



Regional Plan Committee
March 5, 2024 at 4:00 - 5:30 pm

To join Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87815276521?pwd=Mmw5U080SGpCTUFNVHZFSEERQUlI0dz09>

Meeting ID: 878 1527 6521, Passcode: 783374

One tap mobile 1(929)436-2866 or 1(301)715-8592

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AGENDA

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 4:00 pm² | Adjustments to the Agenda |
| | Public Comment |
| 4:05 | Approval of Minutes - (Action - enclosed)³ |
| 4:10 pm | Discussion: Draft Regional Plan Chapters: Cooperative Planning, Land Use, Economy, Housing (enclosed) |
| 5:30 pm | Adjourn |

Next meeting: April 2, 2024

¹ Dial-in telephone numbers are "Toll" numbers. Fees may be charged to the person calling in dependent on their phone service.

² All times are approximate unless otherwise advertised

³ Anticipated action item.

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Regional Plan Committee

Draft Minutes

February 6, 2024 4:00 – 5:30 pm

Via Zoom

Committee Members:

	Alice Peal, Waitsfield Alternate Rep
x	Rich Turner, Williamstown Rep
x	Doug Greason, Waterbury Rep
x	Mike Miller, Montpelier Alternate Rep
	John Brabant, Calais Rep

Staff (in person): Christian Meyer, Will Pitkin, Lincoln Frasca, Brian Voigt

Meeting called to order at 4:06 PM

Adjustment to the Agenda

No adjustments

Public Comment

No public present

M. Miller moved to approved Jan 2024 meeting minutes, R. Turner seconded. Approved unanimously.

Flood Recovery and Mitigation Priorities Update

L. Frasca presented on potential flood mitigation projects in Region (project type, phase, potential partners, and potential funding sources – see attached presentation), based on work that D. Greason previously did to compile a record of ongoing and upcoming projects. M. Miller noted that the projects' emphasis is on water quality and that there are varying degrees of overlap between those projects and ones that emphasize floodplain restoration/flood reduction. B. Voigt stated that water quality project types with high flood mitigation potential typically include berm removal and woody riparian planting.

Future Land Use Mapping for the Regional Plan

The committee discussed past land use type definitions, suggested definitions from VAPDA report and guidance on how to add value with upcoming FLU map in 2024 regional plan, what decisions will the upcoming regional FLU map inform.

M. Miller questioned whether regional FLU map defines municipal FLU maps or vice versa and how much the regional FLU map is based on current conditions vs. municipalities' aspirations for future development. M. Miller stated that he thought VAPDA suggested definitions missed already-developed dense residential areas served by utilities that do not fall neatly into any of VAPDA's proposed definitions since they are neither rural nor are they planned for extensive expansion. M. Miller suggested that certain definitions, such as transition/infill, be overlays on top of other areas that have

1 other definitions.

2
3 M. Miller suggested adding a tenth category, “dense residential neighborhood,” to capture already-
4 developed areas then, using these ten definitions, go town by town and try to apply them to the
5 member municipalities then adjust definitions accordingly. D. Greason concurred that CVRPC start off
6 proposed VAPDA definitions plus potentially one to several additional land use definitions. C. Meyer laid
7 out how CVRPC could adopt these new definitions. M. Miller supported VAPDA recommendation to split
8 rural definition into several definitions based on use, potentially even further splitting the rural –
9 agricultural and forestry definition into two separate definitions.

10
11 M. Miller questioned what time frame we are considering for our “future” land use planning. C. Meyer
12 noted that this will depend on the region. D. Greason questioned how to incorporate VAPDA suggested
13 priorities (climate change, housing, etc.) into FLU map.

14
15 Committee members discussed how to structure goals and strategies in 2024 regional plan; M. Miller
16 noted that the Montpelier municipal plan has at least one strategy with each goal.

17
18 D. Greason asked how map will be published. As a static document or interactive digital map with layers
19 that viewer can turn on or off. Staff stated that it can be both but must have a static map to meet
20 requirements of a future land use map.

21
22 The group discussed how flood resilience will be incorporated into regional plan woven into other
23 chapters.

24
25 C. Meyer stated expected timeline on finishing regional plan update.

26
27 M. Miller moved to adjourn, D. Greason seconded, all in favor, motion carried.



MEMO

Date: February 29, 2024
To: Regional Plan Committee
From: Will Pitkin
Re: Initial draft Region Plan Chapters for Review

☒ **ACTION REQUESTED:** Review content and discuss the following chapters of the Draft Regional Plan: Cooperative Planning, Land Use, Economy, and Housing

We will meet Tuesday, March 5th at 4pm. At the meeting, please be ready to discuss the drafts of the following chapters of the 2024 regional plan update, attached for your review:

- Cooperative Planning
- Land Use
- Economy
- Housing

The remaining chapters are still under way (see draft table of contents, attached, for a list of the remaining chapters). Staff is hard at work finishing them up and will present them for your review at a later meeting once they are in a consistent format. We hope to get them to a high standard of organization, clarity, and concision with ample time to receive your feedback and public comment before the August 2024 publication deadline.

The draft plan must at a minimum meet the VT State Statutory Requirements (attached). Staff has exceeded the state requirements in most cases, and the chapters we have provided you have all been reviewed against state requirements.

Questions to consider as you review the attached chapters:

- *Are there areas we have overlooked?*
- *Do these chapters generally support municipal planning goals?*
- *Are there areas where CVRPC needs to go further to represent a regional view?*
- *Are ideas being effectively transmitted?*
- *Are data being effectively transmitted?*

Questions you do not need to consider at this time:

- *Is that a split infinitive?*
- *Could this sentence be more succinct?*

There will be time for wordsmithing as the process moves forward. At this time, we are looking at the attached chapters to ensure they accurately represent member municipalities' interests. We are mainly focused on big-picture content-related feedback. Of course, more detailed review is welcome and send staff those edits if the spirit moves you or feel free to reach out and we will send you the Microsoft Word Doc versions of these chapters for you to mark up.

Chapters	State Statutory Requirements
Introduction & Vision: Welcome to the Region	
By the Numbers: Data Profile	State Planning Goals: (d)
Culture of Cooperative Planning	State Planning Goals: (b)(1)(2)(4) Required Element: (8)
Prosperous, Equitable, and Adaptable Economy	State Planning Goals: (c)(1)(B)(2)(3)(13) Required Element: (10)
Economically Viable Working Landscape	State Planning Goals: (c)(9)(A)-(D) Required Element:
Ecologically Functioning Natural Systems	State Planning Goals: (c)(5)(A)(B)(6)(A)(B)(C)(10) Required Element: (6) (A) (B)
Changing Climate	State Planning Goals: (c)(14)(A)(B)(C) Required Element: (11)
Range of Housing Choices	State Planning Goals: (c)(11)(A)(B)(C)(D) Required Element: (9)
Reliable and Affordable Energy	State Planning Goals: (c)(7)(A)(B) Required Element: (3)
Rural Character and Unique Historic Settlements	State Planning Goals: (c)(5)(C)(D) Required Element: (6)(A)
Cost-effective Infrastructure	State Planning Goals: (c)(12)(A)(B) Required Element: (5)
Healthy, Active and Connected Population	State Planning Goals: (c)(8)(A)(B) (4)
Integrated Regional Transportation System	State Planning Goals: (c)(4) Required Element: (4)
Land Use & Implementation Program	State Planning Goals: (b)(3)(c)(1)(A)(C)(D)(9)(e)(2)(A) – (F) Required Element: (1)(7)

State Requirement	CVRPC Goals & Strategies	Other Chapters
24 VSA §4348a(a)(8) A statement indicating how the regional plan relates to development trends, needs, and plans and regional plans for adjacent municipalities and regions.	See: “Municipal Planning” & “How CVRPC Relates to Neighboring RPCs”	
24 VSA §4302(a) General purposes. It is the intent and purpose of this chapter to encourage the appropriate development of all lands in this State by the action of its constituent municipalities and regions...	Goal 1, 1.1; Goal 2, 2.1;	
24 VSA § 4302(b)... ...(1). To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and State agencies.	Goal 4, 4.1, 4.2	
...(2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.	Goal 3; Goal 4; Goal 5	
...(3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the State, as well as the community in which it takes place.	Goal 4	Natural Systems? Working Landscape?
...(4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans	Goal 5	

Cooperative Planning

Steward a strong culture of cooperative planning with local, regional and state partners, and empower residents to work together to find solutions to sustaining the vitality of their communities and the high quality of life enjoyed in our Region.

Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) are sandwiched between municipal government and state agencies and, unlike county governments in other states, RPCs have no regulatory authority or jurisdiction. However, RPCs are intermediaries between State and municipal governments and provide technical assistance to member municipalities and help administer various State programs. Additionally, the regional plans that RPCs develop can be used in the following ways:

- **A long-term guide** to evaluate public and private investments that affect the future of the Region.
- **A tool for coordination** to ensure that municipal planning initiatives are compatible with those of neighboring municipalities and the State.
- **An aid in State regulatory proceedings** to ensure regionally significant, large-scale projects that require Act 250 or Section 248 approval are compatible with the regional vision.
- **A source for prioritizing strategic planning studies** to meet specific needs like creating more housing or managing stormwater.
- **A stand-in for a municipal plan.** A municipality may choose to adopt the regional plan or a portion of it as its municipal plan, in the event that a municipality may not or cannot develop its own plan.

Goal 1 Encourage cooperative regional planning to align economic, social, and environmental interests to guide investments that help meet the future needs of the Region’s residents.

Goal 2 Develop commonly shared development goals for appropriate land uses through collaboration with municipal partners.

Goal 3 A well informed and trained body of local volunteers to carry out required planning needs and the most local level possible.

Goal 4 Cooperative and coordinated planning to identify how local planning decisions can have regional or wider felt impacts.

Goal 5 Ensure the CVRPC serves as a forum for local leaders to come together and a resource to support local planning needs.

Planning in Central Vermont

Municipal Planning

The State of Vermont has a long tradition of local government, with municipalities planning local development since the early 1920s. State law does not require municipal governments to engage in long-term planning; however, Vermont’s Planning and Development Act (24 VSA Chapter 117) enables municipal planning if desired. Municipal planning commissions made up of volunteers appointed by local officials may produce a comprehensive development plan, otherwise known as a municipal or town plan.

The municipal plan must contain the elements required in 24 VSA Chapter 117 and must also work toward achieving the State Planning Goals. The municipal plan sets long-term goals for the community and provides the legal basis for adopting municipal land use regulations (zoning and/or subdivision bylaws) and other programs necessary to facilitate orderly development and land conservation. The municipal plan is primarily visionary but does carry some weight when state and local regulators review permit applications.

For a municipal plan to succeed, municipal planners should continually update the plan’s goals and strategies in response to changing conditions. Ensuring broad public engagement is a crucial component of the planning process as towns’ development plans can affect access to services, property values, and community character.

How municipalities fund their planning programs varies. Some allocate a portion of the municipal budget to carrying out a planning program. Most municipalities heavily rely on volunteer boards and committees to undertake planning duties with limited municipal staff to assist. Many towns rely on State grants (and to a lesser degree federal funds) to fund municipal plan updates, bylaw amendments, strategic plans, and scoping/engineering studies. Implementing complex or large-scale projects often requires significant volunteer dedication and expertise or reliance on outside professionals such as consultants and RPC staff.

State law enables municipalities to band together and pool resources to form Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and Municipal Union Districts (MUDs). Several examples of municipalities exercising these powers in Central Vermont include the following:

- CVRPC provides technical assistance to aid in planning efforts that cross municipal boundaries. Municipalities appoint commissioners to serve on the RPC and its respective committees. (For more info on RPCs, please see next section.)
- Municipal Union Districts (MUDs) provide shared services. Examples in the Region include:
 - Wrightsville Beach Recreation District
 - Mad River Valley Planning District
 - Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD)
 - Communication Union Districts / CVFiber
 - Consolidated Water and Sewer Districts: part of the municipal purview (Barre Fire District #1, Williamstown Fire District #1, Edward Farr Utility District...other?)
 - Natural Resource Conservation Districts / Winooski Natural Resource Conservation Districts (WNRCD)
 - Mad River Resource District Management Alliance

Municipalities may also join the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT): a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded in 1967 to serve and strengthen Vermont local government. VLCT provides the following:

- Educational workshops and consulting advice for municipal officials.
- Support for legislation that strengthens local government.
- Comprehensive insurance coverage for municipalities.
- A Municipal Assistance Center for consultation on a wide range of municipal issues.

Regional Planning

In 1957, the Vermont State Legislature authorized municipalities to come together and form regional planning commissions. RPCs are not part of State government, but State Statute defines the powers and duties of RPCs (Title 24, Chapter 117). RPCs' purpose is to provide planning assistance to municipalities within the region and create a forum for addressing issues that cross municipal boundaries. Statute also requires RPCs to prepare regional plans which are consistent with statewide goals and compatible with the adjoining regions' plans.

The regional plan must contain the elements required in 24 VSA Chapter 117 and must also work toward achieving the State Planning Goals. Similar to the municipal plan, it sets the vision and long-term goals for the region and sets the foundation (and legal basis) for identifying projects that have a significant regional impact. The regional plan should include clear goals and strategies that are given deference

when State regulators review permit applications for large development projects (Act 250) or energy generation facilities and telecommunication structures (Sections 248 and 248a).

SIDEBAR: The purpose of the Regional Plan: “best promote(s) the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and welfare of the inhabitants as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.” (as per 24 VSA Chap 117)

SIDEBAR: Significant Regional Impact:

RPCs can help ensure consistency in municipal planning. The regional plan provides a framework of region-wide goals and strategies for local officials to consider when preparing or updating their municipal plans. The State also offers financial incentives to encourage municipalities to coordinate directly with their RPCs. Although the State does not require municipalities to seek regional approval of their municipal plans from their RPC, receiving that regional approval makes municipalities eligible for various State funding programs.

Member municipalities govern their RPCs through volunteer commissioners appointed by the municipalities’ legislative bodies. These representatives govern the commissions’ activities and provide a critical link ensuring that regional efforts are aligned with the needs of member municipalities. An RPC’s day-to-day operations are carried out by staff overseen by an executive director, who reports to the commissioners. The CVRPC and its member municipalities are principal partners in fostering cooperative planning across the region.

How CVRPC Relates to Neighboring RPCs

Five regional planning commissions border CVRPC:

- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission
- Addison County Regional Planning Commission

CVRPC is economically and culturally closely tied to its neighboring RPCs. And while CVRPC regularly communicates with each of the RPCs and collaborates on various initiatives, more pointed consultation and coordination is on an as needed basis where demand merits as outlined in the examples below.

Land Use

CVRPC, like its neighbors, publishes a Future Land Use Map as a requirement of its Regional Plan. This is a starting point for how RPCs can relate their development goals to neighboring jurisdictions. Where CVRPC abuts other RPCs, the dominant land uses are, as defined by the CVRPC Future Land Use Map, Rural. This includes some portion of Rural-General, Rural-Agriculture and Forestry, and Rural-Conservation. And while the names each region uses to categorize its abutting land uses all vary, they can be generalized to also be a mix of rural, rural agriculture, forestland, or conservation.

Watershed Planning

CVRPC primarily lies in The Winooski River Water Basin (Basin 8). However, Basin 8 extends well beyond the CVRPC boundaries. To facilitate investment and planning in Basin 8, CVRPC serves as the designated Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP). The coordinating body for the CWSP, the Basin Water Quality

Council (BWQC), comprises representatives from within and without the CVRPC planning area. In addition to the local representatives, this council includes representatives from CCRPC, the Town of Essex, the Town of Stowe and neighboring Natural Resource Conservation Districts. CVRPC also participates in the meetings of the neighboring BWQC associated with the Lamoille River Basin to represent the interests of those areas of the Central Vermont jurisdiction that are in that river basin.

Economic Development

CVRPC participated in developing the Western Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for a four-county planning area. Partners in the Western Central Vermont CEDS include:

- Addison County Economic Development Corporation (ACEDC)
- Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC)
- Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC)
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC)
- Chamber and Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR)
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
- Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation (GBIC)
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)

The West Central Vermont CEDS partners are now working to form an Economic Development District that will build on this experience of participatory and cooperative planning.

Transportation

Interstate 89, as well as other significant state routes, including Route 2, Route 302, Route 100, play an integral part in connecting Central Vermont to our neighboring regions and support substantial economic connectivity and commuting. To address major needs, CVRPC participates in steering committees related to major projects even when they lie beyond the regional jurisdiction. This has included participation in the Chittenden County I-89 2050 Study and coordination with AOT, LCPC and municipal partners on managing the impacts of ongoing development in Waterbury and Stowe and the resulting congestions issues observed along Route 100. CVRPC will continue to engage with its neighbors and encourage them to engage in local studies that may have wider impacts.

Statewide Planning

In the early 1970s, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) took responsibility for directing local planning efforts. In addition to the ACCD, various State agencies have adopted statewide plans that affect local and regional planning, especially by defining priorities for State funding. All statewide plans must further the Statewide Planning Goals and conform with regional plans.

Unlike at the local level, where the municipal plan directs land use regulation, there is no statewide land use plan that guides State land use regulation. Instead, State agencies base land use regulation, most notably Act 250 and Section 248 permitting, on proposed developments' conformance to regional plans and, to a lesser degree, municipal plans. Additionally, recent legislative directives are placing more

emphasis on the regional plan and to a lesser degree on municipal plans to provide the legal basis for siting large-scale development and directing priority locations for State funding and initiatives.¹

“What are Act 250 and Section 248?”

- Act 250: Vermont’s land use and development law that provides a public, quasi-judicial process for reviewing and managing the environmental, social and fiscal consequences of major subdivisions and developments in Vermont.²
- Section 248: Section 248 of Title 30 of Vermont Statute requires utilities and companies to obtain approval from the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for projects including electric generation and transmission facilities.

RPCs help State agencies implement many statewide plans. This collaboration provides State agencies with more Region-specific knowledge in making decisions and funding from State partners provides critical funding for RPCs. Statewide planning initiatives that RPCs help implement include:

- Clean Water Service Provider Network – VT Agency of Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Municipal Energy Resilience Program – VT Agency of Administration Department of Buildings and General Services.
- Transportation Planning Initiative – VT Agency of Transportation.
- Emergency Management Performance Grants – VT Department of Public Safety VT Emergency Management division.

By providing technical assistance to municipalities and working with them to ensure their regulations conform with State guidelines, CVRPC helps its member communities access State funding sources.

Outside of State government, various organizations are active in planning Vermont’s future, including:

- Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA): statewide association for Vermont's 11 regional planning commissions.³
- Vermont Planners Association: statewide, non-profit, membership-based organization of professional and citizen planners and others in related fields who support good planning.

Challenges

Cooperative regional planning relies on support from member municipalities and requires participants to balance sometimes-competing interests. Most RPC board members are lay volunteers who must both advocate for their municipal interests and support various State agency initiatives that might either favor other towns or may be in opposition to local political forces. These challenges are further compounded by limited capacity at the municipal level, lack of regulatory authority at the regional level, and an absence of more-centralized planning between State agencies.

¹ Examples of this include passage of Act 174 Enhanced Energy Planning and need to cite recently passed legislation that NRB Legislative Report to study land use areas and ACCD’s workplan item to develop a methodology for unified approach to developing a regional plan future land use plan and map.

² <https://nrb.vermont.gov/act250-program>

³ <https://www.vapda.org/>

A 2006 Vermont Council on Planning study identified the following challenges to cooperative planning: “As the pace of change in Vermont increases and the complexity of land use and other environmental and economic issues grows, the demands on the state’s RPCs will grow. Without clear authority and adequate resources, their ability to respond effectively will remain precarious and will vary depending on the stamina and creativity of staff members. This reality reduces the viability of a regional perspective at a time when it is increasingly important.”

Goals

Recognizing the difficulties associated with cooperative and engaged planning, CVRPC has developed the following goals:

Goal 1 Encourage cooperative regional planning to align economic, social, and environmental interests to guide investments that help meet the future needs of the Region’s residents.

Goal 2 Develop commonly shared development goals for appropriate land uses through collaboration with municipal partners.

Strategy 2.1 Identify uses and priority areas for redevelopment and new growth

Goal 3 A well informed and trained body of local volunteers to carry out required planning needs and the most local level possible.

Strategy 3.1 Improve training for local board members and staff on planning processes and policy frameworks.

Goal 4 Cooperative and coordinated planning to identify how local planning decisions can have regional or wider felt impacts.

Strategy 4.1 Engage municipalities regularly on their local planning process.

Strategy 4.2 Engage with planning commission during the drafting phase of municipal plans.

Goal 5 Ensure the CVRPC serves as a forum for local leaders to come together and a resource to support local planning needs.

Strategy 5.1 Hold regularly scheduled commission meetings where local leaders and the public feel welcome.

Statutory Requirements	CVRPC Goals & Strategies	Other Chapters
24VSA § 4348a(a)(1): A statement of basic policies of the region to guide the future growth and development of land and of public services and facilities, and to protect the environment.	<i>See Land Use Policy Statement</i>	
24VSA § 4348a(a)(2) A land use element, which shall consist of a map and statement of present and prospective land uses , that:...	<i>See Map and Planning Areas</i>	
...(A) Indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture (using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8), residence, commerce, industry, public, and semi-public uses, open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, and areas identified by the State, regional planning commissions, or municipalities that require special consideration for aquifer protection; for wetland protection; for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors; or for other conservation purposes.	<i>See Map and Planning Areas: Downtown/Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, Village Areas, Neighborhood Residential, Transition/Infill Areas, Resource-Based Recreation Areas, Enterprise, Hamlet, Rural-General, Rural Agricultural and Forestry, Rural - Conservation</i>	
...(B) Indicates those areas within the region that are likely candidates for designation under sections 2793 (downtown development districts), 2793a (village centers), 2793b (new town centers), and 2793c (growth centers) of this title.	<i>See Map and Planning Areas: Downtown/Village Center, Planned Growth Areas, Village Areas</i>	
...(C) Indicates locations proposed for developments with a potential for regional impact, as determined by the regional planning commission, including flood control projects, surface water supply projects, industrial parks, office parks, shopping centers and shopping malls, airports, tourist attractions, recreational facilities, private schools, public or private colleges, and residential developments or subdivisions.	<i>See Map and Planning Areas: Resource-Based Recreation Areas, Planned Growth Areas, Village Areas, Transition/Infill Areas, Enterprise</i>	
...(D) Sets forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity, and character of such land uses	<i>See Land Use Policy Statement</i>	

and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services.	<i>and Implementation</i>	
...(E) Indicates those areas that have the potential to sustain agriculture and recommendations for maintaining them which may include transfer of development rights, acquisition of development rights, or farmer assistance programs.	<i>See Planning Areas: Rural - Agricultural and Forestry</i>	<i>Working Landscape Element (?)</i>
...(F) 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. A plan may include specific policies to encourage the active management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water quality, timber production, recreation, or other values or functions identified by the regional planning commission.	<i>See Planning Areas: Rural - Agricultural and Forestry and Rural - Conservation</i>	<i>Working Landscape Element (?)</i>
24VSA § 4348a(a)(7) A program for the implementation of the regional plan's objectives, including a recommended investment strategy for regional facilities and services based on a capacity study of the elements in this section.	<i>See Implementation</i>	
24 VSA § 4302(C)(1)(D) Development should be undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles as defined in subdivision 2791(13) of this title.	<i>See Land Use Policy Statement, Planning Areas, and Implementation</i>	

[\[Map here\]](#)

A Land Use Element

Planning land use provides the basis for all future land development decisions. These decisions will impact every other aspect of the Regional Plan, including energy, transportation, natural resources, economic development, and public utilities and facilities. As such, a clear and concise land use plan is critical to the successful implementation of the goals of a regional plan.

Vermont Statute clearly outlines the criteria that a regional plan is required to address. To that end, the following information is provided to address these statutory requirements. In addition to the text in this section, specific maps are included to provide visual representation of the goals and implementation actions identified herein. **The maps are intended to complement the text, not act as a substitute.**

Land Use Policy Statement:

This plan proposes a central land use policy that will guide future land use and development based on traditional land use patterns: concentrated nodes of residential and commercial development surrounded by open working lands and conservation lands. To achieve this, CVRPC will prioritize clustered settlement patterns and encourage higher-density residential, commercial, and industrial development in downtown and village centers. Further, CVRPC will work with municipalities to align local regulations, capital planning and public investment strategies with state and regional infill and redevelopment goals.

CVRPC recognizes that transportation has both enabled the development of affordable housing in rural bedroom communities as well as contributed to sprawling linear development along existing state routes and town highways that competes with agricultural uses and contributes to the fragmentation of forestland. Where transportation shortcomings exist, such as lack of mode choice or dependency on vehicles, CVRPC views these as land use shortcomings, manifestations of forces that limited new development in urban cores and adjacent lands where services and alternative mode choice exist. Therefore, CVRPC advocates for regulations that facilitate growth in existing settlements, direct public funding toward village and downtown centers and place new housing in or adjacent to existing walkable neighborhoods.

CVRPC recognizes that human settlement in river corridors and floodplains is at risk of increasingly frequent and intense fluvial erosion and inundation. At the same time, CVRPC recognizes that much of the Region's existing development is in river hazard areas and that it is easier to restrict new development than to remove existing development. CVRPC prioritizes conserving and, where feasible, restoring flood storage capacity and keeping new development out of harm's way. Land use regulation is the most effective method of preventing future development in floodplains and river corridors – or at least ensuring that development is safe from hazards and does not worsen the hazard downstream.

Mixed-use land use should be determined by measurable impacts on neighborhood characteristics instead of simplistic typologies like Commercial or Industrial. Where compatible, CVRPC supports the transformation of existing commercial areas into areas serving a mix of uses in areas not at risk of flooding.

Development should adhere to State “smart growth principles” (24 V.S.A. § 2791) to minimize its impact on the viability of agricultural operations and its contribution to the fragmentation of large contiguous tracts of woodland. Identified critical wildlife corridors should be protected from fragmentation and uses that reduce their viability for movement of wildlife, particularly where they connect large contiguous tracts of land. Development on wetlands, steep slopes of 25% or more, and ridge lines should be avoided.

Based on these policy statements and using the recommendations from the VAPDA Regional Planning Report, required by Section 15 of Act 47 of 2023, CVRPC has developed future land use Planning Areas and a Future Land Use Map. The Planning Areas are not meant to be detailed representations of current conditions, nor are they intended to be distinct areas of segregated future land uses. The Planning Areas focus on the overall pattern and form of development across the rural to urban spectrum rather than on specific densities or uses, which are more properly defined at the local level.

Planning Areas

Downtown/Village Centers:

These areas are vibrant, mixed-use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets. They include hamlets, villages, new town centers, and larger downtowns seeking benefits under the State Designation Program. The Downtown/Village Centers are the central business and civic centers within Planned Growth Areas or Village Areas, or they may stand alone.

Factors used in determining the presence and boundaries of a Downtown/Village Centers include a historical urban core, state-designated village center, local road network, availability of public water and wastewater infrastructure, dense development and smaller lot sizes (five units per acre or higher), a mix of residential, commercial and civic land uses, and a distinct separation from surrounding rural areas.

Planned Growth Areas:

Includes areas identified for the densest future growth and highest concentrations of population, housing, and employment in each region and town, as appropriate. They include a mix of commercial, residential, and civic or cultural sites with active streetscapes, supported by land development regulations, public water and wastewater and multi-modal transportation systems, and follow State smart growth principles (24 V.S.A. § 2791). These areas could include historic or New Town Centers, Designated Downtowns, Growth Centers, Village Centers, and Neighborhood Development Areas.

The primary factor used in determining the boundaries of Planned Growth Areas is municipal input on future planned development. In including these areas as Planned Growth Areas, the RPC will consider urban context and surrounding land uses to ensure the Planned Growth Area is complementary to existing Downtown/Village Centers.

Village Areas:

Includes the traditional settlement area or a proposed new settlement area; they typically comprise a cohesive mix of residential, civic, religious, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, arranged along a main street and intersecting streets that are within walking distance for residents who live within and surrounding the core. Village Areas may have one or more of the following: water, sewer, or land

development regulations. They provide some opportunity for infill development or new development where the village can grow outside of flood hazard areas. These areas include existing Village Center designations and similar areas statewide, but this area is larger than the Village Center designation.

Factors in determining the presence and boundaries of a Village Area include: a state-designated Village Center, local road network and availability of public utility infrastructure. Where water and wastewater infrastructure is present, density will be at least five units per acre; where utilities are not available, Village Areas will have relatively dense development and smaller lot sizes (greater than one unit per acre), a mix of land uses, and a distinct separation from surrounding rural areas.

Neighborhood Residential:

Includes already established dense residential areas served by water and sewer. These areas abut Downtown and Village Centers and are walkable but are single-use residential neighborhoods. Per state statute they have a minimum zoned density of five dwelling units per acre and provide some opportunity for infill development or new development. Neighborhood residential is not rural, nor is it planned for extensive future growth.

Factors that determine Neighborhood Residential areas include their proximity to Downtown/Village Centers and their dense, established, single use development pattern.

Transition/Infill Areas:

Includes areas of existing or planned commercial, office, mixed-use development, or residential uses either adjacent to a Planned Growth or Village Area or a new stand-alone Transition Area and served by, or planned for, water and/or wastewater. The intent of this land use category is to transform these areas into higher-density, mixed-use settlements, or residential neighborhoods through infill and redevelopment or new development. This area could also include adjacent greenfields outside flood hazard areas and planned for future growth.

Transitional/Infill Areas are determined by municipal planning goals intended to transform an existing, low-density commercial area into a mixed-use center.

Resource-Based Recreation Areas:

Includes large-scale resource-based, recreational facilities, often concentrated around ski resorts, lakeshores, or concentrated trail networks, which provide infrastructure, jobs, and housing to support recreational activities. These areas may have local water and wastewater and should be considered for new housing and services.

In Central Vermont Resource based Recreation Areas are determined by their proximity to a large-scale recreation area such as the ski resorts in the Mad River Valley. They may also be determined by the provision of water and wastewater.

Enterprise:

Includes locations of high economic activity and employment that are not adjacent to Planned Growth Areas. These include industrial parks, areas of natural resource extraction, or other commercial uses which involve larger land areas. Enterprise areas typically have ready access to water supply, sewage disposal, electricity, and freight transportation networks.

Enterprise areas are principally determined by local zoning bylaws that support concentrated commercial and industrial uses.

Hamlet:

Small historical clusters of homes and perhaps a school, church, store, or other public buildings not planned for significant growth; no public water supply or wastewater systems, and mostly focused along 1-2 roads.

Though small in area, a Hamlet is distinguished by a relatively dense development and a distinct separation from surrounding rural areas.

Rural - General:

Include areas that promote the preservation of Vermont's traditional working landscape and natural area features. Rural – General accommodates the bulk of Central Vermont's rural economy, including small enterprises and home-based occupations and professional services. They allow for low-density residential, home-based professions and limited commercial development that is compatible with productive lands and natural areas.

Rural - Agricultural and Forestry:

Include blocks of forest or farmland that sustain resource industries, provide critical wildlife habitat and movement, outdoor recreation, flood storage, aquifer recharge, and scenic beauty, and contribute to economic well-being and quality of life. Development in these areas should be carefully managed to promote the working landscape and rural economy, and address regional goals, while protecting the agricultural and forest resource value. Included in this category are forest blocks and habitat connectors that are significant on a state, regional or local level.

Rural - Conservation:

Include areas intended to be conserved often with regulations or State or non-profit purchase of property rights limiting development, fragmentation, and conversion in order to maintain ecological health and scenic beauty. These lands have significant ecological value, and require special protection due to their uniqueness, fragility, or ecological importance. They may include protected lands, areas with specific features like steep slopes or endangered species, wetlands, flood hazard areas, and shoreline protection areas, and are intended to remain largely undeveloped for the benefit of future generations. Some portion of managed forest land will likely fall into this category. Included in this category are forest blocks and habitat connectors that are significant on a state, regional or local level.

Examples of Rural - Conservation area include the following:

- Protected lands
- Elevations above 2,500 ft (elevations above 1,700 ft in Waitsfield, as regulated)
- Slopes of 25% or more
- Rare, threatened or endangered species and significant natural communities
- Wetlands
- Special flood hazard areas
- Shoreline protection areas
- Critical wildlife connectors

Implementation:

The Regional Plan is CVRPC's primary policy document. It outlines the areas that are designated as regional priorities for an eight-year planning horizon. As such this plan prescribes how CVRPC directs its planning work, focusing on strategies that will help the region work toward its planning goals. CVRPC implements the planning work identified in this plan in the follow ways:

- CVRPC develops an annual work plan to identify specific tasks staff will take on with each member municipality to advance regional planning goals.
- CVRPC staff provide technical assistance to member municipalities in developing or implementing municipal plans. When staff engage with a municipality it is an opportunity to review local planning for conformity with regional and state planning goals.
- CVRPC participates on State and local committees to help advocate or integrate a regional perspective in these planning initiatives.
- CVRPC actively works to engage Central Vermonters in its work, meetings, and trainings. These are opportunities to hear from local residents about what their priorities are and identify how our work can support these needs.
- CVRPC will work to develop indicators to annually assess the actions the organization has taken to meet its planning goals. Where indicators show a performance shortcoming, CVRPC can adjust its work program to better assign resources to the unmet needs.

While statute requires this plan to be updated every eight years, it is revisited frequently throughout that period as need arises or as new data needs to be incorporated into individual chapters.

State Requirements	CVRPC Goals & Strategies	Other Chapters
§ 4348a (10) An economic development element that describes...		
...present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development...	Goal 3; 3.1-3.8	
...and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.	Goal 4; 4.1-4.2	
24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(1)(B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas, employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both, and should be encouraged in growth centers designated under chapter 76A of this title	Goal 3; 3.1-3.8	
24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(2) To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.	Goal 2; 2.1-2.2	
24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(3) To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.	Goal 1; 1.1-1.3	
24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(9)(B) The manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.	Goal 5; 5.1	
24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(13) To ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare and to integrate childcare issues into the planning process, including childcare financing, infrastructure, business assistance for childcare providers, and childcare workforce development.		Infrastructure Chapter

Prosperous, Equitable, and Adaptable Economy

Aspiration: Foster a prosperous, equitable, and adaptable economy that will provide full employment in a broad range of occupations at a livable wage.

A healthy economy is essential to maintaining quality of life for Vermonters. A diversified and dynamic economy provides employment, stimulates social and cultural interaction, and provides the resources for the provision of a wide variety of community services, including

education, health care and well-maintained social and physical infrastructure. A diversified economy offers greater opportunities for individuals to engage in satisfying and meaningful occupations and pursuits.

Economic vitality is a balance between human, natural and capital resources. The interaction of these factors determines the scale and intensity of growth and development. The Economic Element of the Central Vermont Regional Plan focuses on the structures of the regional economy and how the CVRPC intends to support planning that maximizes our resources.

Goals:

Goal 1 Full employment and the creation and preservation of high-quality jobs in a diverse range of occupations.

Goal 2 Sustained economic growth in communities with high unemployment or low per capita income.

Goal 3 Focused growth and development in areas where services and utilities are available.

Goal 4 Business retention, growth and development that anticipate and meet market opportunities.

Goal 5 Grow value-added manufacturing associated with natural resources, agricultural, and forest products industries.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

CVRPC adopted the West Central Vermont CEDS in 2023. A CEDS - or a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. The West Central Vermont CEDS is the result of two-and-a-half year, regionally led planning process designed to build capacity, support local initiatives, and develop economic resiliency in West Central Vermont (Addison County, Chittenden County, Rutland County, and the CVRPC Planning Area).

The primary purpose of the West Central Vermont CEDS is to improve the economic wealth and well-being of all the Region's residents by strengthening local economic partnerships and enabling the Region to meet current and anticipated economic challenges. The intended outcome of maintaining a CEDS is to bolster the prosperity of the Region through collaboration and the leveraging of each participating region's strengths and assets, while also meeting the requirements of the federal Economic Development Administration to secure new funding sources.

In adopting the West Central Vermont CEDS, CVRPC also adopted these goals and will work to implement them in parallel to the goals of the Regional Plan. The West Central Vermont CEDS goals are as follows:

CEDS Goal #1: Attract New Workers and Expand Labor Force

Attract new workers of all skills sets, training, and expertise to the Region, and remove existing barriers to workforce participation for existing residents, to combat the state-wide labor

shortage due to the impacts of COVID-19, an aging population, and other structural barriers to labor participation.

CEDS Goal #2: Equity

Facilitate equitable economic development planning, and the delivery of services and programs, that advance opportunities and education for the traditionally underrepresented populations in the regional economy.

CEDS Goal #3: Business Development and Job Creation

Support job retention and growth at existing high-wage employers, attract new high-wage employers to the region, expand economic diversification, and create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs to create and grow their business within the Region.

CEDS Goal #4: Workforce Development and Employee Retention

Facilitate connection-building across public and private labor force stakeholders to improve workforce training and education alignment, collaboration, insights, and strategies on the regional level. Provide regional coordination among stakeholders to deliver effective workforce training and education to new and existing workforce.

CEDS Goal #5: Infrastructure and Resilience

Actively participate in the planning, funding, and construction of infrastructure projects needed to strengthen the regional economy and that support equity, smart growth principals, and economic resilience in response to climate change and other disasters.

CEDS Goal #6: Quality of Life

Balance economic development goals and growth with the importance of retaining key elements of our high quality of life in West Central Vermont (e.g. ample access to outdoor recreation, arts and culture, high quality K-12 public schools, and compact settlement surrounded by rural countryside).

Population and Workforce/ Employment Trends

Population

The population in the CVRPC planning area is 65,402 (2020 decennial Census). This accounts for 10% of the state's total population. The population grew 2.8% between 2000-2010 and then only marginally, 0.1% from 2010-2020. Due to pandemic-related immigration, it is unclear if the 2020 census accurately reflects the trends and additional data will be needed in future years to verify long-term trends.

The percentage of Vermonters 19 years or younger has been consistently decreasing since 2000. While the population of Vermonters 65 years and older has increased. As Vermont's population ages out of the workforce, a smaller proportion of working adults must support a larger proportion of the population than in the past. Loosely defining working age as 20 years to 65 years, the following table illustrates how an aging population will put downward pressure on the number of adults in the labor force. Additionally, the number of Central Vermonters under age 20 has decreased in this same period, potentially indicating additional future scarcity in the workforce.

	2010	2015	2022
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Working age (20-64 year)	62%	64%	59%
Younger and older Central Vermonters	38%	36%	41%

Between 2016 and 2021 the population of households of 59 or younger decreased by 2.5% while those 59 or older increased by 10%. The number of workers aged 60+ increased significantly between 2012 and 2022, however, in the same period, the number of workers 16-44 years of age went up only marginally and the number of workers aged 45-59 went down significantly. The direct impacts on the economy are as the workforce ages, employees leave, and labor becomes scarcer.

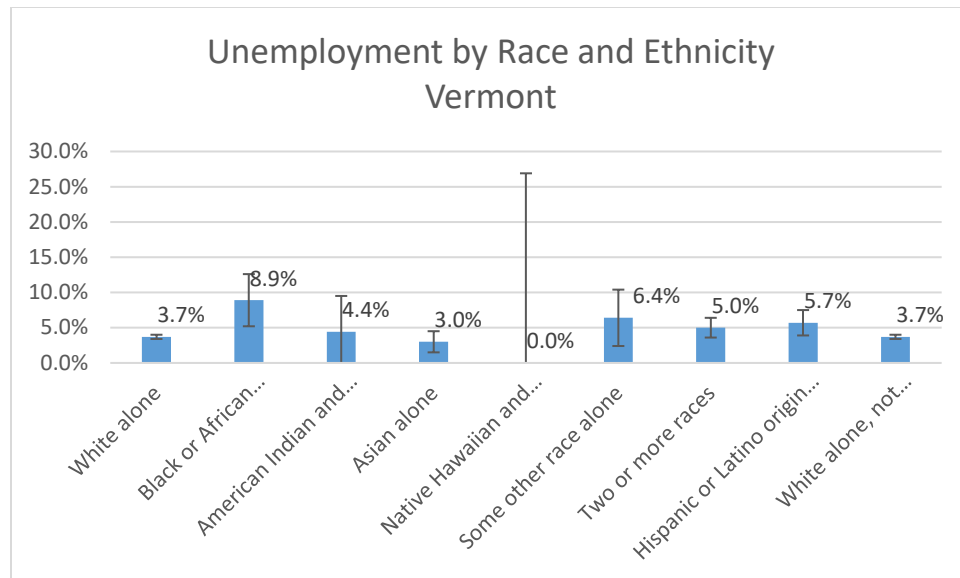
Gender Parity

Recent data (2021) show that nationally, the gender wage gap is \$0.18 cents, that is, an American woman on average make \$0.82 for every dollar a man makes. In Vermont, the wage gap is \$0.09, meaning that the average Vermont woman makes \$0.91 for every dollar an average white, non-Hispanic man makes. While Washington County and Vermont as a whole are leaders nationwide on this issue, continued effort is needed to achieve parity.¹

Race and Ethnicity of Workforce

A successful economy is one that provides equitable access to economic opportunity for Vermonters of all races and ethnicities. The chart below shows unemployment by race and ethnicity for the State of Vermont. While these numbers often have substantial uncertainty due to the limited sample sizes for many of the minority groups in Vermont, it demonstrates that White alone Vermonters generally experience lower unemployment than many of the other groups.

¹ National Women's Law Center, 2021. <https://vtdigger.org/2021/07/07/vermonts-gender-wage-gap-ranked-lowest-in-the-country/>



Education

Ensuring that the future workforce is well-trained and able to meet the needs of existing employers is important. Resources to help residents develop necessary professional skills help retain central Vermonters and link young adults completing high school with careers. Vermont and Central Vermont are served by several important resources. Examples of the programs needed to foster workforce training include: the VT Department of Labor's registered apprenticeships program, which provides work experience and training, and the Central Vermont Career Center, which is the region's provider of Career Technical Education and provides training and a pipeline between students and employers. Additionally, Central Vermont benefits from local post-secondary educational institutions like Community College of Vermont and Norwich University.

Working to close holes in the workforce development and high school-to-work pipeline will help those individuals who do not pursue a post-secondary education receive adequate training and take advantage of opportunities to enter local demanded high-skilled and high-paying occupations.

Access to Childcare

Affordable high-quality childcare is foundational to both the health of the next generation and necessary for our economic viability. On average Vermonters with children 5 and under spend over 25% of their income on childcare costs which is higher than the national average of 20%.

²Childcare and associated goals are included in this plan in greater detail in the [Infrastructure Chapter](#).

² <https://vermontbiz.com/news/2022/march/15/vermonters-spend-over-25-income-average-toddlers-child-care>

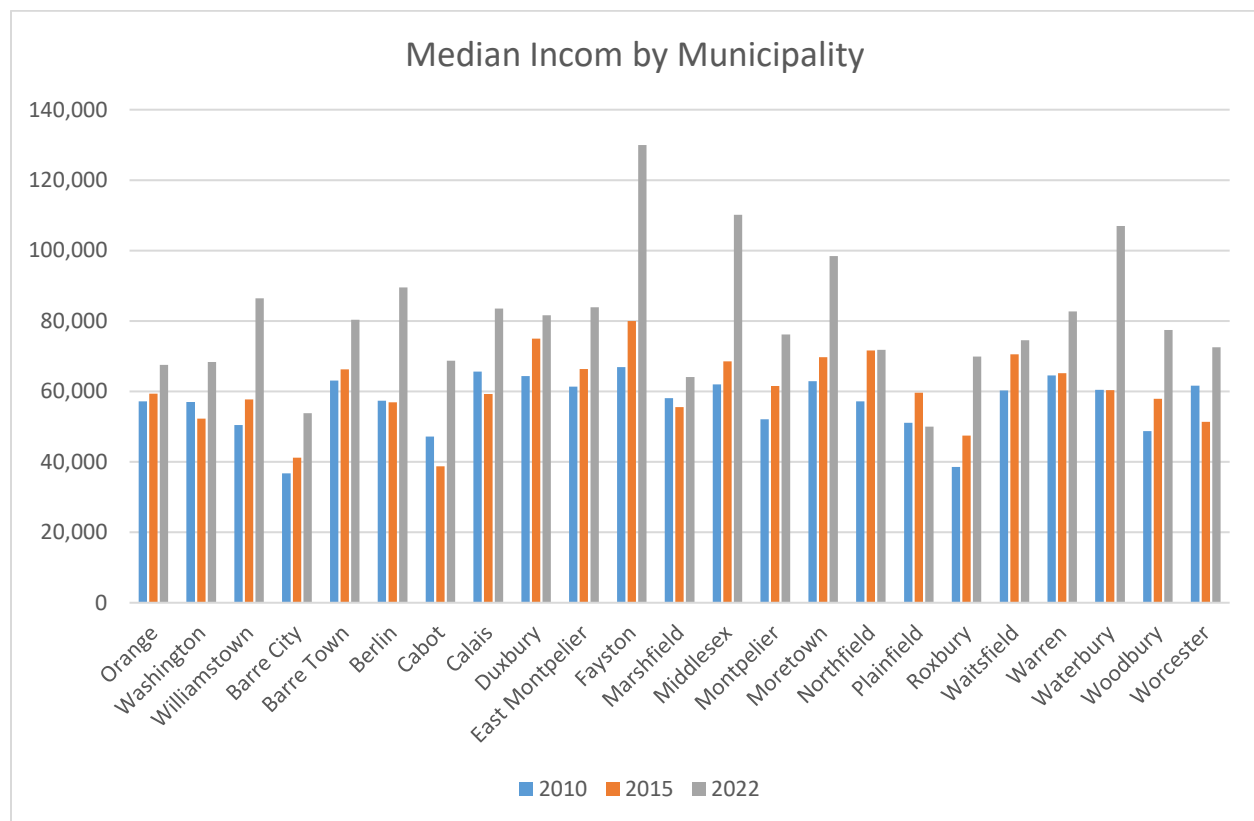
Participation and Employment

While unemployment measures the percentage of the labor force that is currently without a job or has experienced a decrease in employment, the labor force participation rate is the percentage of those of working age who are in the labor force. Vermont currently has low unemployment claims, and the unemployment rate has been decreasing state and countywide for over a decade. The labor force participation rate and population have not kept up with the workforce needs for the state or for our region resulting in employer vacancy rates remaining high.

Labor force participation rate may be impacted by factors such as;

- Higher rate of retirement due to aging population
- Slow rate of population growth
- Increased dependent care needs
- Desire for higher wage jobs and disinterest in low wage jobs
- Fear of contracting the COVID 19 virus/vulnerability to health implications from COVID
- Higher unemployment benefits and pandemic era economic stimulus payments

Household Income



Median household income can be used as a measure of economic vitality for a region. The above chart shows incomes increasing in most Central Vermont municipalities. However, this

growth has not been evenly distributed across each of the municipalities with the CVRPC planning region.

The Basic Needs Budgets and Livable Wage Report published by the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office (2023) defines livable wages and outlined in the table below. All hourly wages given are per wage earner.

2022 Basic Needs Budget Wages		
Family Type	Urban	Rural
Single Person	\$20.03	\$18.80
Single Parent, One Child	\$35.50	\$31.00
Single Parent, Two Children	\$45.92	\$39.47
Two Adults, No Children	\$15.11	\$15.55
Two Adults, Two Children (one wage earner)	\$37.43	\$36.71
Two Adults, Two Children (two wage earners)	\$25.97	\$24.32

Employment by Sector

Central Vermont has a diverse economy. However, many of its top industries are similar to elsewhere in the state. As host to the state capital, Montpelier, the Central Vermont economy is characterized by a high percentage of employment in the public administration sector.

Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector - 2019		
	Total	Percent
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,432	16.60%
Retail Trade	4,080	12.50%
Educational Services	3,430	10.50%
Public Administration	3,189	9.80%
Accommodation and Food Services	3,006	9.20%
Manufacturing	2,245	6.90%
Finance and Insurance	2,256	6.90%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,587	4.90%
Construction	1,423	4.40%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1,310	4.00%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1,137	3.50%
Wholesale Trade	1,035	3.20%
Transportation and Warehousing	707	2.20%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	435	1.30%
Information	399	1.20%

Management of Companies and Enterprises	314	1.00%
Utilities	261	0.80%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	212	0.60%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	156	0.50%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	76	0.20%

Productive Resources and Tourism

Central Vermont possesses "working landscapes" where people manage, nurture, and harvest the resources of nature. Farmlands, forest lands, and lands containing mineral resources are vitally important to the economy and character of our Region. This Plan encourages the protection of resource producing lands and the livelihoods of the people who use them by recognizing their benefits, promoting their products, and rethinking the attitudes, policies, and land use patterns that threaten their existence.

Farming helps to define the Region's cultural identity and provides Central Vermont residents with open space, recreational opportunities, aesthetic pleasure, and a sense of place. More importantly, farms and farm soils, if protected now, can assure us of some degree of Regional food resilience. The most recent Census of Agriculture conducted by the USDA showed that while statewide, the number of farms had decreased by 7%, while sector wide, net farm income had increased by 17%.

Forests provide many benefits to Central Vermont residents. The forest products industry contributes to the economy, provides jobs and raw materials for local production. Forests contain habitat essential to a variety of wildlife species and help protect and replenish surface and groundwater supplies. They also perform an important atmospheric cleansing function, protecting the quality of the air we breathe. Many recreational pursuits are dependent on, or enhanced by, forests, as is the aesthetic quality of the Region. According to a 2020 study funded by the USDA, statewide Vermont's forest economy directly employs over 9,100 people and has \$1.4 billion in sales. Total contributions from the sector support nearly 14,000 jobs, with labor income over \$500 million, and \$2.1 billion in sales.

Central Vermont is a place of celebrated natural beauty. Its scenic landscapes not only enrich lives and spirits and attract new businesses and residents, they also provide the basic ingredient for one of the Region's most important industries - tourism. Each year thousands of visitors travel here to see the mountain vistas, pastoral scenes, fertile valleys, historic villages, Interstate 89 (which has received awards for its scenery), remote back roads, and woodlands ablaze with autumn color. Thus, it is in our best interest, both psychologically and economically, to preserve the best of Central Vermont's visual splendor. Additionally, outdoor recreation and tourism are major contributors to the Vermont economy.

Downtown, Village Center and New Town Center Designations

Vermont has a State Designation Program to balance growth with preservation of our natural resources. A Downtown Designation intends to support community revitalization while preserving the historic character and enhancing the future of medium to large-sized historic

centers. This designation provides communities with financial incentives, training and technical assistance to support local efforts to restore historic buildings, improve housing, design walkable communities and encourage economic development by incentivizing public and private investments.

A Village Center designation aims to revitalize small to medium sized historic centers with financial resources, training and technical assistance to attract businesses and economic vitality in Vermont's smaller communities.

For municipalities that lack a historic downtown, Vermont statute [24 V.S.A § 2793b](#) provides the option of designating a New Town Center. Designation requirements focus on planning, capital expenditures, and regulatory tools promoting a pedestrian-oriented development pattern like our historic downtowns.

MAP OF DESIGNATIONS IN CVRPC REGION

Goals:

Goal 6 Full employment and the creation and preservation of high-quality jobs in a diverse range of occupations.

Strategy 6.1 Promote career exploration and education planning for all young people and reduce barriers to participation in some form of post-secondary education or training.

Strategy 6.2 Provide technical assistance to support regional educational institutions in trainings, field demonstrations and internships.

Strategy 6.3 Provide technical assistance to municipalities and career and technical education programs to build pipelines between training and employment.

Goal 7 Sustained economic growth in communities with high unemployment or low per capita income.

Strategy 7.1 Encourage ever higher environmental standards for economic growth.

Strategy 7.2 Ensure the impacts of growth are not unduly borne by frontline communities.

Goal 8 Focused growth and development in areas where services and utilities are available.

Strategy 8.1 Encourage and assist applications for state designations in existing compact settlements not yet designated by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Strategy 8.2 Assist participating municipalities in designation renewals and in utilizing technical assistance and incentives offered by State designation programs to preserve and reuse significant, economically viable, and historic structures.

Strategy 8.3 Support rezoning of village centers for mixed-use development, encompassing commercial, light manufacturing, artisan and residential uses at traditional village density.

Strategy 8.4 Assist municipalities in planning for capital investments, identifying barriers to redevelopment or reuse, and planning for adaptive reuse of buildings.

Strategy 8.5 Support and prioritize assistance with community-identified priority/anchor revitalization projects in our downtowns, village centers and growth centers as they are identified.

Strategy 8.6 Provide technical assistance to municipalities to update plans and bylaws to encourage context appropriate development in existing villages and commercial areas.

Strategy 8.7 Support municipal-led efforts to help businesses relocate out of river corridors and floodplains.

Goal 9 Business retention, growth and development that anticipate and meet market opportunities.

Strategy 9.1 Focus retention, growth and development efforts on industries and businesses that are a good fit with the Region's existing economic base and support sustainable economic development.

Strategy 9.2 Promote entrepreneurship and innovation in all business sectors and encourage small and micro business development.

Goal 10 Grow value-added manufacturing associated with natural resources, agricultural, and forest products industries.

Strategy 10.1 Support the production and marketing of local foods and beverages, granite industry, and forest products.

State Requirements	CVRPC Goals & Strategies	Other Chapters
24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(1): Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.	Goal 2, 2.1, 2.3, Goal 3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.6	
<p>24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(11): To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters...</p> <p>...(A) Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income.</p> <p>...(B) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.</p> <p>...(C) Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.</p> <p>...(D) Accessory apartments within or attached to single-family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives, elders, or persons who have a disability should be allowed.</p>	<p>Goal 1, 1.1,1.2,1.4; Goal 4, 4.6</p> <p>Goal 2, 2.1; Goal 3, 3.1, 3.2,</p> <p>Goal 3, 3.4</p> <p>Goal 3, 3.4</p>	
24 V.S.A. § 4348a (9) A housing element that identifies the regional and community-level need for housing that will result in an adequate supply of building code and energy code compliant homes where most households spend not more than 30 percent of their income on housing and not more than 15 percent on transportation. To establish housing needs, the Department of Housing and Community Development shall publish statewide and regional housing targets or ranges as part of the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment. The regional planning commission shall consult the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment; current and expected demographic data; the current location, quality, types, and cost of housing; other local studies related to housing needs; and data gathered pursuant to subsection 4382(c) of this title. If no such data has been gathered, the regional planning commission shall gather it. The regional planning commission's assessment shall estimate the total needed housing investments in terms of price, quality, unit size or type, and zoning district as applicable and shall disaggregate regional housing targets or ranges by		

<p>municipality. The housing element shall include a set of recommended actions to satisfy the established needs.</p> <p>§ 4302. Purpose; goals (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.</p>		
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Range of Housing Choices

Aspiration: Ensure a range of safe and affordable housing choices are available for all residents.

Intro

Central Vermont needs more types of housing and more housing near employment and commercial centers. Most municipalities in the Region have sufficient total housing stock; however, many Central Vermont residents are housing cost-burdened and homelessness rates in the Region are increasing. Additionally, much of the Region's existing housing stock is vulnerable to flooding and other natural disasters. To address these needs while maintaining Vermont's traditional pattern of compact settlements surrounded by rural countryside, CVRPC encourages developing higher-density, diverse, flood-safe housing near downtowns and village centers.

Safe and affordable housing is integral to a thriving economy and sustainable, inclusive communities. Vermont state statutes encourage development that maintains Vermont's historic settlement pattern and discourages strip development. Access to housing impacts local economic development, school enrollment, land use, traffic patterns and the region's ability to attract new people. Providing housing options for a variety of income levels, lifestyles, and household compositions contributes to the economy and social vitality of our region.

However, despite the vital importance of a safe and diverse housing stock, there is a shortage of matching housing options available to Central Vermonters. The causes of this shortage are manyfold, including an aging housing stock, changing household demographics, increased building costs, and population growth.

This chapter will describe the current housing stock in Central Vermont and its weaknesses, identify regional and community-level need for new housing, and describe how the CVRPC will work to encourage the supply of a diverse and affordable housing supply conveniently located to access existing and planned town and village centers.

Goals:

Goal 1 Develop housing opportunities for all residents of the CVRPC Region, including and especially, affordable, elderly, and specialized housing.

Goal 2 Administer innovative planning, design, and development of housing that minimizes costs, energy consumption, and environmental impacts.

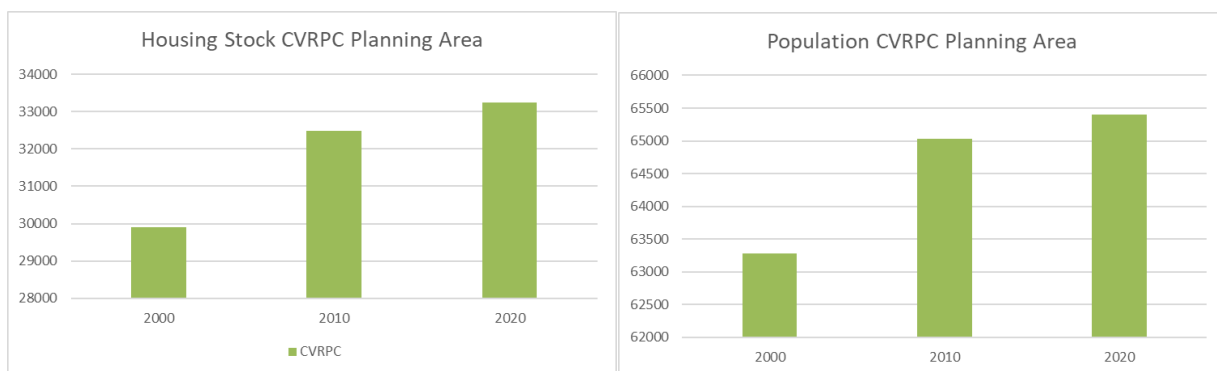
Goal 3 Develop new housing, including multi-family and manufactured homes, near employment, and outside of flood hazard areas. Build new housing to higher standards of flood resilience and preserve existing housing by retrofitting or rebuilding to higher standards of flood resilience.

Goal 4 Create an environment where coordination between public, private, and non-profit agencies involved with planning, financing, and developing affordable housing is frequent and easy.

Housing Stock and Characteristics

In 2020, there were 33,234 housing units and 65,402 residents in the CVRPC planning area (2020 U.S. Census). Since 2000, the number of units has grown but slowly. The slowed creation of new units between 2010 and 2020 was likely impacted by the 2008 Great Recession and the accompanying housing crash.

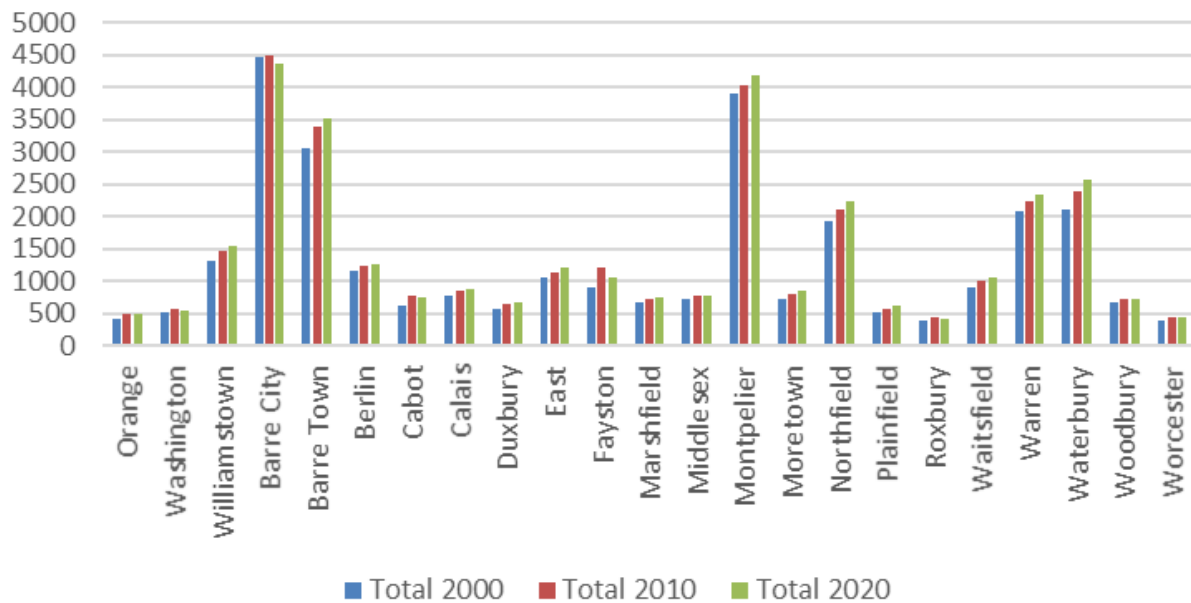
While housing growth has been modest, the population of the Central Vermont planning area has continued to grow, though at a similarly slow rate. Between 2010 and 2020, the Region gained only 368 new residents. That number would likely be even lower without the COVID-19 Pandemic, which is speculated to have increased migration from denser urban areas to rural communities, like Vermont (VT Department of Taxes). Pandemic-related migration to Vermont has since slowed, and CVRPC will continue to measure its lasting impacts.



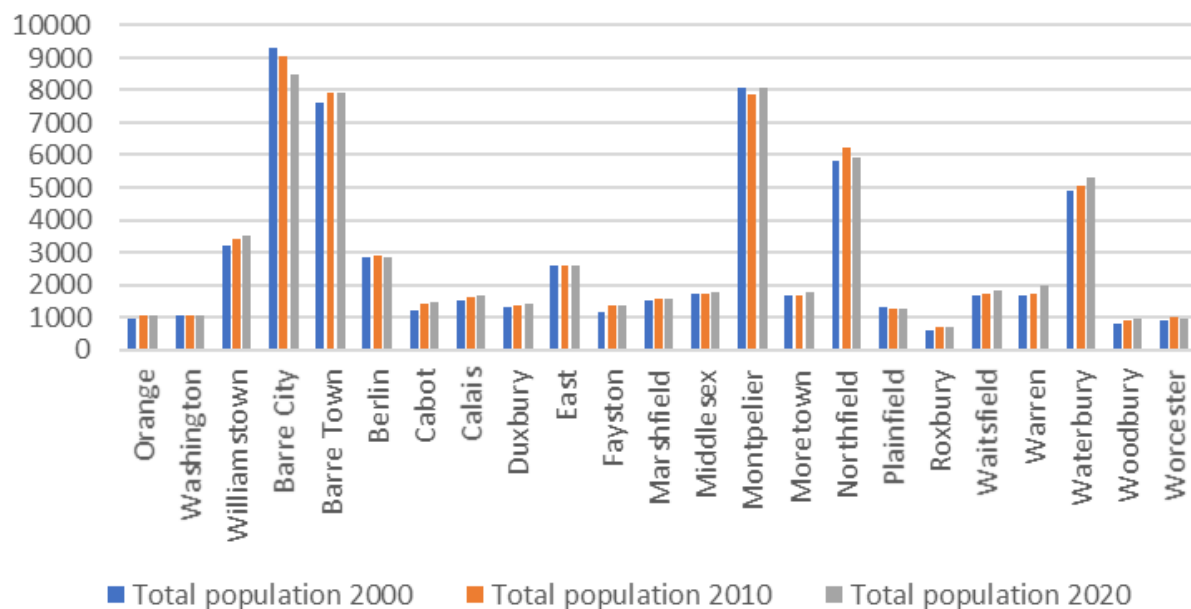
Census Table H001 – Decennial Census

Although the Region's housing has increased, even if at a slowing pace, this trend is not reflected across all municipalities. Many communities have recorded a decrease or stagnant growth in their housing stock.

Number of Housing Units by Municipality

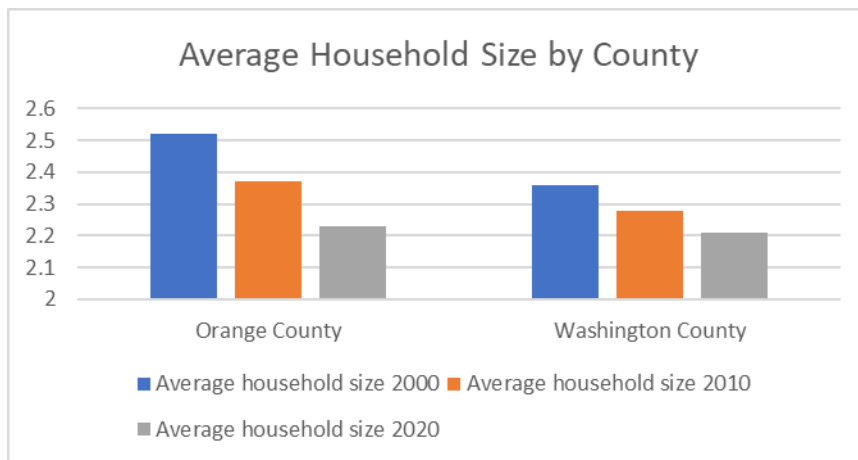


Population by Municipality



Household Composition

Changes in population and housing stock do not tell the whole story. During these same two decades, the number of occupants per household decreased. Household size has decreased by over 6% in Washington County and 11% in Orange County (the CVRPC planning region is all of Washington County and three towns in Orange County: Orange, Washington, and Williamstown). 20 of the 23 member towns in the Region experienced decreased average household size between 2000 and 2020. This implies that even without population growth, new housing units would be needed to house the population of Central Vermont.



While the average household size has decreased, the average floor area of new housing units in the United States has grown substantially over the last half-century, which has contributed to a mismatch between housing supply and demand. First-time homebuyers who may not yet have children and older residents who may no longer have children living at home are often looking for smaller housing options. In Central Vermont, programs to encourage a diversity of housing options will help buyers to purchase or rent a housing unit appropriate to their housing need and budget.

Affordable Housing Shortage

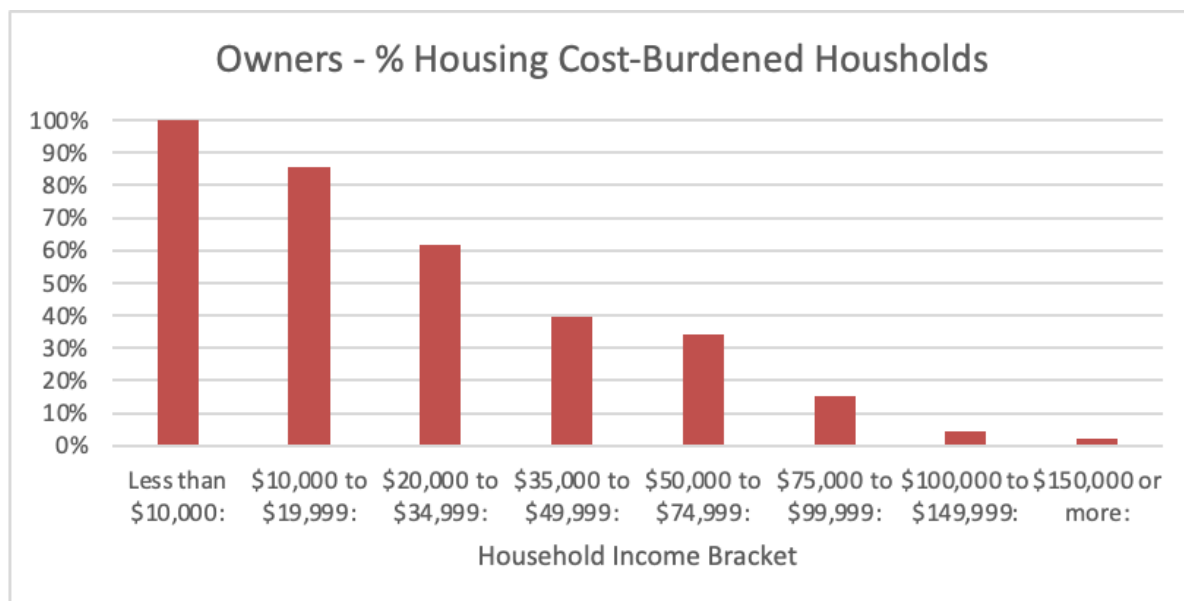
Despite vacancy rates exceeding the target of 5% in most towns and across the Region as a whole (implying sufficient total housing), affordability indicators show a need for increased affordable housing. Additionally, factoring transportation costs into affordability assessments highlights the need for more housing close to employment and commerce centers.

CVRPC and recent State legislation encourage developing diverse, affordable housing through several ways. These include constructing multi-unit housing developments and accessory dwelling units, reducing zoning density restrictions in appropriate areas for growth, and

converting single-family homes into duplexes. In 2022, the average new single-family home was 2,300 square feet, while the average unit in a new multi-unit construction was 1,300 square feet. Although housing units in multi-unit constructions are not necessarily smaller than single-family developments, developing both single- and multi-unit housing will increase housing variety and help residents find the housing that best suits their needs. This would help reduce both the housing shortage and housing cost burden.

Housing Cost Burden

The number of Central Vermonters who are housing cost-burdened indicates that affordable housing supply is not keeping up with demand. Housing cost-burdened households refer to those spending 30% or more of their income on housing; in Central Vermont, that includes 23% of owner-occupied households and 44% of renters. As detailed below, housing cost burden is especially high among low-income households and other frontline communities. This indicates demand for additional financial support and programs for households of all incomes, along with increased affordable housing options.



2022 - ACS

A substantial number of Central Vermonters are housing cost-burdened, including 23% of owner-occupied households and 44% of renters. While the data is not available for renters to illustrate housing burden by household income, the trend, as shown for household owners, indicates demand for additional financial support and programs for households of all incomes.

Housing and Transportation Index

Of course, housing is not the only cost associated with where someone lives; the Housing and Transportation Index attempts to provide a better measure of an area's affordability by combining housing and transportation costs as a percentage of Area Median Income. A target percentage of Area Median Income is 45%. As detailed below, the median Central Vermont household spends between 38% and 67% of their income on these basic living expenses and only three of the 22 census tracts in the Region meet the 45% target. However, where development is densest - downtown Montpelier, Barre City, and parts of Barre Town - housing and transportation require a smaller proportion of household income. This trend supports the concept that building housing in our denser cities and towns has additional benefits.

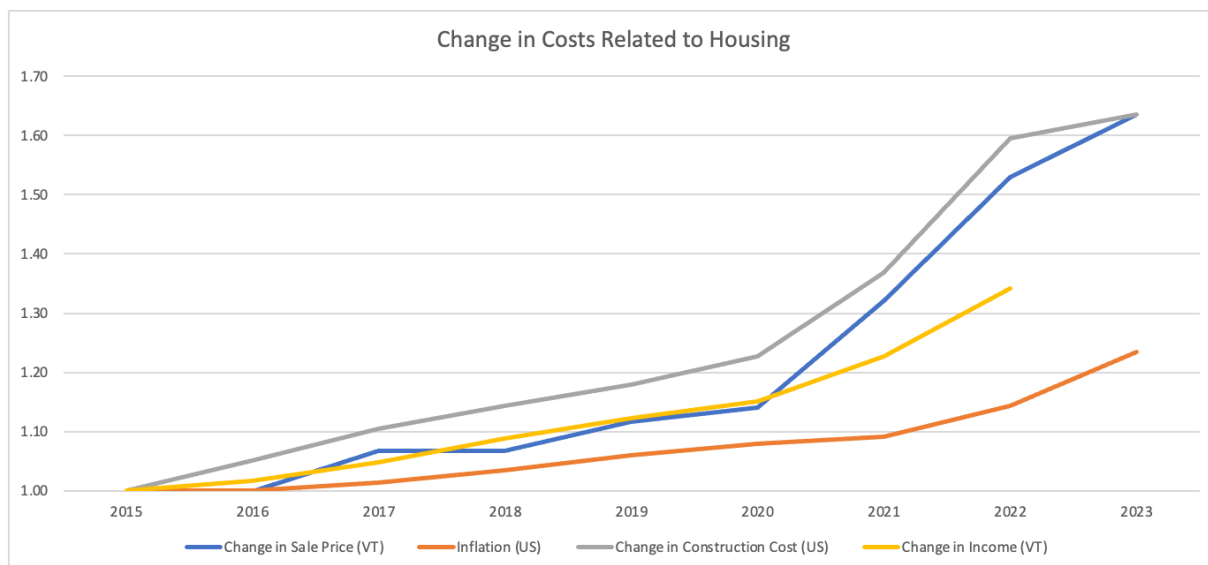
		Percent of Area Median Income Spent on:		
Municipality(ies)	Tract #	Housing and Transportation	Housing	Transportation
Orange/Washington	9591	54%	26%	28%
Orange/Washington	9591	53%	25%	28%
Williamstown	9592	54%	27%	27%
Marshfield/Cabot/ Plainfield	9540	53%	26%	27%
Woodbury/Calais	9541	57%	30%	27%
Worcester/Middlesex	9542	58%	30%	28%
Waterbury	9543	60%	35%	25%
Duxbury/Moretown	9544	58%	31%	27%
Berlin	9545	51%	28%	23%
Montpelier	9546	56%	34%	22%
Montpelier	9547	49%	27%	22%
Montpelier	9548	40%	23%	18%
Montpelier	9549	47%	26%	21%
East Montpelier	9550	60%	34%	26%
Barre City	9551	38%	19%	19%
Barre City	9552	40%	21%	19%

Barre Town	9553	53%	27%	27%
Barre Town	9554	46%	21%	25%
Roxbury/Northfield	9555	50%	25%	25%
Warren	9556	57%	31%	26%
Waitsfield	9557	54%	30%	25%
Fayston	9558	63%	35%	27%

2019 H+T Index

Housing Cost Factors

The Region's prolonged affordability issues are due to factors including indexed median home sale prices, new construction costs, VT median income, and inflation. Homes sale prices have grown rapidly since 2016 (over 6% per year) and there is no indication that Vermont will be able to build housing for any cheaper, as single-family home construction costs have also increased at a similar rate. Both measures have far exceeded national inflation. A silver lining is that statewide median income is also increasing, though its growth has trailed behind the construction and sales indices.



Vacancy Rates

Despite the demand for additional affordable housing across all demographic groups, vacancy rates in the region have been on the rise over the last two decades. This calls for deeper investigation into the causes of these housing units being left unused and opportunities to reactivate these housing units should be encouraged. During this same period, the vacancy rate for occasional-use housing units has decreased. CVRPC should investigate the relationship between these two housing categories and attempt to identify any negative impacts on housing availability or affordability.

Percent of Vacant Housing Units		
	For Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	All Other Vacancies
2000	11%	3%
2010	11%	5%
2020	10%	6%

2000, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

Housing Targets

As detailed above, vacancy rates in the Region as a whole exceed the 5% target; however, vacancy rates in parts of the Region are below that target, indicating a need to increase the total housing stock, not just the affordable housing stock. Below is a summary of additional housing units to reach a 5% vacancy rate across the Region (divided by census tract, since town-by-town vacancy rates were not available).

Municipality(ies)	Census Tract Number	Additional Housing Units Needed to Reach Target 5% Vacancy Rate
Barre City	9551	N/A
Barre City	9552	N/A
Barre Town	9553	41
Barre Town	9554	N/A
Berlin	9545	N/A
Cabot/Marshfield/Plainfield	9540	N/A
Calais/Woodbury	9541	N/A
Duxbury/Moretown	9544	21
East Montpelier	9550	8

Fayston	9558	N/A
Middlesex/Worcester	9542	11
Montpelier	9548	16
Montpelier	9547	14
Montpelier	9546	N/A
Montpelier	9549	N/A
Northfield	9555.01	N/A
Northfield/Roxbury	9555.02	N/A
Orange/Washington	9591.01	21
Waitsfield	9557	N/A
Warren	9556	N/A
Waterbury	9543	N/A
Williamstown	9592	N/A

Homelessness:

Homelessness rates have increased in the Region, driven in part by the affordable housing shortage. For many in the Region, homeownership and renting are not feasible; for others, the housing stock may not accommodate their needs. Homelessness rates in the Region have increased in the last six consecutive years and, statewide, by 19% between 2022 and 2023.

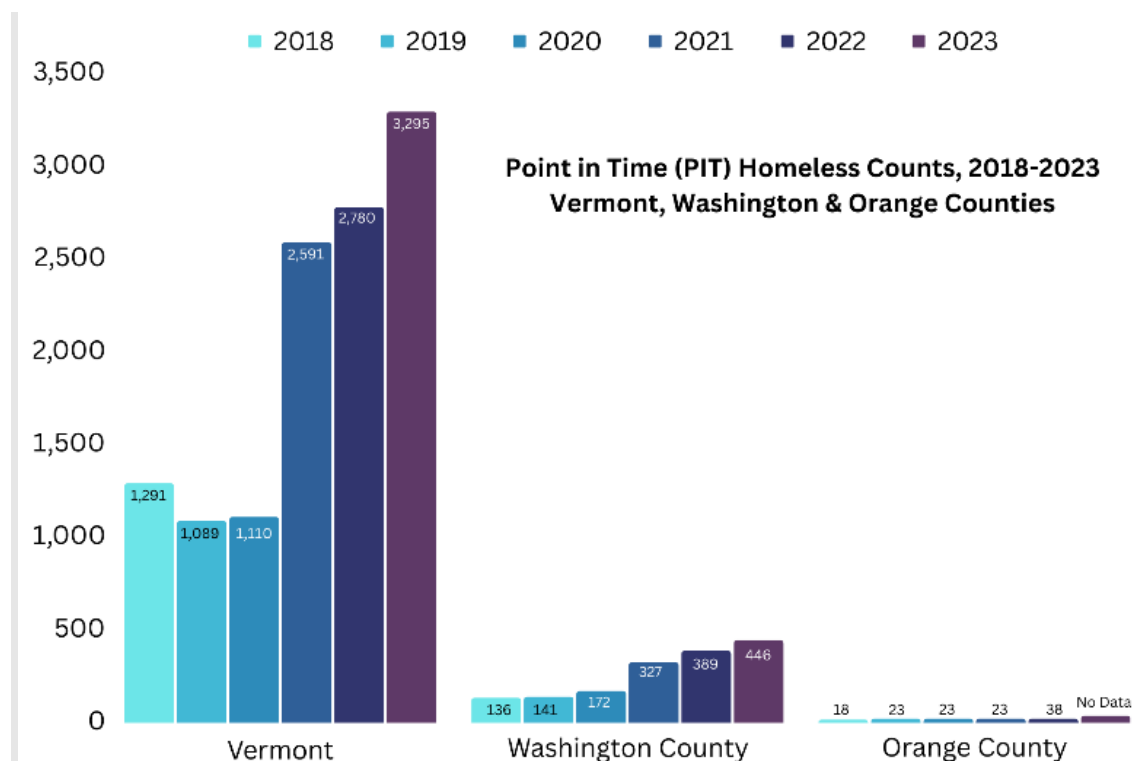
Children and the elderly represent vulnerable subgroups and the number of children and elderly individuals experiencing homelessness has risen sharply. Between 2007 and 2022, Vermont was one of five states with the highest increase in families with children experiencing homelessness: (an increase of 421 families (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)). The Vermont PIT Counts (detailed below) further illustrate a grim picture for children experiencing homelessness. In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, children made up 251 of the individuals experiencing homelessness in Vermont and in 2023, this ballooned to 654 children. In the CVRPC Region, there was a similar trend with 22 children experiencing homelessness during 2019's PIT Count and 87 in 2022. As Vermont's population ages, so does its population of people experiencing homelessness and many resources, including homeless shelters, do not have the resources to care for the specialized needs of the elderly, often including medical issues related to long-term drug use. The growing severity of the homelessness crisis underscores the Region's need for more affordable and specialized housing.

Vermont's needs differ from many other areas with an uptick in individuals experiencing homelessness. The state has the second-highest rate of homelessness in the country but one of the highest rates of sheltered individuals, which speaks to the need to move from emergency shelters to permanent housing. As detailed below, effective solutions to homelessness must go beyond simply building more affordable housing to provide holistic assistance to people

experiencing homelessness. However, a critical first step in any holistic solution is to ensure an adequate supply of affordable permanent housing.

There are currently resources in the Region for those experiencing homelessness, but they are not sufficient to meet the current or projected need. In Washington County, there are 1,311 units of subsidized apartments with specific affordability restrictions or reserved for residents with housing vouchers. The majority of these are restricted to housing for older and/or disabled tenants while others are designated as accessible units. Twenty-seven units are designated as supportive housing for the homeless. Good Samaritan Haven operates the only homeless shelters in the CVRPC planning area for adults. With facilities located in Berlin, Barre, Barre Town and Montpelier, they currently have 76 beds available. While this is an incredible resource for the Region, there is still much unmet need for housing those experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is a complex issue and increasing housing stock is one part of the solution, but not the only answer to the issue. Those experiencing homelessness may be also experiencing the effects of trauma, substance use disorder, mental health conditions, aging or any combination of these. It is important to have our region's solutions meet the complexity of needs. People Experiencing Homelessness Point in Time Counts

Shelter PIT Shelter by Type for Washington and Orange Counties



Source: Institute for Community Alliance

This data is collected in the annual Point in Time Count or One Night Count of the homeless. It is conducted each January by the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance. The count takes place overnight and counts only the literally homeless. This includes individuals in shelters, transitional housing, hotel rooms purchased using public funding, or those living outdoors. It does not include those at risk of homelessness or living with friends or family (couch surfing). The PIT Count inevitably under-represents the total number of people experiencing homelessness. In 2017, the number of homeless individuals who received services throughout the year was roughly three times the number counted in the PIT Count.

Point in Time Counts, a Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and Chittenden County Homeless Alliance survey of all individuals experiencing homelessness conducted on one night each January since 2016 showed that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has increased in the Region and statewide, with a spike during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Conclusion

CVRPC encourages member municipalities and residents to address the Region's shortage of affordable housing through various methods. These include diversifying the types of new housing units constructed, increasing density in new and existing housing units, and zoning for growth close to existing population centers and infrastructure and out of natural disaster hazard areas. The following are goals and strategies to ensure that all Central Vermont residents have housing that meets their needs.

Goals:

Goal 1 Develop housing opportunities for all residents of the CVRPC Region, including and especially, affordable, elderly, and specialized housing.

- a. Provide technical assistance to municipalities seeking to ensure at least 20% of the housing stock is affordable, as defined by 24 VSA, Chapter 117, Section 4303.
- b. Plan for workforce housing and units that are affordable to households below the area median income and housing near employment centers should be encouraged.
- c. Support large employers as they explore and implement employer assisted housing
- d. Assist towns in finding the resources needed to carry out housing needs analyses to identify the specific types of housing most needed by the community.

Goal 2 Administer innovative planning, design, and development of housing that minimizes costs, energy consumption, and environmental impacts.

- a. The majority of new housing should be constructed in town centers and Designated growth centers.
- b. Review town plans to ensure that all towns in the Region have a housing element that identifies housing issues and outlines steps through which housing needs will be addressed.
- c. Assist towns with the process of designating growth centers.

Goal 3 Develop new housing, including multi-family and manufactured homes, near employment and commerce, and outside of flood hazard areas. Build new housing to higher standards of flood resilience and preserve existing housing by retrofitting or rebuilding to higher standards of flood resilience.

- a. The Region's existing housing stock should be preserved and renovated. Adaptive re-use of older and historic buildings should be encouraged especially in town centers.
- b. Encourage the adoption of local land use regulations and bylaws that allow concentrated development where appropriate infrastructure can be made or is available.
- c. Promote the density building land use strategies discussed in this chapter and in the Land Use Element as a matter of course through our technical assistance programs.
- d. Provide technical assistance to municipalities on local bylaws that permit accessory dwelling units and leverage accessory dwelling units; provide resources for residents looking to build or convert existing structures into accessory dwelling units.

Goal 4 Create an environment where coordination between public, private, and non-profit agencies involved with planning, financing, and developing affordable housing is frequent and easy.

- a. The Region's towns, non-profits, and state agencies should work collaboratively to address the Region's housing needs.
- b. Help towns to identify potential partners for affordable housing development.
- c. Continue advocating for state policies and funding initiatives that increase housing opportunities for the Region's residents.
- d. Continue support of local housing groups.
- e. Actively participate in the Act 250 process to support appropriate housing development.
- f. Encourage towns to develop a streamlined permitting process for housing along with density bonuses and lowering of impact fees for affordable housing in growth centers, village centers and downtowns and other areas where housing growth is desired.