in designated village centers, commercial/industrial districts, and Norwich University.”</p> <p>The Plan recommends upgrading the designated Village Center to a state designated Downtown and exploring Village Center designation for Northfield Falls.</p>
<p>(iii) Reinforcing the character and planned growth patterns of public investments, including infrastructure</p>		<p>113-114</p>	<p>The land use chapter includes discussion about maintaining the urban core growth center in the historic village center of Northfield. The plan mentions that this will allow for greater economic vitality, promote transportation alternatives and “is cost-effective by limiting expensive facility extensions into un-served areas.”</p>
<p>Consistency with Specific State Goals (continued from previous page)</p>		<p>Pages</p>	<p>Comments, notes, suggestions</p>
<p>2. Provide a strong and diverse economy (A) Does the plan have an economic development chapter? (B) Does the plan discuss its position in terms of regional employment? (i.e. is it an employment center, is it a bedroom community, etc.) (C) Does the plan discuss unemployment or lack thereof? (D) Does the plan discuss the balance of improving the economy and maintaining environmental standards?</p>		<p>54-65</p>	<p>A. Yes B. Yes, the plan mentions that approximately half of Northfield residents also work in Northfield, which represents an increase. It notes that most jobs are in services, including jobs at Norwich University, “the mainstay of the local economy.” C. Yes, the plan mentions that unemployment in the town is higher than in the region (4.4% compared to 3.8%). D. Yes, the town provides a series of policies and tasks related to developing and maintaining high environmental standards during future construction and development. A Sustainable Economic Development section also recognizes that “the State of Vermont has recognized that creating quality jobs and conserving and protecting the social and natural environment are of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life in the state (p.64).” This concept is reinforced in the main Economic Development goal.</p>
<p>3. Broaden access to educational and vocational</p>		<p>94-101</p>	<p>A-B. Yes, the plan details adult education in many forms, including higher education available at the Community College</p>

<p>training opportunities</p> <p>(A) Does the plan discuss adult education?</p> <p>(B) Does the plan discuss where educational opportunities are and might be found?</p> <p>(C) Is the town working with the local school district or the community to provide educational opportunities in schools and in other community settings</p>			<p>of Vermont, the Vermont Technical College, various universities and colleges in Burlington, through Norwich University both in person and online through the College of Graduate and Continuing studies, and online through a collaboration between UVM, Johnson State College and the Department of Education for degrees in education studies.</p> <p>C. Yes, students from the elementary through high school levels are involved in community organizations. Local businesses host interns and other service learning students, as does the senior center. A partnership between the local PTO, Norwich University and WCYSB offers grants to extended educational opportunities for local students.</p>
<p>4. Provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems</p> <p>(A) Is the proposed land use plan coordinated with the transportation network? Does it discuss the connection between land use and transportation efficiency?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access management • Discouraging new roads in outlying areas <p>(B) Does the Transportation chapter discuss and encourage multi-modal transportation?</p> <p>(C) Does the Transportation chapter discuss and encourage public transit?</p>		<p>66-75</p>	<p>A. Yes, though the transportation network is mainly roads, the future land use plan mentions that new development should be concentrated in the village center where there is already dense development. It mentions that there is a great deal of energy use from transportation in the area and that energy efficiency could be improved by greater density of development and more public transportation alternatives.</p> <p>B-C. Yes, the transportation chapter mentions the possibility of expanded public transportation in Northfield and the need for increased walkability in the town. The chapter discusses the need for maintaining the current Northfield-Montpelier bus route and the possibility of more bus routes and a new Amtrak station in the town.</p>
<p>5. Identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including</p>			
<p>(i) Significant natural and fragile areas</p> <p>(A) Does the plan identify significant natural and fragile areas? Does the plan include criteria for what makes an area “significant”?</p> <p>(B) If identified, does the plan clearly (not vaguely) discuss how they should be preserved?</p> <p>(C) If identified, is land use proposed in such a fashion that these areas will be protected?</p> <p>(D) Does the plan discuss alternative (non-regulatory) ways to protect these areas (other</p>		<p>12-28</p>	<p>A. The plan includes a section on Environmentally Sensitive Areas and makes good use of ANR’s Biofinder tool to identify the significant natural and fragile areas, which are comprised of Wetlands, Floodplains, and Wildlife Habitats. These resources were identified using ANR’s criteria for their identification</p> <p>B & C The plan includes the policy that these areas should be preserved through land use regulations, specifically including the policy that all construction should be: “Sited and carefully managed to avoid the fragmentation and degradation of critical wildlife habitat, including habitat identified</p>

<p>than through land use regulations)?</p>			<p>as important or critical, including core habitat areas, large blocks of un-fragmented forest, and connecting corridors (Policy 1.c.)” The Plan also proposes formalizing the role of the Conservation Commission in development review. D. Yes, the plan proposes “Inform[ing] the community about natural resources issues before the town and encourage dialogue through surveys and public forums” (Task 5)</p>
<p>(ii) Outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands</p> <p>(A) Does the plan identify outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands? Does the plan include criteria for what makes a resource “outstanding”? (B) If identified, does the plan clearly (not vaguely) discuss how they should be preserved? (C) If identified, is land use proposed in such a fashion that these areas will be protected? (D) Does the plan discuss alternative (non-regulatory) ways to protect these areas (other than through land use regulations)?</p>		<p>16-19</p>	<p>A. The plan provides an overview of water resources in the town, but there are no criteria given for designating them as “outstanding” resources. B & C. The plan includes a series of policies and tasks on the preservation of water quality, including stating that construction should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully managed on slopes of 15-25% to minimize surface water runoff and erosion, and prohibited on slopes of 25% or more; • Sited with adequate riparian setbacks and buffers as needed to protect water quality, riparian habitat, and coldwater fisheries (e.g. 50 foot minimum), as recommended by Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; • Sited to avoid and/or minimize impacts to designated source and surface water protection areas that supply community or municipal water systems; • Sited to avoid flood hazard areas to the extent feasible, or where necessary, be designed to minimize flood damage and the loss of life and property; • Sited and designed to preserve or restore pre-construction runoff conditions (Policy 2) <p>D. The plan proposes non-regulatory ways to protect water resources, such as “educate landowners regarding the importance of naturally vegetated areas along rivers and streams. Encourage the replanting and maintenance of buffers” and exploring the possibility of Low Impact Development standards for the town.</p>

<p>(iii) Significant scenic roads, waterways, and views (A) Does the plan identify scenic roads, waterways and views? Does the plan include criteria for what makes a scenic resource “significant”? (B) If identified, does the plan clearly (not vaguely) discuss how they should be preserved? (C) If identified, is land use proposed in such a fashion that these areas will be protected? (D) Does the plan discuss alternative (non-regulatory) ways to protect these areas (other than through land use regulations)?</p>		n/a	<p>A. The town mentions scenic resources at various times throughout the plan, but does not provide any criteria for what makes a landscape “scenic.” Rather, the town simply identifies various scenic resources by name. B and C. Yes. There are provisions for the preservation of scenic resources throughout the plan, including in natural resources, where Task 3 states that the town should “Develop standards for the preservation and improvement of the natural aesthetics and scenic landscapes of the town and surrounding areas” and in cultural resources, where policy 3 states that development should be “Designed to minimize adverse impacts to Northfield’s historic sites, structures and outdoor recreation areas, and scenic landscapes.” D. Yes, the plan suggests seeking opportunities for conservation easements (Natural Resources tasks 61 and 62), which will also work to maintain scenery.</p>
<p>(iv) Important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and arch. sensitive areas (A) Does the plan identify historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas? Does the plan include criteria for what makes a scenic resource “significant”? (B) If identified, does the plan clearly (not vaguely) discuss how they should be preserved? (C) If identified, is land use proposed in such a fashion that these areas will be protected? (D) Does the plan discuss alternative (non-regulatory) ways to protect these areas (other than through land use regulations)?</p>		29-32	<p>A. Yes, the plan identifies historic sites, including structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, historic cemeteries, historic districts, and possible archaeological sites that are unidentified as of yet. For a building to be historic, it “must be at least fifty years old, and retain its historic integrity, to be eligible for listing on state and national registers.” B.-C.. Yes, the plan suggests that development should be “Designed to minimize adverse impacts to Northfield’s historic sites, structures and outdoor recreation areas, and scenic landscapes” (Cultural Resources Policy 3). D. The plan proposes exploring the possibility of nominating a historic district to the NRHPs and applying for Certified Local Government designation to increase financial opportunities for preservation.</p>
<p>6. Maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources. Vermont’s air, water, wildlife, mineral and land resources should be planned for use and development according to the principles set forth</p>		12-28	<p>A. Yes B. The plan discusses air quality only in passing, and only vaguely states that the town should “Maintain and improve the quality of Northfield’s air, water, wildlife, forests and earth and land resources”</p>

<p>in 10 V.S.A 6086(a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Is there a complete inventory/map of existing water resources, wildlife habitat, mineral resources and other land resources? B. Does the plan discuss air quality? If so, does it describe measures to maintain and improve its quality? C. Does the plan discuss water quality? If so, does it describe measures to maintain and improve its quality? D. Does the plan discuss wildlife resources? If so, does the plan describe measures to maintain and improve its quality? E. Does the plan discuss floodplain protection? If so, does the plan describe measures to maintain and improve its quality? F. Does the proposed land use pattern maintain or improve the quality of the resources listed above? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. Yes, the plan discusses water quality and suggests source water protection programs, mentions that a treatment plant upgrade took place in 2002, and says that development should be “Sited to avoid and/or minimize impacts to designated source and surface water protection areas that supply community or municipal water systems” (Natural Resources Policy 2.c.) D. The plan discusses wildlife resources and says that development should be “Sited and carefully managed to avoid the fragmentation and degradation of critical wildlife habitat, including habitat identified as important or critical, including core habitat areas, large blocks of unfragmented forest, and connecting corridors (Natural Resource Policy 1.c.)” and that the in the future, the following tasks should take place (Natural resources tasks 57-62) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57. Identify and map important wildlife areas and corridors. 58. Offer opportunities for the community to learn sustainable habitat management practices. 59. Include protective guidelines for habitat under local subdivision and zoning regulations. 60. Ensure animals and plants can move freely for long distances between conserved lands, contiguous forest habitat, and other important habitats, land feature and natural communities in order to meet all survival requirements (breeding, dispersal, adaptation to climate or habitat changes). 61. Seek opportunities for conservation of larger blocks of unfragmented forest, the level of protection depending upon the size and qualities of the parcels. (See ANR maps 3, 4, and 5 for information currently available). 62. Seek opportunities for conservation easements to conserve important wildlife habitat and travel corridors. E. Yes, the plan discusses flood plain protection, and lays out a policy that “New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas is prohibited. Improvements to existing development in vulnerable areas must not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion” (Natural Resources Policy 3) and that the town should “Encourage the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and
---	--	--	---

			<p>moderate flooding and fluvial erosion” (Natural Resources Policy 4).</p> <p>F. The proposed land use pattern maintains and may improve the quality of the resources listed above. As demonstrated above, there are significant policies and tasks associated with that task. Given the plan’s very strong section on conservation and natural resources, more emphasis and/or consistency regarding resource protection goals within the Low-Density Residential proposed district or Rural Character planning area would provide clearer guidance.</p>
<p>7. Encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources</p> <p>(A) Does the town recognize the connection between energy, transportation and land use?</p> <p>(B) Does the energy chapter of the plan discuss energy efficiency and renewable energy?</p> <p>(C) Does the plan contain policies and recommendations that encourage energy efficiency?</p> <p>(D) Does the plan contain policies and recommendations that encourage the development of renewable energy resources?</p> <p>(E) Does the pattern of land use proposed in the community appear to encourage the efficient use of energy either through the proposed location of development in relation to community services, or in terms of lot layout and design?</p>		<p>104-107</p>	<p>A. Yes, the plan identifies that 34% of Vermont’s energy use is transportation based, that vehicle miles traveled in Northfield increased 8% between 1990 and 2000, and that those residents who are able to both live and work in Northfield use less energy.</p> <p>B. Yes, the plan discusses energy efficiency (“conservation”) in terms of both housing heating and transportation, mentioning Efficiency Vermont and the need for more transportation alternatives in Northfield for greater transportation energy efficiency. The plan also discusses renewable energies, including hydropower, wind, wood and solar.</p> <p>C. The plan encourages reducing the reliance on single-occupant vehicles, undertaking an energy audit, and assessing the energy efficiency of housing stock in the town.</p> <p>D. The plan suggests that “Renewable energy generation facilities in the community should be permitted after the community has developed clear standards to ensure such facilities will have minimal adverse impact to wildlife populations and water quality; will mitigate to the extent possible aesthetic impacts; will not cause a nuisance to the surrounding area (e.g., due to excessive noise) and will not result in undue risk to public health and safety (e.g., through a lack of security or uncontrolled access)” (Energy Policy 5)</p> <p>E. Yes, the plan suggests that future growth should be</p>

			<p>concentrated in the village center, that future land use should maintain a high level of accessible biomass in the town, and that reliance on single-occupancy vehicles should be reduced through strategies that include the construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.</p>
<p>8. Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, including identifying, providing, and protecting public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, where applicable. (A) Does the plan discuss recreation and identify important recreational areas? (B) Does the land use plan encourage development that protects or harms access to or the availability of recreational activities?</p>		<p>83-84</p>	<p>A. Yes, the plan identifies Memorial Park and Northfield Falls Fields and details the recreational opportunities available there, as well as mentions the town’s snow trails, fishing holes, hunting areas and hiking trails.</p> <p>B. The town lists four tasks for protects and improves recreational activity:</p> <p>12. Manage the municipal forest, including land associated with the municipal water supply, for dispersed outdoor recreation in a manner that is consistent with other functions of the property (e.g., water supply, forest management) with the assistance of the Conservation Commission.</p> <p>13. Protect the Paine Mountain area for its recreation, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, watershed, and forestry value.</p> <p>14. Maintain municipal recreation facilities, including Memorial Park and Northfield Falls ball fields, in order to provide recreation facilities to local residents on an ongoing basis. The upgrade or expansion of those facilities should occur in accordance with a long-range recreation plan.</p> <p>15. Encourage the creation and maintenance of a network of recreation trails, including hiking trails and winter recreation trails maintained by VAST. Class IV town roads should be available for recreation, including snowmobile trails, on a case by case basis providing the Select board determines that such use will not result in a hazard to public safety. The recreational use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) on town properties should be prohibited due to adverse impacts to the environment and natural resources¹⁰.</p>
<p>9. Encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries, including:</p>			

<p>(i) protection of long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands and maintenance of low overall density</p>		<p>15</p>	<p>The plan identifies that Northfield has 4,500 acres of primary agricultural soil. The Low Density Residential proposed zoning district has the stated intent of preserving land for agricultural and forestry uses.</p> <p>Current zoning includes an Agricultural district that matches mapped soils. It is noted that New zoning districts proposed in this plan will continue to provide protection for prime agricultural soils with a 10-acre minimum lot size in rural areas, though the Land Use chapter could benefit from more specific strategies to preserve agricultural lands and a greater minimum lot size (25 acres) or more flexible/sliding scale zoning strategies should be considered.</p>
<p>(ii) encouraging the manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products</p>		<p>64-65</p>	<p>Economic Development policy 9 seeks to “Promote the local production of agricultural products to make Northfield more self-sufficient and ensure long-term employment that meets basic needs.”</p> <p>Task 3 of the Economic Development chapter seeks to strengthen and expand the farmers market to encourage consumption of local agricultural products. The narrative of the Local Economy section highlights local and specialty food products and sustainable agriculture as sectors having potential for growth.</p>
<p>Consistency with Specific State Goals (continued from previous page)</p>		<p>Page s</p>	<p>Comments, notes, suggestions</p>
<p>(iii) encouraging sound forest and agricultural practices</p>		<p>24-25</p>	<p>Natural Resources Task 49 encourages “offer[ing] opportunities for the community to learn best practices in forest stewardship.” Task 65 encourages “Provid[ing] maximum protection for critical natural resources for local agriculture and food production.” There is no reference to sound agricultural practices in the Plan.</p>
<p>(iv) planning public investment so as to minimize development pressure on agriculture and forest land</p>		<p>24</p>	<p>Natural Resources policy 1.d. states that development should be “Sited to avoid, to the extent feasible, primary agricultural soils, which should be protected for current and future agricultural use” Task 7 references the need to explore ways to strengthen implementation of existing land management plans on parcels enrolled in Current Use. There is also a separate task list for Forests with related conservation strategies.</p>
<p>10. Provide for the wise and efficient use of natural</p>		<p>24-25</p>	<p>The plan recognizes the need for earth extraction of sand and gravel for commercial use and road maintenance and construction.</p>

resources, facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and proper restoration and preservation of aesthetic qualities			Natural Resources tasks 63 and 64 state that the zoning authority should “Research municipal authority to regulate extraction of earth resources” and that the Planning Commission should “Adopt appropriate zoning by-laws to ensure protection of slopes, surface and groundwater quality, aquatic life, local roads and neighboring properties.”
11. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing, including:			
(i) Encouraging housing to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in the community, particularly for citizens of low and moderate income.		52-53	The plan recognizes that there is a lack of subsidized housing for families, since only 4.46% of subsidized units are three-bedroom. It mentions mobile home parks as a possible solution for low and moderate income residents. Housing policy one states that “Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups, particularly for Northfield residents of low and moderate income.”
(ii) Ensuring that new and rehabilitated housing is safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.		52-53	The plan includes a build-out analysis map, which shows that new housing units are “proportionally concentrated in higher density residential areas served by existing public infrastructure.” Housing policies 2 and 3 state that “New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, and located near employment and commercial centers” and “Housing development should be coordinated with the provision of necessary supporting public infrastructure, services, and facilities.”
(iii) Identifying sites for multi-family and manufactured housing in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.		52-53	The plan recognizes that decreasing household size may lead to an increase in demand for rental units and smaller homes. These houses will be populated mainly by older residents or non-family households. Policy 5 states that “Sites for manufactured and multi-family housing should be made available in locations similar to those used for conventional single-family dwellings. Higher densities of residential development should be considered in areas served by municipal water and wastewater facilities.”
(iv) Allowing accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences.		52-53	The plan recognizes that decreasing household size may lead to an increase in demand for accessory apartments. Policy 6 states that “ Accessory apartments should be allowed within or attached to single-family dwellings to provide affordable housing, supervision

			and care for elderly or disabled relatives.”
<p>12. Finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs, (eg fire, police, EMS, schools, water, sewage, & solid waste)</p> <p>(A) Public facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal.</p> <p>(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services</p>		91-93	<p>A. The plan discusses the fire and police protection in the town, the available emergency medical services, water supply and sewage, as well as solid waste disposal. Additionally, there is a full chapter on the state of local education. The Plan also includes 5-yr goals and future investment priorities for both the Water System and Wastewater System.</p> <p>B. The population section of the plan recognizes that the rate of population growth will need to be matched by the growth of community services, and the plan seeks to “Promote a greater increase in year-round population (in excess of the projected 0.4% annual rate of increase) and associated development within municipal sewer and water service areas” (Policy 3), ensure that school enrollment projections match population growth (task 2) and make sure that population growth and housing development are correlated (Task 1).</p>
<p>13. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care</p>		86-87	<p>The plan discusses the availability and the high cost of daycare in the area, and states in the plan that “the town will work to improve the child care infrastructure,” including by “Encourag[ing] private day care facilities and allow their use in all zoning districts (subject to appropriate conditions) in which residential and/or business uses are allowed” (Community Facilities and Services Goal 18).</p>
<p>E. Compatibility with Municipal, Regional Plans [§4350] Plans must be:</p>		Page s	Comments, notes, suggestions
<p>1. Compatible with other regionally approved town plans</p>		6-7	<p>Section 1.3, Regional Coordination, discusses Northfield’s relationship with neighboring communities. The town’s zoning along its borders is compatible with the respective zoning of its neighbors. The plan includes the reassurance that “a brief review of neighboring municipal plans does not reveal any notable incompatibility of plan goals or policies”</p>
<p>2. Compatible with the Regional Plan</p>		7	<p>The plan states that “no areas of incompatibility between this plan and the Central Vermont Regional Plan have been identified” and that the plan should be reviewed and approved by CVRPC.</p>

CVRPC Regional Housing Distribution Plan elements	Plan: Northfield 2014
<p>The Regional Housing Distribution Plan is intended to be used by municipalities when updating their land use plans and regulations; AND</p> <p>Town Plans adopted after January 1, 2009 are expected to incorporate this Housing Distribution Plan onto their town plan housing element.</p>	<p>The Northfield Town Plan narrative states: “The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission has requested that municipalities in the region plan to accommodate an assigned proportion of the projected regional housing demand of 8,835 new units between 2000 and 2020. Northfield must demonstrate that the municipality would develop 510 new housing units consistent with its current planning and zoning. With only 143 new units added in the first half of this period, and with the rate of population growth outside of the college-aged cohort declining, this goal seems artificially high and unattainable.</p> <p>Monitoring growth in population and households will identify whether changes in average household characteristics are occurring. Without such monitoring, however, a more reasonable rate of household growth, relative to the projected population increase, is an average of no more than 4.8% over the 2010-2020 period (an average of 9 households per year over the 10 year period).”</p>
<p>Town Plans shall contain a detailed map or maps of the town showing the town’s preferred locations for future housing units – consistent with current or proposed zoning – for 80% of the anticipated 10 to 15 year growth.</p>	<p>The Plan references a previously included build-out map that is not made available in the Plan update. Though no planned future units or areas designated for future housing are mapped, per se, Housing policies and tasks state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, and located near employment & commercial centers. • Higher densities of residential development should be considered in areas served by municipal water and wastewater facilities. • Increased density and/or reduced lot size requirements for multi-family dwellings in higher density (e.g. village) zoning districts. • Any expansion in student enrollments at Norwich University should be accommodated through the development of on-campus housing. <p>A Land Use policy states that “Development will be encouraged, through land use regulations and related policies of this Plan, to locate within the urban core, defined by the land use districts identified on the Future Land Use map.</p>
<p>Town Plans shall also provide mapping updates that identify the locations and number of housing units created in the town since the previous town plan adoption.</p>	<p>A Housing Map is included with the Plan which includes all housing in the Town, calling out housing built from 2009 to 2014 by year built.</p>
<p>Towns and cities are required to demonstrate the community’s intent to meet the proposed housing unit numbers laid out in the Housing Distribution Plan or to describe in detail the obstacles that make attainment impossible. CVRPC will consider the planning effort to encourage housing development in relation to the Housing Distribution plan when approving a municipal plan.</p>	<p>See above referenced strategies.</p>

