

# CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## Notable Updates to 2026 Regional Plan

The intent of this plan adoption is to leave regional policy largely unchanged. Where policy changes are being proposed, they are intended to narrowly meet the requirements of law and the LURB review process. Where the plan narrative is being changed, efforts are being made to focus on updating data. Where no new data is available, and the narrative is not needed to support policy or meet statute it has been struck through. This should be apparent as you read through the current draft. New text is in red, removed text has been struck through, and comments are provided in the margin to help explain staff intent. However, several required updates are either larger in nature or create new policy that should attract additional attention.

Two major policy changes that are reflected in this document are the Future Land Use Area map and the regional and local housing targets. These changes were precipitated by Act 181 of 2024. To provide additional information on these changes, links to the statute and methodologies are provided below.

While the energy goals/policies/pathways have been substantially carried forward from the 2018 enhanced energy plan, and much of the narrative is unchanged from the 2024 draft, other updates to the chapter have been made to meet the requirements of evolving state policy. Therefore, to help set the context for these updates, a more in-depth description of changes is provided below. A more in-depth treatment of these changes is provided below that is not provided for other chapters in the plan.

The above noted changes are not exhaustive, and you will see substantial new text throughout the document supporting our requirements to address equity in our planning work and to highlight our flooding and resilience goals. Hopefully this intent is clear from the margin notes.

### Chapter 2 – Land Use and the Future Land Use Area map.

This chapter received substantial updates to meet the required elements as outlined in state statute (**24 V.S.A. § 4348a**). The former regional land uses have been replaced with the state defined 11 land uses. A description of these land uses can be found in statutory language in Append F and attached methodology developed in cooperation between Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies and the Land Use Review Board.

[Link to FLUA mapping methodology](#)

## Chapter 3 – Energy Element

**Updates developed in 2024-2025 with feedback from the Regional Plan Committee. Meeting minutes cited below.**

- See updates below speaking to specific STANDARDS; narrative also brought in line with Natural Systems and Land Use, Housing, and Utilities, Facilities and Services chapters to promote consistency.
- **Residential Fuel-Switching Targets:** Customized Regional target for high-efficiency cord wood heat (residential), part of heat pump and cord wood approach and standalone wood heat for residential space heating
  - Previously, CVRPC used the default regional breakout from these targets. This was a significant issue for several of our communities, for whom cord wood heat is an important fuel source. Staff are recommending the customization of these targets to establish how cord wood heat can be part of our targets and the energy transition in Central Vermont by:
    - providing a new high-efficiency cord wood target (to replace outdated inefficient cord wood stoves and boilers as the preferred option where wood heating is chosen in new builds),
    - promoting the use of high-efficiency cord wood stoves with heat pumps (we do not reduce the target for heat pumps),
    - providing context on the use of wood heat across income-levels, the availability of cord wood including via wood pantries, the intersection with high frequency and duration of electric outages, and the significant reduction in energy use still achieved via wood heat stove conversion (especially when paired with heat pumps). [25-01-21 RPC-Packet1.pdf](#)
- **Incremental Renewable Energy** (memo above 25-01-21, and [25-02-04 RPC-Packet-1.pdf](#)); **Constraints and Siting Review**
  - While the previous plan assessed the resource potential areas across technology types and determined preferences and policies regarding scale and technology type, it did not, as is required, distribute our target across the technology types (necessary to consider land use and grid impacts)

- Committee discussed different scenarios in February of 2025 based on recommendations in January 2025 (and earlier), and showed preference for **scenario 3 25-02-04 RPC-Minutes\_Draft.pdf**
- Committee reviewed regional constraints and preferred project characteristics:
  - The committee agreed to clarify that municipal lands should not be categorically excluded as a siting constraint but, instead, municipal land exclusions should follow municipal priorities and specific sites' uses. (page 3 of the minutes)
  - Sam is integrating summary of municipal plans' local constraints and preferred sites into siting section to make clearer existing language re 248 process (and to hold space for municipal updates to be integrated in easily and clearly in mapping, project review, etc.)
  - Siting policy clear discussion of scale of projects and applicable constraints and preferences
  - Integration of substantial regional impact definition and thresholds
  - Integration of discussion on land use priorities in addition to natural resources and technical discussions- ensure energy generation is integrated, where appropriate, into development and/or proximate to it without precluding housing or other development itself especially where there is existing infrastructure

### **State Plan & Policy Updates**

- **State Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) (2022)**
  - Low-Emissions Analysis Platform (LEAP) informs statewide targets, methodology update and target update (2022)
  - **Appendix B- Act 174 Standards:** The 2022 Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP), published on January 14, 2022, includes several important updates to the Act 174 enhanced energy standards:
    - A revised set of standards, presented in this document, updated to reflect current developments in state energy policy,
    - An updated suite of recommendations tailored specifically toward the work of the regions and municipalities. ***Unlike the set of recommendations published with the original standards, which***

***were written prior to the passage of Act 174, these recommendations are included in the 2022 CEP itself.***

- ***Notable Changes to the Standards and regional plan include (The following are in addition to updated methodology and analyses required (tables and mapping) to meet Standards 4a-d, 5, 9a-f, 11, 12a-f, 13, 14, 15)***
  - Reframing of electric sector to recognize beneficial electrification in thermal and transportation sectors will increase electricity use but also must integrate electric efficiency measures (Standard 4),
  - Addition of climate resilient (not only efficient) buildings to meet Standard 6b,
  - Meets Standards 9a-f with more clarity and refinement, integrating local municipal plans, preferences, and challenges,
  - “NEW” STANDARD 10- assess potential equity impacts of policies and objectives included to meet standards 6-9,
  - Updates regional constraints, and integrates local constraints (not in previous plan) (Standard 12b&c),
  - Integrates transmission and distribution resources and transportation infrastructure into siting (Standard 12d- was discussed in previous plan narrative but not executed in mapping and analyses),
  - Integrates municipal preferred locations and regional and local preferred project characteristics (not in previous plan) (Standard 12eii),
  - “NEW” STANDARD 12f evaluation of forest blocks and habitat connectors integrated as possible constraints (not in previous plan),
  - Updates Standard 13A areas identified as unsuitable for particular categories or sizes of generation; to be clearer to 248 stakeholders (including municipal bodies and project review committee) and Standard 14 (see below Siting Review)
- State Climate Action Plan (2021 and 2025 update)

- Long Range Transmission Plan Update (VELCO) (2024) (especially solar optimization transmission and distribution resources constraints)
- Utility Integrated Resource Plans
- Renewable Energy Standards (RES) updates (2024 Act 179 which changed key tier requirements to reflect 100% renewable electricity by 2035 and created two new tiers: Tier 4 new regional renewable energy and Tier 5 on load growth)

## Chapter 6 - Housing Element: Housing Targets

Act 181 of 2024 requires each RPC to disaggregate regional housing targets to each municipality. Statute further states that a substantial majority of these targets should be assigned to Tier 1 eligible Future Land Use Areas. In this draft, staff has assigned targets based on future land use and land area. Of the total regional housing target, 60% has been assigned to Tier 1 eligible areas. These units are then distributed across municipalities based on land area. For example, if a municipality has 8% of the region’s Tier 1 eligible Future Land Use Areas, it received 8% of the Tier 1 assigned housing units.

The remaining 40% of the target was assigned to non-Tier 1 eligible Future Land Use Areas. This included Transition/Infill, Hamlet, Rural General, and Rural Agriculture & Forestry. Similar to the Tier 1 eligible target, these units were distributed by municipality proportionally based on land area.

No housing targets were assigned to Enterprise areas, Resource-Based Recreation areas, or Rural Conservation. There is nothing prohibiting housing from being developed in these areas; however, these areas are not intended to host a significant portion of new housing. A Rural Conservation Future Land Use Area on the Regional Map does **not** mean a parcel or area will be considered for Tier 3<sup>1</sup>. Tier 3 determinations are made by the State of Vermont Land Use Review Board independent of the regional planning commission. As with other elements of the regional plan, whether or not a town chooses to develop a local plan, adopt or update zoning, invest in infrastructure, make town land available for housing development, or take other actions to facilitate the development of housing remains the decision of the town.

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<sup>1</sup> Tier 3 is an Act 181 designation meant to prioritize forest blocks and other priority conservation areas. S.325, currently in committee, is drafting revisions to Act 181. Tier 3 and the “road rule” are two aspects of Act 181 where they are focusing their attention.