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Background & Context

OVERVIEW

The ECOS Plan is the Regional Plan for Chittenden County, Vermont. It includes three additional regional comprehensive plans: the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP), and Comprehensive Economic Develop Strategy (CEDS). Combining plans and looking at issues with an intersectional lens allows the county to agree on common objectives and collaborate across sectors on coordinated agendas of action.

The original ECOS Plan, adopted in 2013, stitched together voices of community members, and more than 60 organizations to create and convey shared visions and priorities for the region. The 2025 ECOS Plan is an update to the original version. It incorporates new data, and accounts for the shifting priorities of Chittenden County community members.

The CCRPC and municipal planning partners use the ECOS Plan to frame and guide planning and project priorities. Therefore, it is critical that the ECOS Plan meaningfully incorporates the needs of diverse communities throughout Chittenden County. The ECOS Plan provides an opportunity for government and non-government agencies, organizations, communities, and residents to engage in the planning process through its development every eight years. As a public document, residents can and should reference and rely on the ECOS Plan as they hold the CCRPC and its partners accountable for implementation.

Because the ECOS plan has been accessed and reviewed by partner organizations and citizens who have participated in civic processes for decades, the first phase of engagement prioritized the voices of community members whose needs, wants, and goals were not already represented in the plan. The second phase of engagement focused on the Regional Future Land Use Map update, as required by new state legislation. This supplement describes the outreach and engagement activities that CCRPC conducted during both phases of engagement to inform the ECOS Plan update.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & BEST PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To inform this community engagement strategy, CCRPC staff reviewed a range of national and local best practice resources related to equitable and comprehensive public engagement, including:

- *Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities* – PolicyLink
- *Community Leadership in Action: A Vermont Guide to Community Engagement and Resources* – Vermont Council on Rural Development
- *Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Strategies: A Field Guide* – Community Wealth Partners
- *Promising Practices for Meaningful Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making* – Federal Highway Administration
- *Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* – Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- *Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence* – North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)
- *Guidelines for Equitable Community Involvement* – NAACP
- *Equitable Community Engagement Guide* – Oregon Department of Transportation
- *Six Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement* – Organizing Engagement
- *Strengthening and Sustaining Public Engagement in Vermont: A Planning Guide for Communities* – Susan Clark, Public Agenda

In particular, the following principles outlined in *Strengthening and Sustaining Public Engagement in Vermont* helped inform CCRPC's engagement approach. CCRPC strives to uphold these principles in its engagement efforts, recognizing that unproductive engagement is damaging and often results in decreased trust in government and decision-makers. Productive engagement, when done respectfully and thoughtfully, results in better and more resilient policies, robust local citizenship networks, and stronger communities.

ENGAGEMENT WORKS BEST WHEN IT IS:

INTERACTIVE	Everyone has a chance to contribute.
TIMELY	It happens at a point when people can have an influence on important decisions.
INCLUSIVE	It brings together a wide range of people, including people who may have been excluded or not engaged before.
AUTHENTIC	People value one another's input and know the process will have meaningful results.
TRANSPARENT	It is open, honest, and understandable.
INFORMED	Everyone has access to the knowledge and data they need, and there is balanced information describing the pros and cons of different opinions.
ACCESSIBLE	The barriers to participation, including location, time, language and other factors that might deter people, are as low as possible.
RESPONSIVE	What people say is documented and decision-makers report back to participants on the outcomes of engagement.
NETWORK-BUILDING	Engagement helps to build relationships and networks over the long term.
EVALUATED	People are able to track and measure how engagement is working.

To uphold these principles throughout ECOS engagement, CCRPC:

- Offered multiple opportunities to engage, directly and indirectly.
- Provided clarity at the start with communities about what could and could not change about the plan, so that community input focused on the elements where it would hold influence.
- Presented and discussed the information in understandable, simple, and visual terms whenever possible, and shared all relevant information with community members before asking for input.
- Emphasized and prioritized relationship building in and throughout engagement.
- Shared all collected information back to participants to offer opportunities for corrections, additional comments, and accountability to build trust.
- Connected community members, municipalities, and organizations to one another when and where it made sense to support their own work.
- Respected community members' time and lived experience by providing stipends, language services, food, childcare when requested, and other support to reduce participation barriers.

GOAL OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Ensure that the voices of all Chittenden County communities meaningfully shape regional priorities, policies, and mapping. Engagement for the 2026 ECOS Regional Plan aimed to support a more inclusive and responsive plan by grounding it in lived experience, local expertise, and state planning requirements.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT & ASSESSMENT OF PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing social uprising that began in 2020 ignited significant changes in the social and political fabric of Chittenden County. Communities fractured as social isolation became a norm, and inequities deepened, especially for communities already struggling. Since then, the climate crisis has continued to visibly shape our landscapes, as the State has seen record flooding, poor air quality due to wildfires, and warming temperatures. Meanwhile, income inequality has continued to rise, political divides worsened, and Vermont has become the site of one of the nation's greatest housing crises.

To repair past harms, prevent future ones, and center local knowledge in policy, CCRPC recognizes the critical importance of organizational equity and community engagement. While this shift is necessary and overdue, CCRPC is also mindful of the growing fatigue among community members—driven by unmet basic needs and the high volume of overlapping engagement initiatives. To avoid placing additional burdens on already overextended individuals and organizations, staff reviewed engagement activities conducted since 2020 and incorporated existing community-informed insights into this plan. The approach emphasized clarity in outreach, a focus on filling identified gaps, and compensating community members for their time and expertise.

In spring 2024, CCRPC staff reviewed more than 30 recent public engagement efforts conducted by municipalities, State agencies, and community organizations to reduce duplication and lessen participant fatigue. Insights from these efforts have been integrated into the ECOS Plan where applicable. For a full list of the engagement efforts reviewed, please see this Community Engagement Tracker.

- Age Strong Burlington Draft Action Recommendations (Burlington Council on Aging)
- Amplifying Vermont's Economic Resilience
- Burlington Housing and Community Development Ranking
- Burlington's Racial Equity Strategic Roadmap
- CEDS Engagement
- Charlotte Village Master Planning Project Outreach
- Chittenden County Active Transportation Survey
- Community Health Needs Assessment
- Connecting Power to People Report from RDI
- Essex Town Plan Outreach (see raw data link too)
- Jericho Town Plan Outreach
- Milton on the Move Report
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Engagement
- Opportunities for Action Plan 2022
- South Burlington Comments
- Strengthening the Housing and Services System
- Underhill ARPA Survey
- Vermont Climate Action Office Engagement
- Vermont Designation 2050
- Vermont Future Forests Strategic Roadmap
- Vermonters Identify Top Issues
- Vermont Manufactured Home Flood Risk Assessment
- Vermont's Priority Measures for Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Funding
- Vermont Propositions
- Vermont Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

- Vermont Vision for Youth Success
- Vermont Weighs In
- VTrans Carbon Reduction Strategy
- VTrans Transportation Equity Framework
- Williston Town Plan Engagement

COLLABORATION WITH CCRPC'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CCRPC staff collaborated closely with CCRPC's Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) throughout both phases of engagement. At the outset, staff provided an overview of the ECOS Plan and its implications for Chittenden County communities. CEAC members discussed their desired level of involvement and opted to receive updates at monthly meetings, while offering support for specific events and focus groups on an as-needed basis.

To help shape Phase 1 priorities, CEAC members offered the following recommendations:

- Focus engagement on the **housing chapter** of the ECOS Plan.
- Strive to engage **all underrepresented and marginalized communities** by prioritizing **inclusive methods** rather than targeting specific groups.
- **Meet people where they are**, such as at religious gatherings, sports events, or community centers.
- **Compensate community members** for their time and expertise.
- Organize **language-specific focus groups** to ensure culturally relevant participation.
- **Distribute flyers** with QR codes linking to surveys in accessible public spaces.
- Partner with the **Vermont Language Justice Project** to produce outreach videos in multiple languages.
- Use events that emphasize **community-building first** (music, food, socializing) before collecting feedback.
- Share information through **CCTV's African Variety Channel**.
- Avoid hiring external consultants; instead, **invest resources directly in community efforts**.
- Move away from using the term **"stakeholder,"** which has exclusionary origins.
- Collaborate with trusted organizations and venues, including AALV, The Family Room, Winooski Rotary Park (for outdoor events), The Islamic Society of Vermont (ISVT), JUMP, and Vermont Interfaith Action.

During Phase 2, CEAC remained engaged as CCRPC developed the Regional Future Land Use Map and housing targets required under Act 181. Staff presented the committee with overviews of Act 181, mapping methodology, and housing target calculations, and invited feedback on draft materials and outreach strategies.

Discussions centered on the environmental, racial, and social equity implications of the new planning framework. Members expressed concerns that, without intentional design, Act 181 could reinforce existing disparities. They were also invited to the April 2025 Regional Housing Convening to further engage in discussions about the map, housing targets, and equitable planning.

CEAC members emphasized the following priorities:

- Review the **Regional Future Land Use Map through an equity lens** to avoid reinforcing racial or economic disparities.
- **Avoid concentrating growth areas** solely in historically white or wealthy communities.
- Link **infrastructure access** (e.g., transportation, services) with sustainability and equity goals.
- Prioritize **walkable, bikeable development** with public amenities, especially in rural communities.
- Provide **accessible tools and contextual resources** for communities to review and comment on planning materials.
- Acknowledge how **past zoning and planning policies** have contributed to current inequities.
- Address how **planning decisions impact access** to health, food, transportation, and quality of life.

- Focus on **housing quality, affordability, and choice**—not just quantity.
- Highlight the role of **stable housing in mental health and well-being**.
- Explore **community-centered planning approaches**, such as student design competitions and service co-location hubs.
- Build **trust through clear, consistent opportunities for collaboration and feedback**.

The CEAC was also involved in the analysis of environmental benefits and burdens. Members raised concerns about home sale disclosure policies, accountability in addressing environmental harms, the location of affordable housing relative to environmental risks, the need for stronger enforcement and for CCRPC to play a stronger advocacy role in shaping system-level change. For more details on this process, see Supplement 3.

PHASE 1: ECOS Plan Chapters: Goals & Actions

OVERVIEW & GOALS

The first phase of community engagement focused on elevating the voices of those whose needs, priorities, and experiences were not adequately reflected in previous versions of the ECOS Plan. Drawing on an assessment of engagement activities from the 2013 plan and a review of more than 30 engagement efforts conducted by partner organizations since 2020, CCRPC identified the following priorities for Phase 1:

- **Emphasize the Housing chapter** due to the urgency of the current housing crisis in Chittenden County, recent state legislation, and the upcoming engagement around the Future Land Use Map.
- **Deprioritize the Climate Change and Ecological Systems chapters** given the number of existing initiatives led by the State of Vermont's Climate Action Office.
- **Deprioritize Transportation** given the recent update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
- **Prioritize engagement with non-English speaking communities**, who have often been excluded from past efforts.
- **Focus on rural municipalities and low-income populations**, which are typically underrepresented in regional engagement.

The goals of the engagement process were:

ENHANCE AWARENESS
of the ECOS Plan – what it is and why it matters.

CENTER THE VOICES OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES
in shaping the plan's goals and actions.

BUILD TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS
between CCRPC and the community through a transparent and iterative process.

INTERESTED & AFFECTED PARTIES (IAP)

To identify impacted communities who have historically been left out of planning conversations, CCRPC staff, in collaboration with the CEAC, built out a Chittenden County Network Map to identify communities and voices who ought to be prioritized in outreach and engagement efforts.

Priority Interested and Affected Parties not included in the 2018 ECOS Plan:

- Low-income and mobile home park communities
- People of color
- Immigrants/New Americans/Refugees community
- Hispanic & Latinx

- Youth & LGBTQ+
- (Dis)Ability
- Homeless & affordable housing residents
- Elderly
- Indigenous communities
- Communities of faith
- Housing advocacy groups
- Small businesses
- Environmental groups
- Localities: ranging from more urban to more rural

Priority Interest and Affected Parties determined through the situation assessment:

- People of color and unhoused communities in Burlington (The Vermont Racial Justice Alliance)
- Youth
- New Americans in Winooski (AALV, Winooski Parents & Students)
- Rural and low-income communities (Milton, St. George, Mobile home parks)
- (Dis)ability + elderly communities (Vermont Interfaith Alliance, Vermont Adaptive, etc.)

ENGAGEMENT THEMES & QUESTIONS

Because the ECOS Plan is long, complex, and often difficult to navigate, CCRPC staff organized engagement around four accessible themes. Each theme encompasses multiple chapters of the plan:

To guide discussions and gather meaningful input, CCRPC asked community members a series of questions, both broad and chapter-specific. Broad questions included:

- How and where would you like to see Chittenden County change over the next 10 years?
- What do you love about living in Chittenden County?
- List three small actions your local government could take to improve the quality of life in your community.

Chapter-specific questions included:

- Does this goal speak to your hopes for the future of [chapter/topic] in Chittenden County?

- What concerns do you have about this goal?
- After reviewing some example actions, what other tangible steps should CCRPC and its partners take to achieve this goal?

TIMELINE & ACTIVITIES

STEP 1 | Collaborative Design (October – December 2023)

- Developed an engagement strategy in collaboration with the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC).

STEP 2 | Situation Assessment (November 2023 – January 2024)

- Researched previous ECOS Plan engagement, community context, and reviewed 30+ engagement efforts since 2020 to avoid duplication and inform outreach priorities.

STEP 3 | Planning & Coordination (January – May 2024)

- Staff coordination with CEAC and partners.
- Developed engagement materials, including:
  - ECOS Plan summary
  - ECOS Plan chapter summaries
  - Discussion guides for focus groups
  - Presentations for focus groups and events
- Build out ECOS webpage on CCRPC website

STEP 4 | Engagement (March – June 2024)

- **Partnerships with key organizations**. Staff continued to build sustainable and reciprocal relationships with key organizations including:
  - CCRPC's Community Engagement Advisory Committee
  - AALV
  - The Islamic Society of Vermont
  - King Street Laundry
  - Vermont Interfaith Action
  - Winooski Parents & Students
  - Richard Kemp Center
  - The People's Kitchen
- **Small group conversations with priority populations.** Working with cultural liaisons, CCRPC facilitated eight small group conversations around a chosen ECOS theme:
  - Climate Action Office Focus Group with the CCRPC Community Engagement Advisory Committee | Climate | *January 31, 2024*
  - Nepali Speaking Community | Community Well-Being | *April 5, 2024*
  - Arabic Speaking Community | Community Well-Being | *April 7, 2024*
  - Milton Mobile Home Community | Critical Infrastructure | *May 7, 2024*
  - Somali-Speaking Community | Community Well-Being | *May 12, 2024*
  - Richmond Senior Center | Social Empowerment | *May 15, 2024*
  - Swahili-Speaking and Lingala-Speaking Community | Community Well-Being | *May 26, 2024*
  - Community Engagement Advisory Committee May Meeting | Housing | *May 29, 2024*

- **Community events**. Efforts funded by Capstone in late 2021 and early 2022 showed the value of getting out and interacting with key populations and communities by attending events, meeting people in their own gathering places, and using creative techniques. CCRPC attended other events thoughtfully to reach key groups and populations. The calendar of priority events reflects where staff time was invested. CCRPC also communicated with municipalities throughout the county, primarily through the Planning Advisory Committee, but also through direct outreach, to identify events and collaborate on engagement approaches.
    - Bolton Citizens Fair | Civic Engagement | *February 17, 2024*
    - King Street Laundry Free Laundry | Health and Housing | *February 21, 2024*
    - ISVT Community Dinner | Social Connectedness | *February 25, 2024*
    - Underhill Town Meeting Day | Civic Engagement | *March 5, 2024*
    - St. George Town Meeting Day | Civic Engagement | *March 6, 2024*
    - Vermont Interfaith Action Clergy Luncheon | General Themes | *March 20, 2024*
    - Human Right's Council Rothstein Event | Housing | *April 1, 2024*
    - King Street Laundry CarShare Info Session | Household Finance | *April 29, 2024*
    - Burlington Tenants Union Art Night | Housing | *April 30, 2024*
    - Wards 2 & 3 Meeting | Housing and Civic Engagement | *May 9, 2024*
    - Milton Inclusion Festival | Social Connectedness | *May 11, 2024*
    - Ward 5 Meeting | Housing and Civic Engagement | *June 20, 2024*
    - Vermont Afghan Alliance Lunch | General | *June 3, 2024*
    - Old North End Farmers Market | General | *July 9, 2024*

- **CCRPC-Hosted Regional Housing Convening (public meetings).** CRPC and CVOEO hosted a Regional Housing Convening in April. CCRPC has hosted Regional housing Convenings for municipal housing committees in the past. This convening gathered community members and organizations together with policy makers and municipal housing committees to discuss the book Just Action and the ECOS plan's housing chapter. The participants shared resources around housing efforts, and brainstormed ways to collaborate to create and support more affordable housing in Chittenden County.

- **Public Survey.** CCRPC created a survey on the goals in the ECOS plan to serve as more general feedback gathering. The survey was distributed via multiple channels:
    a. Flyers with QR codes posted in laundromats, local markets/grocery stores, community organizations, churches/faith spaces, parks and recreation spaces.
    b. Coasters with engagement questions and QR codes to the survey were delivered to 16 bars across the county.
    c. Front Porch Forum posts.
    d. WhatsApp group outreach.
    e. Partner newsletters and CEAC member networks.

STEP 5 | Integration (June – September 2024)

- Synthesized feedback from small groups, surveys and events.
- Integrated community feedback and knowledge into the ECOS Plan goals and actions.
- Tracked changes to the ECOS Plan and reported these changes back to communities to ensure accountability.
- Shared findings with relevant CCRPC Committees (CEAC, PAC, LRPC, Board) and partners.

PHASE 1 RESULTS IN NUMBERS

- **20** events attended
  - **328+** reached through events
  - Municipalities reached: Bolton, Burlington, Huntington, Richmond, Underhill, Milton, St. George
- **6** focus groups hosted
  - **91** people engaged
  - Languages reached: Arabic, Lingala, Nepali, Somali, Swahili
- **365** respondents to county-wide survey
  - **17** (out of 19) municipalities reached with the top five being:
    1. Burlington: 32.30%
    2. South Burlington: 14.61%
    3. Essex: 5.9%
    4. Milton: 5.9%
    5. Colchester: 5.62%
  - Ages reached:
    - 19-39: 26.59%
    - 40-59: 34.63%
    - 60-79: 35.46%
    - 80+: 3.05%
  - Racial and ethnic identity:
    - White: 87.85%
    - I prefer not to say: 5.25%
    - Middle Eastern or North African: 2.76%
    - Asian: 1.93%
    - Black or African American: 1.93%
    - Hispanic or Latino: 1.93%
  - Gender:
    - Female: 61.22%
    - Male: 32.69%
    - Non-binary/third gender: 1.11%
    - Prefer not to say: 4.71%
  - Housing situation:
    - Own: 69.81%
    - Rent: 26.87%
    - Living with others but not paying rent: 2.49%
    - Homeless: 0%
    - Other: 0.55%
  - Surveys taken:
    - Community Well-Being: 89.75%
    - Critical Infrastructure: 70.36%
    - Environmental Stewardship: 74.52%
    - Social Empowerment: 72.85%

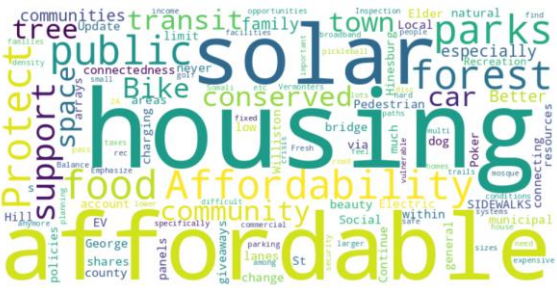
SUMMARY OF PHASE 1 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

CCRPC staff compiled and organized all gathered comments, input, and relevant data and developed summaries of feedback to share with the CCRPC Board, municipal selectboards, partner agencies, and engaged communities.

The summarized data was integrated into the ECOS Plan's Goals and Actions in July and August 2024. The draft interim plan was made available for additional public review online in October 2024. Main messages heard included:

What do you love about living in Chittenden County?

What do you hope to see change over the next 10 years?



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK BY ECOS PLAN CHAPTER

CHAPTER 1: EQUITABLE PLANNING PRACTICES

Participants expressed a strong need for CCRPC to increase its visibility and actively educate communities about its roles and influence. This was emphasized during various events where participants were not familiar with CCRPC and its functions.

- There was appreciation for CCRPC showing up in community spaces.
- There is a need for more education around CCRPC's role and projects.
- CCRPC should add a set of recommendations for the municipal plan review process on how to make the town more inclusive.
- The system of planning is inaccessible (often by design) to regular people. Absent a total redesign in how the public oversees local and regional planning, the planning practices goal has no chance of being achieved.
- There is a desire for oversight from CCRPC and VLCT.

- Public input must be included from the beginning of a planning project, not just approving or disapproving decisions that were already made.
- State, regional, and local governments must and do not have accountability structures and the culture of selectboards is anything but equitable. Town leaders participating in restorative justice when they hurt community members is a first step.

CHAPTER 2: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS (& CLIMATE CHANGE)

Participants emphasized urgent action over further discussion, calling for immediate legal mandates to reduce non-renewables and increase environmental protection. Specific needs identified were: greater collaboration and transparency among decision-makers, affordable renewable energy for all income levels, and comprehensive climate education. Addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and the inequitable impacts of climate change was highlighted as critical. Specific takeaways included:

- More collaboration was needed between decision-makers (locally, across the country, and internationally), with a globally coordinated effort that includes communities.
- Energy needed to be resilient in the face of increasing natural disasters.
- Every student in school should be learning about climate change, its effects, who is responsible, and what actions are needed; participants noted a lack of awareness about mitigation resources and governmental programs that subsidize mitigation behaviors. Public education and awareness surrounding trash and recycling were considered important. Youth needed to be educated on how to eat locally and healthily. Materials should be created for a wide range of audiences using multiple communication channels. Participants stressed the importance of sharing what is working and what solutions are emerging to give people hope.
- There was a strong desire for the government to mandate the reduction of non-renewable energy sources, ban the use of plastics, prohibit deforestation, disinvest from fossil fuels, and enact more intense environmental protection laws.
- Renewable energy was considered unaffordable. Electric vehicles were seen as targeting only upper- and middle-class Americans. Solar power was described as too expensive for most to afford. Participants emphasized that the wealthy are responsible for a disproportionate share of CO_2 emissions and urged not to place the burden on the working class.
- Programs were seen as too complicated. They needed to be simplified so that people could use them easily. Many did not know how to navigate complex systems.
- The vulnerability of aging populations was emphasized as a key concern.
- Participants called for a direct focus on the harms of capitalism, stating that profit drives everything in this country and harms both human well-being and the planet. They stressed the importance of naming the root causes of climate change.
- It was noted that it is difficult for people to think about or act on climate change when they do not have secure housing, jobs, or food. Participants urged that people's everyday needs be addressed so they have the capacity to engage in conversations about our collective future.
- The inequitable impacts of climate change were highlighted as a critical issue.
- Participants demanded an end to the externalization of environmental degradation.
- There was a need for:
    - Subsidies for electric vehicles *and* alternative transportation solutions beyond EVs
    - Investments in wind and solar energy

- More flexible resilience funding
- Affordable home heating and air conditioning options

CHAPTER 3: WATERSHED HEALTH

Participants shared the need to address industrial polluters, expand water quality mitigation activities, and improve access to safe, swimmable water bodies. They advocated for expanding floodplains, protecting smaller rivers and streams, discouraging herbicide and pesticide use, and involving local tribes in sewage management discussions. Conservation efforts should focus on protecting forests, wetlands, and biodiversity.

- Industrial polluters needed to be addressed, and mitigation activity on state property required attention. The burden of water quality mitigation activities appeared to fall disproportionately on a few select groups (e.g., logging, farming) and should be reviewed, expanded, or refocused.
- Blue-green algae blooms were severely limiting the public's access to water for recreation—especially during times when people most needed to cool down. Participants suggested improving reliable, safe access to swimmable and fishable rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes in ways that also enhance water and habitat quality.
- The expansion of floodplains should continue to be advanced in order to help conserve habitats, improve water quality, reduce flood damage, and provide recreational opportunities.
- Smaller rivers and streams needed to be protected as well.
- The use of herbicides and pesticides on home lawns and gardens should be discouraged or forbidden.
- The impact of sewage release in Lake Champlain around Burlington should be measured, and Abenaki members should be consulted during this process. The City of Burlington, tribal members, and CCRPC should come together to discuss alternative approaches to sewage management. Wastewater monitoring for emerging pathogens should continue. Additional wastewater monitoring should be added to track drug consumption.
- Conservation efforts needed to be expanded: more forests and wetlands should be protected from development; rivers should be shielded from pollution and flooding; and life and biodiversity in Lake Champlain should be preserved.

CHAPTER 4: WORKING LANDS

Participants want to see efforts to preserve farms and forests, and control harmful runoff into Lake Champlain. They advocated for organic agriculture, helping BIPOC and new American farmers, increasing access to locally grown food, and banning pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

- There was concern about too much focus on urbanization; participants emphasized the importance of preserving farms and forests.
- Participants believed it was possible to invest in housing and growth while preserving working lands.
- Organic and biodynamic agricultural approaches should be supported.
- Dairy farming was identified as a major contributor to pollution in Lake Champlain. Controlling runoff into the lake was seen as essential.
- Many farms needed the ability to subdivide small parcels to keep the rest of their farmland viable.

- BIPOC and new American farmers were reported to be struggling and in need of support.
- Climate-friendly agricultural practices should include increasing access to locally grown food, banning the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, creating systems that make unhealthy choices inaccessible, and supporting jobs in local food production.
- More public gardens should be integrated into streetscapes.

CHAPTER 5: LAND USE

Participants supported denser downtowns with greater access to services, focusing on infrastructure and public transit while preserving Vermont's natural landscapes.

- There was strong support for denser downtowns with greater access to services, along with a desire to prevent sprawl.
- With denser downtowns, participants emphasized the importance of including urban green spaces and trees to mitigate the heat island effect.
- Participants agreed with the focus on areas planned for growth—particularly the emphasis on infrastructure and public transit—and also supported preserving Vermont's natural landscapes. However, they noted that maintaining Vermont's historic settlement pattern may not be advisable given the evolution of the state's economy, climate, and technology.
- Historic settlement patterns were said to reflect an 18th- and 19th-century economy (primarily agricultural and silvicultural) and transportation infrastructure (ship and rail). Participants suggested that Vermont may need new settlement patterns to reflect changes in its economy (e.g., high tech and remote work) and infrastructure (from ship/rail to road to low-carbon alternatives).
- Larger buildings should be clustered and connected to existing neighborhoods with parks and paths.
- The criteria for identifying areas planned for growth were considered too narrow.
- It was emphasized that areas planned for growth should not be located in floodplains.
- Participants called for more walking streets without cars.

CHAPTER 6: ENERGY

Participants emphasized reducing dependency on fossil fuels over maintaining economic profit, ensuring equity in access to affordable energy, and including all GHG emissions in environmental strategies. They advocate for prioritizing the environment above financial gain and protecting poorer populations from bearing disproportionate burdens of climate change.

- Reducing dependency on fossil fuels was considered more important than maintaining the economic profitability of current energy systems.
- Participants called for the creation of equitable access to affordable energy.
- Some participants expressed reluctant disagreement with current economic goals, stating that the goal of balancing economic output with energy reduction was contradictory. They emphasized that economic output is proportional to energy input and that the economy must be reoriented toward sufficiency rather than growth.

- Since the wealthiest 1% were viewed as responsible for the majority of negative climate and environmental impacts, participants stressed that climate action must start with them.
- The F-35 aircraft and the McNeil plant were identified as obstacles to reaching climate goals. Participants noted that the U.S. military is the largest contributor to the country's global carbon footprint.
- Participants emphasized that without aggressive action to ensure rich landholders sacrifice as much or more than low-income individuals, any plan would fail and further alienate the public from environmental efforts.

CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION

Major concerns about the inadequacy of public transportation, especially its failure to reach rural areas effectively and the lack of connectivity to essential services and town centers. Participants called for expanded routes and more frequent services to accommodate community needs, particularly for lower-income residents pushed out of town centers due to high housing costs.

- Public transportation should be accessible, reliable, affordable, and sustainable. Transit should serve rural areas, be equitable, and reduce the need to buy cars.
- Designing for walking and biking requires building things closer together and making roads safer.
- Public transportation in rural municipalities was especially needed as lower-income residents were being pushed out of town centers.
- Regional transportation solutions were encouraged.
- Safe bike paths should be separated from both cars and pedestrians.
- All streets should have better sidewalks.
- There should be more senior transportation services.
- More street lighting was needed.
- The fare-free bus system should be preserved.
- Bus shelters should be safe and clean and public transportation must be made safer.
- Protected bike lanes and bus/high-speed transit lanes should be added to the existing road network.
- More trains were requested.
- More transportation to natural areas and green spaces outside the city was suggested.

CHAPTER 8: HOUSING

Many concerns were centered on the lack of affordable housing and tenants' rights. Maintenance issues were rampant, with reports of slow responses to repair requests, impacting living conditions. The need for housing that accommodates larger families was a recurring theme, highlighting the mismatch between available housing types and community needs, particularly among immigrant communities. Feedback highlighted a critical need for housing development strategies that cater to larger family units and consider cultural sensitivities, such as private cooking spaces. Participants also stressed the importance of safe neighborhood locations for new housing and the utilization of vacant lots for community housing projects.

- There was a call for more safe, affordable, and low-barrier housing near downtowns and in safe areas.

- Resilient affordable housing should be high-quality, flood-protected, and equipped with generators if needed.
- There should be greater access to mobile home parks and education to reduce stigma.
- More support was needed for Habitat for Humanity.
- Down payment assistance programs should be expanded, including requiring banks and real estate companies to contribute a percentage to support funds.
- More programs were needed to assist with housing applications and utility payments (especially for New Americans).
- Accountability in the housing system was essential, including transparency around waitlists.
- There was strong support for affordable housing that enables seniors to age in place, including co-housing models that combine seniors and younger people.
- Housing should be accessible for people with disabilities and for seniors.
- Larger, affordable units were needed to support families, particularly in immigrant communities.
- Rent control was supported.
- AirBnB rentals should be regulated.
- Hotels and motels should be converted into apartments.
- Increased density and smart growth in town centers were encouraged.
- More co-housing programs like Home Share were needed.
- Just cause eviction protections and anti-discrimination measures were emphasized.
- A county-wide rental registry and housing code should be created, including rent control and safety inspections.
- Landlord discrimination training was needed.
- Rent-to-own programs should be expanded.
- There should be stronger oversight and enforcement to ensure apartments are well-maintained; landlords must be held accountable.
- Municipalities should inspect rental housing and enforce standards.
- There should be municipal education/training sessions around Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH).
- Support was needed for Vermont Legal Aid's paired testing.
- Restrictive covenants should be mapped, in partnership with UVM, historical societies, or NPAs.
- Land trusts should be supported.
- Resources should be provided to organize YIMBY voices.
- A vacant building registry and funding should be created to remediate sites for redevelopment.
- Ordinances should be enacted to hold landlords accountable for vacant properties.
- State funding should support water and sewer expansion when it would enable affordable housing.
- Housing design should be informed by the needs of the people being served.
- Municipalities should be supported in exploring form-based code.
- Regulations for affordable housing should allow impact fee waivers.
- Inclusionary zoning should be required statewide.
- Affordable housing replacement policies should be enacted to reduce gentrification and displacement.
- Major employers should be mobilized to invest private capital in housing.
- Energy-efficient homes were seen as unaffordable for many.
- The University of Vermont should be required to provide subsidized housing for 90% of undergraduate students.
- Higher taxes should be levied on second homes and large homes.
- Planning for climate refugees was seen as urgent.

- Affordable housing should be available in all neighborhoods.

CHAPTER 9: HEALTH

There's a pronounced need for more comprehensive healthcare services, particularly in rural areas where services are limited. Discussions also focused on the need for mental health services within communities, emphasizing support systems that cater specifically to cultural nuances

- Affordability should be included in the health goal.
- There should be a stronger focus on public health, including more widely available and affordable insurance.
- Tick prevention and Lyme disease education need to be increased.
- More comprehensive medical coverage is needed.
- A state-sponsored health fund should be created to address climate-related health problems.
- Overdose prevention centers are needed.
- More social services are needed in rural areas.
- Increased mental health support is especially needed in refugee communities.
- Isolation, loneliness, and stress were identified as major problems.
- There should be more education about how to navigate the healthcare system and the importance of preventative care, particularly for New Americans.
- Secondhand smoke is a major issue in rental properties; policies should protect from exposure. Buffer zones should be implemented so that tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis cannot be sold near youth-centered spaces like doctors' offices, schools, and dentists.
- More trees and green spaces should be located near affordable housing.
- Healthy grocery stores with affordable, nutritious food should be available in more locations.
- Health services are often too far away, and transportation is a major barrier.

CHAPTER 10: ECONOMY & HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SECURITY

Input indicated that current wage levels do not meet the cost of living. Participants called for more job training programs and access to part-time work opportunities, reflecting the diverse needs of the community, especially among those who cannot commit to full-time employment due to family obligations.

- Livable wages must keep pace with inflation.
- More well-paying part-time work opportunities are needed. Students and others who can only work part-time should earn more than minimum wage.
- More technical and skill-based training and education programs are needed.
- There should be more access to childcare.
- Financial literacy education should be expanded.
- Transportation barriers were cited as a major obstacle to job security.
- Economic development should not come at the expense of the environment.
- More regulation is needed of large-scale polluters such as Global Foundries and military operations.
- The ability to invest and save should be included in household financial security goals.

- Participants expressed a preference for less emphasis on economic growth and more emphasis on improving quality of life for residents and the environment.

CHAPTER 12: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Participants highlighted the need for better preparedness and community-based support mechanisms during emergencies, with suggestions for more robust communication infrastructure to aid in emergency situations.

- Emergency communication systems need improvement, including systems that do not rely on cell service.
- Concerns were raised about flooding, heat, and snow and ice storms.
- Warming and cooling centers are needed.
- Town evacuation plans must be accessible to all.
- Emergency management should include better social support and training—for example, sending trained social workers with officers during mental health or overdose crises. These mental health providers should not report to the same management structure as the police.

CHAPTER 13: INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES

There was concern over inadequate broadband access and poor road maintenance, especially in rural areas.

- Greater access to broadband is needed.
- Wi-Fi access in public spaces should be increased.
- Water and wastewater solutions are needed for mobile home co-ops.
- Existing infrastructure should be repaired.
- Infrastructure should not be built in areas at high risk of natural disasters.
- Local mutual aid efforts should be supported as a hazard mitigation strategy.
- Social capital and community connection should also be supported as a hazard mitigation strategy.
- Burlington's water treatment facilities are already struggling to keep untreated wastewater out of Lake Champlain. The system is not prepared to accommodate greater density and must be upgraded before more development is added.

CHAPTER 16: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Feedback showed a desire for more accessible civic education programs that reduce bureaucratic jargon and make governance understandable and engaging for all community members. This includes providing education on how local and regional governments function and how residents can participate effectively in decision-making processes.

- More dialogue is needed with impacted and vulnerable communities, including targeted outreach to minority populations who speak different languages. Processes must be transparent and built on trust.
- Community dinners were seen as effective ways to encourage participation in local government.

- Public information must be more accessible, with less jargon.
- Education should be provided about how governance works, and partner organizations should be supported in offering civics classes.
- Language barriers cause confusion and stress.
- There should be more refugee representation in local government and greater voting access for New Americans.
- Local government should reflect greater racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity.
- Radical transparency was encouraged; governments should provide regular, digestible updates and consistent opportunities for feedback through online posts.
- Citizen journalism should be supported.
- The format and accessibility of public meetings should be improved.
- Governments should engage through trusted community leaders and liaisons and show up consistently—not just once.
- Meetings should be scheduled in the evenings or on weekends.
- Food, interpretation/translation, stipends, and transportation should be provided to make meetings accessible.
- Officials should meet people where they are (e.g., grocery stores, religious congregations, community centers).
- All community communication channels (social media, flyers, Front Porch Forum) should be used.
- Meeting spaces must be ADA accessible.

CHAPTER 17: SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Participants valued community dinners and other social events as crucial for building social connectedness. There was a call for more such events that are inclusive and consider the diverse backgrounds of community members, providing spaces where people can connect across cultural and social divides.

- There is a general need for more empathy-building within and between communities.
- More central gathering spaces like skate parks are needed.
- Community spaces such as ISVT, UIRC, and the Family Room should be better connected and supported.
- More community events and gatherings are needed.
- More diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training should be provided.
- Youth programming should receive more support.
- Libraries need more support as community hubs.
- Programs that connect seniors with daycare facilities can build intergenerational bonds.
- Adult recreation programs can also support social connection and cultural engagement.
- There should be less privatization of public spaces.
- Burlington's social history should be preserved, including the creation of a public museum or cultural center.
- More green spaces are needed.
- Public restrooms, laundry facilities, and showers are needed to support dignity and public health.

PHASE 1 COMMUNITY VOICES & STORIES

The following graphic contains some of the feedback shared throughout Phase 1.

Commented [AS1]: Emma-- we were thinking we could have a page of quote bubbles sharing some of these?

Commented [EV2R1]: Can you flag any of them that you definitely want? Or should I just do them randomly

Commented [AS3R1]: I have highlighted the ones I think are particularly noteworthy. Sarah, what do you think?

Commented [SM4R1]: I went throuhg them and added a couple. Looks good to me!

Commented [SM5R1]: Deleted the extras

Commented [EV6R1]: OK so to be clear - still include all of these as bullets, but also make a graphic of all the highlighted ones? Or do you just want the graphic?

Commented [AS7R1]: I think just a graphic is fine!

Commented [SM8R1]: Agreed- just one graphic page

Placeholder – one-page quote graphic

PHASE 2: Future Land Use Map & Housing Targets

OVERVIEW & GOALS

Under 24 V.S.A. §4348a, CCRPC is required to develop a Regional Future Land Use (FLU) Map that incorporates meaningful community input. The second phase of engagement focused on working with municipalities and municipalities and partners to collaboratively re-create a Regional Future Land Use Map that aligns with Act 181 requirements and reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of all 19 Chittenden County municipalities within a 6- to 12-month timeframe.

The engagement process involved a broad group of Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) including, but not limited to, municipal boards (selectboards, planning commissions, housing committees, conservation committees); community groups and organizations; regional and statewide interest groups; state agencies; the CCRPC Board of Directors; and other CCRPC committees. The new map will identify areas of Chittenden County that are eligible for Act 250 exemptions and participation int the State Designation Program. CCRPC staff sought to make FLU map decisions reflective of the aspirations of all community members, adopted municipal policy, and state statutory definitions.

CCRPC facilitated work sessions, community meetings, and small-group conversations to ensure IAPs ranging from Environmental Justice (EJ) communities to municipal leaders all had influence over the draft FLU Map. CCRPC sought consensus on the draft FLU Map amongst all IAPS, yet prioritized finding alignment with municipal legislative bodies and planning commissions (recognizing that CCRPC's Board of Directors is composed of municipal representatives), and ensuring map alignment with state statute.

CCRPC did not seek a formal vote of the municipal legislative body to approve the proposed FLU Map before making a recommendation to the CCRPC Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) and Board of Directors. Municipal legislative bodies did need to affirmatively vote to request Act 250 exemption (Tier 1B status) to be officially mapped and applied in their municipality. CCRPC also communicated to IAPs that final approval of the FLU Map is under the jurisdiction of the State Land Use Review Board (LURB). It is the LURB that is required to make a final determination regarding the FLU Maps conformance with the requirements in 24 V.S.A. 4348a.

CCRPC staff compiled detailed recommendations by municipality to the LRPC, identifying proposed FLU Map boundaries and areas of unresolved concern. The LRPC then provided a recommendation to the CCRPC Board, which made final edits and adopted the ECOS Plan, including the FLU Map.

For additional information about Act 181, Act 250, Housing Targets, and Environmental Justice, please see the Introduction and Land Use Chapters.

The goals of the engagement process were:

- Ensure all 19 municipalities and the greater community are fully informed about the Act 181 requirements.
- Collect detailed input from each municipality to help inform the new Regional Future Land Use Map through multiple forms of engagement.
- Foster a collaborative environment to attempt to build community consensus on the Regional Future Land Use Map.
- Facilitate discussions and provide education about municipal housing targets to promote understanding and build support across municipalities and partners.
- Provide clear, accessible information and resources to all participants throughout the process.

- Develop a draft Regional Future Land Use Map by June 2025 and release housing targets that have been widely reviewed.

Commented [AS9]: Add something about housing targets?

Commented [AS10R9]: We don't have a description of housing targets anywhere in this doc… you think it matters?

Commented [SM11R9]: Oooo good point.. I just added "housing Targets" to the more information sentence above… maybe thatll do? I don't want to add more text

INTERESTED & AFFECTED PARTIES (IAP)

Please note that this list served as a starting point for reaching out to communities but is not reflective of all parties included, and some of these IAPs did not respond to outreach efforts.

- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) staff
- Municipal Planning Staff
- Public Bodies
    - Planning Commissions
    - Selectboards
    - Libraries *(as there is interest)*
    - Public Schools *(as there is interest)*
    - Recreation Departments *(as there is interest)*
- Municipal Community Members & Interest Groups
    - Conservation Commissions
    - Housing Committees
    - Municipal Land Trusts
    - Organizations that represent EJ Populations
    - Places of Worship
    - Senior Housing
    - Low-Income Housing (including housing cooperatives and mobile home parks)
- Regional & Statewide Interest Groups
    - Indigenous Communities
        - Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs (VCNAA)
        - Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation.
        - Elnu Abenaki Tribe
        - Koasek Abenaki Tribe
        - Mississquoi Abenaki Tribe.
    - Health
        - Vermont Department of Health (VDH)
        - Office of Health Equity
    - Housing & Land Access
        - Champlain Housing Trust (CHT)
        - Housing Committees
        - Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB)
        - Office of Economic Opportunity (with Agency of Human Services)
        - Evernorth
        - Cathedral Square
        - Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)
        - Burlington Housing Authority
        - Winooski Housing Authority
        - State Housing Authority
        - Land Access and Opportunity Board (LAOB)
        - Vermont Realtors Association
        - Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

        - Vermont Builders & Remodelers Association
            - And individual developers (e.g. Nedde, SD Ireland, Snyder and Braverman, Larkin, Summit Properties, Jeff Nick and Jeff Davis, Judge Properties, etc.) – look at the BHT list that Chris Donnelly @ CHT has
        - Vermont Council on Rural Development
        - Vermont State Housing Authority Mobile Home Park Representatives
        - Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)
    - Environment & Agriculture
        - Vermont Natural Resource Council (VNRC)
        - Climate Action Office
        - County Farm Bureau
        - VT Farm to Plate Network
        - Chittenden County Forester
        - Hunger Free Vermont
        - State Land Trusts (Vermont, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited)
        - Clean Water Service Provider (5,7, and 8),
        - Winooski Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDs)
        - Environmental Justice Network
        - Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA-VT)
        - Everytown Project, Farmers of Color Land Trust
        - Conservation Law Foundation
    - Economic Development
        - Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation (GBIC)
        - Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce
        - VT Business Roundtable
        - Vermont Agency of Transportation
    - Other EJ Focus Populations
        - Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV)
        - ANR's Environmental Justice Subcommittee
        - Richard Kemp Center / Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
        - Rights & Democracy
        - Hunger Free Vermont
        - Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network
        - Vermont Works for Women
        - New Farms for New Americans
        - United States Committee on Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
        - Vermont Professionals of Color Network
        - State Office of Racial Equity
        - Vermont Interfaith Action

ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS

Though much of the Outreach and Engagement work that was conducted involved clarifying new State policy and identifying technical information about specific land areas, there were still some general and specific questions asked of the community. Some of the general questions asked to guide discussions around the new Future Land Use Map included the following:

- Do you see your community's priorities reflected in the draft future land use map?

Commented [AS12]: Sarah. do we have a list of questions we used for this process? Is it worth including?

Commented [SM13R12]: @Anne Nelson Stoner I took some of the general uestions for our discussion guide... do you think its worth inclung? Should I get more specific?

Commented [AS14R12]: @Sarah Muskin I think if you have more specific questions that were asked during focus groups, it's worth including them. But if this captures the conversation, then this is okay too!

Commented [SM15R12]: I just want to pull the specific questions and truly different questions were asked of every municipality and every focus group that were tailored to that particular audience/setting. SO tI think this might be the best way to present this information!

- Name 1-2 areas of the map that feel overemphasized or overlooked?
- Are there potential conflicts you see on the map? Where do you anticipate disagreement?
- Generally speaking, how well does this map reflect where you would like to see housing development happen in Chittenden County?

TIMELINE & ACTIVITIES

STEP 1 | Planning & Coordination *(August 2024 – June 2025)*

- Internal Staff Coordination - Aligned outreach, mapping, and education efforts across CCRPC Staff.
- Development of Draft Materials
    - **Draft Future Land Use (FLU) Maps based on VAPDA methodology, municipalities, and policy.**
    - Interactive mapping tool to visualize proposed changes and allow for community feedback.
    - Educational and outreach materials, including:
        - Summary of Act 181 and engagement plan
        - Discussion guides for committees and community groups
        - Presentations for municipal bodies and focus groups
        - Housing Targets handout
        - Posters
- Municipal Templates & Recommendations
    - Customizes engagement plan template for each municipality
    - Draft recommendation memo template for presentation to the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC)

STEP 2 | Inform & Educate about Act 181 & Upcoming Engagement Process *(Fall 2024)*

- Initial outreach to Municipalities
    - Selectboard and City Council briefings to introduce Act 181 and outline project goals.
    - Distributed informational materials explaining legislative requirements and land use designations.
    - Identified key local partners for ongoing engagement (staff, planning commission, or hybrid model).
    - Asked municipalities to identify additional stakeholders to engage.
- Inform Planning Directors and Planning Commissions
- Developed Engagement Plans for Each Municipality
    - Gathered preliminary input from municipal staff and planning commissions
    - Began planning meetings, events, and focus groups.

STEP 3 | Assess Environmental Benefits and Burdens *(Fall 2024 – Summer 2025)*

- Mapped EJ Focus Populations in Chittenden County
- Defined and visualized existing environmental benefits and burdens using regional data.
- Reviewed policies and maps to ensure they promote benefits and reduce burdens equitably across all communities.

See Supplement 3- Environmental Benefits and Burdens for more information about this process and analysis.

STEP 4 | Engagement to Review Draft Map *(January 2025 – May 2025)*

- **Municipal Engagement**
    - Municipal or Planning Commission Engagement Meetings to review and amend the draft FLU map.
    - Other Municipal Engagement Activities (Community Meetings) as outlined in municipal-specific engagement plans (Housing Committees, Conservation Committees, Selectboard Meetings,etc.)
    - Attended Municipal Events
- Regional & Statewide Engagement

- Outreach Materials
  - Educational video (3–5 minutes) explaining Act 181 and the FLU mapping process.
  - Sent tailored invitations to each group of focus group participants.
- **First Round of Regional Focus Groups** (Feb-Mar 2025)
  - February 12, 2025 | Environmental Justice Focus Populations
  - February 18, 2025 | Natural Resources & Working Lands
  - February 28, 2025 | Housing & Land Access
  - March 7, 2025 | Economic Development
  - March 12 | Housing & Land Access (evening option)
  - March 12, 2025 | Statewide Info Session
- **Housing Convening** *(April 2025)* | Reported progress from engagement activities completed to date and shared proposed FLU Map and housing targets.
  - Presented key takeaways from the engagement meetings.
  - Offered opportunities for additional input.
  - Fostered connections between interest groups for collaboration on housing initiatives.
- **Second Round of Targeted Regional Focus Groups** (April-June 2025). Hosted additional small group conversations and information sessions:
  - Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce
  - AARP Livable Communities Volunteer Team
  - **Language-based focus groups:**
    - April 12, 2025 | Arabic
    - May 11, 2025 | Bhutanese/Nepali
    - May 18, 2025 | French
    - June 1, 2025 | Swahili
- **Informant Interviews.** One-on-one interviews with those unable to attend group sessions.
  - Liz Curry (Mobile Home Co-ops)
  - Jens Hilke (Community Wildlife Program)
  - Chief Don Stevens (Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk-Abenaki Nation)
- **Virtual Engagement**
  - **Manufactured Home Park resident survey**
  - **Public-facing online interactive map** to collect feedback
    - Flyers with QR codes distributed at municipal meetings and Town Meeting Days
    - Front Porch Forum posts.
    - WhatsApp group outreach.
      - Partner newsletters and CEAC member networks.
  - Recorded **report-out presentation** shared via CCRPC website.

STEP 5 | Review Final Map Draft & Discuss Housing Targets *(April 2025- June 2025)*
Conducted final review meetings with all IAPs to ensure input was accurately reflected in the map. Discussed housing targets, and explained the methodology.

- Planning Commission and/or Selectboard Meeting to Review Final Draft and introduce housing targets.
- Municipal group meetings to review final draft and introduce housing targets.
- Tier 1B Request: Per 181, the municipal legislative body can request that the specific areas of the municipality be considered Tier 1(B) areas on the Regional FLU. At this point in the process, CCRPC will ask the municipality to make this request, if desired.

STEP 6 | Finalize Map & Housing Targets and Prepare for Formal Approval Process *(Summer 2025-Spring 2026)*

- Staff Recommendation: CCRPC staff issued formal recommendations by municipality to LRPC. See complete memos below.
- LRPC Meeting: Staff presented recommendations to the LRPC during three meetings. The LRPC considered, discussed, and made select amendments to the proposed FLU Map before making a recommendation to the Board of Directors.
- Board of Directors Meeting: Staff reviewed LRPC's recommendations with the Board of Directors. The Board discussed and amended the proposed FLU Map before advancing the regional plan adoption process.
- Adoption Process: Staff led the Board of Directors through the regional plan adoption process outlined in 24 V.S.A. §4348(b – g).
- Land Use Review Board: The Land Use Review Board (LURB) reviewed the regional plan, and FLU map, and make a final determination (24 V.S.A. §4348(h)).

STEP 7 | Evaluation & Ongoing Support

- Ongoing Support: CCRPC collaborated with the LURB and State agencies to establish a system for ongoing assistance for municipalities.
- Evaluation: Collect feedback from all interested and affected parties engaged throughout the process to assess the effectiveness of the process and identify lessons learned and areas for improvement in future engagement efforts.
- Sharing: CCRPC shared lessons learned widely so that key takeaways can be leveraged at different scales and by different IAPs.

PHASE 2 RESULTS IN NUMBERS

- **27** Selectboard/City Council meetings
- **37** Municipal Planning Commission meetings
- **15** Other municipal board meetings (e.g., housing committees)
- **22** Meetings with municipal staff
- **16** Community meetings/events
- **11** Focus groups
  - Included 4 language-specific groups with translation
- **8** Key informant interviews
- **8** Regional meetings/events
- Online engagement:
  - **241** comments submitted to the Interactive map viewer and static PDF maps
  - Housing target feedback form – 18 responses
  - Mobile home park survey – 72 responses

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

To communicate with This document summarizes regional-level feedback received during Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's (CCRPC) engagement efforts related to the development of a regional Future Land Use (FLU) map (as required by Act 181 of 2024) and municipal housing targets (as required by the HOME Act of 2023).

Commented [EV16]: @Sarah Muskin can you add #s to each of these?

Commented [SM17R16]: I actually don't know the first one... @Melanie Needle might and @Taylor Newton would

Commented [MN18R16]: I added the number of comments we received from the comment form on the map. I don't know how many comments we received on the pdf maps.

Placeholder – ECOS Engagement Summary Page 1

Placeholder – ECOS Engagement Summary Page 2

Placeholder – ECOS Engagement Summary Page 3

REGIONAL FEEDBACK: LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC FOCUS GROUPS

Overview

Focus Group Topic: Housing in the Context of the Regional Future Land Use Map and Housing Targets

Between April and June 2025, CCRPC conducted four language-specific focus groups—in Arabic, Nepali, French, and Swahili—to better understand the housing experiences and priorities of New American and refugee-background communities in Chittenden County. These sessions were held in partnership with trusted community leaders and interpreters to ensure accessibility and cultural context. The majority for focus group participants attended a focus group with CCRPC on related topics in 2024, so there was familiarity with RPC work and this initiative was a part of broader continued relationship building. The discussions revealed shared concerns around affordability, housing quality, and the need for greater representation in planning decisions, as well as unique insights shaped by each community's experience. What follows is a summary of key themes from each group and a synthesis of seemingly shared priorities.

Summary of Feedback – Arabic-Speaking Focus Group
Date: 4/12/25 | **Location:** Zoom | **Attendees:** 15

Housing Concerns
- Overcrowding is a major issue (e.g., large families sharing one bathroom).
- Accessibility issues with stairs and kitchens; participants expressed a desire for more inclusive home designs.
- Participants questioned why the state and cities don't develop affordable housing directly.
- Electricity, heating, and water costs are burdensome and unaffordable in addition to housing costs.

Future Land Use Mapping
- Participants raised questions about who makes development decisions (state vs. city vs. RPC vs. developer).
- Participants expressed concern that the FLU map excludes rural areas and does not provide enough housing choice in those communities; they also noted concerns that increased density will create congestion.
- Participants expressed support for urgency in housing development, not just long-term vision.

Trust & Follow-Through
- Participants expressed skepticism about the planning process: "ink on paper," "a world of paper and wishes."
- Participants shared hopes for real implementation of programs and housing crisis solutions.

Summary of Feedback – Bhutanese Nepali Focus Group
Date: 5/11/25 | **Location:** CCRPC Offices | **Attendees:** 15

Housing Access & Affordability
- Participants expressed high demand for homeownership; this is particularly meaningful for refugees coming from camps.
- Participants shared concerns about long wait times and high costs in both rental and ownership markets.
- Green space and gardens were seen as essential, and participants expressed concern they are lacking in planned growth areas.
- Participants reported housing quality issues such as mold, pests, ventilation problems, and delayed maintenance.

Education & Navigation Support

- Participants identified the need for step-by-step assistance with housing paperwork and translation support.
- Participants expressed interest in housing navigators and translated materials for public engagement.
- Participants noted that online-only systems create access barriers for elders and non-English speakers.

Environmental and Social Concerns

- Participants expressed fear that Future Land Use maps will lead to redlining.
- Participants noted health concerns tied to housing (e.g., access to fresh food, overcrowding).

Civic Participation

- Participants expressed a strong desire for co-creation, not just consultation, and frustration with one-time engagement and lack of follow-through.
- Participants recommended holding recurring focus groups every six months and even more if possible

Summary of Feedback – French Congolese Focus Group
Date: 5/18/25 | **Location:** St. Joseph's Cathedral | **Attendees:** 13

Housing Affordability

- Participants noted that Vermont is unaffordable; housing costs are displacing residents who are moving to other states.
- Participants expressed strong demand for larger units to accommodate big families.
- Participants identified property taxes as an increasing concern.

Workforce Ties

- Participants viewed housing shortages as a workforce issue, noting that immigrants are filling essential roles in caregiving and healthcare; if these populations don't have a place to live, essential jobs will go unfilled.
- Participants shared that they want their children to stay, put down roots, and contribute to the Vermont community, but fear they will leave due to the cost of living.

Systemic Inequities

- Participants expressed widespread frustration with capitalism and systemic inequality.
- Participants reported feeling marginalized and underrepresented in housing decisions.

Policy Engagement

- Participants raised questions about protections against displacement for current residents.
- Participants called to involve legislators and decision-makers directly in future conversations.

Summary of Feedback – Swahili-Speaking Focus Group
Date: 6/1/25 | **Location:** AALV | **Attendees:** 13

Desire for Homeownership

- Participants expressed strong interest in buying homes and remaining in Vermont long-term.
- Participants identified credit requirements and lack of support as barriers and called for reduced regulations.

Land Use & Environment

- Participants criticized Vermont's compact housing patterns and asked why more open space isn't used.
- Participants expressed a belief that humans should live in harmony with nature and not be crowded together.
- Participants shared a desire to more easily build and develop homes.

Equity & Belonging

- Participants emphasized the importance of equal access regardless of race and expressed a desire to feel truly welcomed.
- Participants stated that housing should accommodate and reflect the presence of refugee communities.

Rental Issues

- Participants reported slow maintenance responses and lax enforcement of rental codes.
- Participants called for CCRPC to support a "Homebuying 101" class and Credit Scores education

Support for Housing Targets

- Participants responded positively—clapping and giving thumbs up—when shown the 2050 housing targets.

Shared Themes

Affordability & Housing Type Needs

- All groups emphasized how unaffordable both renting and buying are in Vermont.
- Large families expressed a need for more multi-bedroom unit options.

Homeownership & Stability

- Homeownership was viewed as a source of pride and stability, particularly meaningful for refugee-background communities.
- Participants identified barriers such as credit requirements, unclear processes, and insufficient financial support.

Trust, Representation, and Engagement

- Participants across all groups expressed distrust of planning processes that collect feedback without visible outcomes.
- Participants consistently called for better representation, decision-making power, and engagement from policymakers.

Quality & Safety of Housing

- Poor conditions in some affordable housing units (e.g., mold, pests) were mentioned repeatedly.
- Participants expressed widespread concerns about slow repairs and weak enforcement of landlord responsibilities.

Desire for Place and Belonging

- All groups connected housing to broader social belonging—wanting homes, not just units.
- Participants expressed concern that planning efforts do not reflect or accommodate their communities' realities and aspirations.

TOPIC-SPECIFIC FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Overview

Between February and March 2025, CCRPC convened six topic-specific focus groups to discuss the new Regional Future Land Use Map Development and Housing Targets. Participants included representatives from nonprofit organizations, municipal housing committees, developers, state agencies, and issue-specific working groups. While each conversation focused on a distinct topic area, shared themes emerged around the need for more inclusive and accountable planning processes, better integration of infrastructure and environmental data, and greater flexibility in policy tools to meet housing, conservation, and equity goals. What follows is a summary of key themes from each focus group.

Summary of Feedback – Environmental Justice Focus Group
Date: 2/13/25 | **Location:** Zoom | **Attendees:** 6 | **Representation From:** Vermont Legal Aid; Vermont Department of Health; Northwest Vermont Realtor® Association; Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs; Sterling Homes; Land Access and Opportunity Board

- Participants emphasized the impact of land use planning on health and well-being.
- Land use planning should ensure that low-income communities are not concentrated in the least desirable locations.
- Act 181 should be used as a tool to expedite the development of affordable housing.
- Participants recommended bringing this discussion to CCRPC's Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC).
- Housing targets should be equitably distributed across municipalities, with consideration for communities that have already met or exceeded their fair share of affordable housing.
- Some participants noted that housing targets appear to conflict with the "opt-in" approach and raised questions about how to address municipalities that avoid extending municipal water and sewer infrastructure to limit housing growth.
- Participants expressed a preference for "opt-out" language rather than the current "opt-in" framing.
- The draft Future Land Use (FLU) map was seen as aligning with historical development patterns.
- Focusing solely on where Environmental Justice Focus Populations (EJFPs) currently live may exclude areas where they wish to live in the future.
- It was considered accurate to designate all of Chittenden County as an Environmental Justice (EJ) focus area.
- To prevent the segregation of EJFPs into just a few communities (e.g., Winooski, Burlington, Colchester, Essex), planning should ensure that BIPOC and low-income residents have opportunities to live throughout the region.
- Affordable housing should be prioritized in areas with access to basic services, while also recognizing that these same areas often experience higher environmental burdens such as poor air quality and limited green space.
- Environmental Justice analyses should include data on heat stress and tree canopy coverage.
- Local communities expressed interest in affordable housing options in rural areas, including models such as cluster neighborhoods and agri-hoods.
- The planning process should account for the non-human natural world by recognizing humans as interconnected with ecosystems, rather than treating nature and development as separate (e.g., Smart Growth as a form of separation).
- The preservation of prime agricultural soils should be prioritized in regional planning.
- The process should address the lag between municipal regulations and state planning goals, such as the legislature's recent adoption of smaller lot size requirements, which some towns have yet to implement.
- Regional planning efforts should be forward-thinking, as current maps reflect existing capacity and resources but do not yet account for future challenges such as rising costs, climate disasters, demographic shifts, and increased reliance on local agriculture.
- Participants questioned whether there is existing mapping of floodways and potential village relocations, and emphasized the need to shape data with future resilience in mind—communities along rivers should proactively consider relocation, and floodway risks should take precedence in planning designations.

Summary of Feedback – Housing and Land Access Focus Group # 1
Date: 2/28/25 | **Location:** Zoom | **Attendees:** 17 | **Representation From:** Vermont Legal Aid; City of Burlington; Williston Housing Committee; Evernorth; Cathedral Square Corporation; Vermont Professionals of Color Network; Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs; Vermont Housing Finance Agency;

Jericho Housing Committee; Champlain Housing Trust; CVOEO; Sterling Homes; Vermont Racial Justice Alliance; Snyder Homes; General Public

- Exclusionary zoning policies have historically been used to keep Black and Brown people out of certain areas or municipalities, and participants noted that Act 181 has not yet addressed these structural inequities; they emphasized the need to completely transform, if not eradicate, restrictive and exclusionary policies.
- Participants observed that the origins of current zoning policies are rooted in intentional exclusion, making it critical to confront and dismantle these practices.
- The planning commission should explore changes such as shifting Tier 1B from an "opt-in" to an "opt-out" approach.
- Racial justice should be a central topic in regional planning discussions, with recognition of it as a public health crisis and integration into advocacy efforts.
- Housing development is being constrained by municipal zoning, infrastructure limitations, and exclusionary policies, highlighting a strong need to expand growth areas to support denser and more affordable housing.
- Many zoning laws, conservation goals, and Act 250 requirements continue to restrict housing production, even as state policies have eased some regulations; towns are still able to use local control to prevent growth.
- Participants expressed concern that municipalities may resist meeting housing targets and noted that the definition of a "good faith effort" is currently unclear and inconsistently applied.
- Infrastructure investments and Act 250 exemptions could be used as leverage to encourage municipalities to allow for more housing development.
- Conservation goals can sometimes conflict with housing needs—for example, Williston's 50% conservation target limits the land available for new housing.
- Economic segregation remains a concern, with some towns historically opposing affordable housing and implementing policies that maintain exclusionary zoning.
- Municipal capacity to enforce Act 250 and manage increased development is limited, and some towns appear hesitant to fully opt into available exemptions.
- Participants expressed broad concern that if finalized, the current map could "lock in" existing development patterns for decades, thereby limiting flexibility to respond to future housing needs.
- Designating floodplain areas for growth presents long-term risks to housing sustainability, prompting concerns about the adequacy of resilience planning.
- Some participants advocated for more equitable distribution of growth across the county, rather than concentrating it in Burlington, South Burlington, and Williston; Milton, Jericho, and Richmond were identified as communities where more housing should be encouraged.
- There is interest in integrating transitional areas into planning efforts to support gradual infrastructure expansion, rather than maintaining strict divisions between planned and non-planned growth areas.
- The role of homeowners' associations (HOAs) in perpetuating exclusionary zoning should be addressed, especially where they restrict mobile homes and affordable housing through minimum house size requirements.
- Participants recommended that the regional planning commission play a stronger role in challenging towns that use regional policies to justify limiting housing development.
- The process for modifying the map and shaping its final form remains unclear to some participants, who raised questions about how community input will be used in decision-making.
- There is a broader concern about Vermont's overall capacity to meet future housing needs beyond Chittenden County, particularly in the context of anticipated climate migration.
- The balance between existing infrastructure and long-term growth needs should be reconsidered, as the current plan may not provide adequate capacity for future expansion.

- Coordination across regional, state, and municipal planning efforts remains a challenge, with participants noting concerns about inconsistent data, varying regulatory interpretations, and a lack of strategic alignment.

Summary of Feedback – Housing and Land Access Focus Group # 2
Date: 3/12/25 | **Location:** Zoom | **Attendees:** 8 | **Representation From:** Williston Housing Committee; Williston Developmental Disabilities Committee; Jericho Affordable Housing Committee; Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce; Hinesburg Housing Committee; Vermont Department of Health; Village of Westbury

- Knowing the locations of infrastructure—such as water, wastewater, and transit routes—is necessary to support additional housing, especially affordable housing; if possible, this information should be included on the regional Future Land Use map to help evaluate suitable development locations.
- The map is considered a useful starting point, but effective implementation will require a clear understanding of infill opportunities and the presence or absence of supporting infrastructure.
- When promoting housing in compact centers, it is important to account for potential climate impacts such as flooding and heat islands; tree equity scores could be used as a data layer to assess where canopy improvements are needed to reduce heat exposure in both existing and future development areas (e.g., Williston's Taft Corners, which currently ranks low on tree equity and canopy coverage).
- Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the adaptability of the map to respond to changing conditions and local needs.
- Housing committees need clear information to understand why each land use category has been assigned; the definitions originate from statute.
- A clear understanding of wastewater capacity is important, and participants recommended that this topic be studied further to inform planning decisions.

Summary of Feedback – Economic Development Focus Group
Date: 3/7/25 | **Location:** Zoom| **Attendees:** 8 | **Representation From:** Vermont Chamber of Commerce; City of Burlington; Department of Health; Town of Essex; Land Access and Opportunity Board; CVOEO; Main Street Landing; Private Developer

- Participants expressed concern about the seemingly small amount of land designated as enterprise; while housing supports economic development, land must still be available for jobs and industry within the county.
- Affordable housing and workforce housing were viewed as essentially the same due to the high cost of housing overall, with workforce housing identified as a major concern.
- The expiration of interim Act 250 exemptions could worsen housing affordability, as Tier 1A and 1B areas currently lack affordability requirements unless located in municipalities with inclusionary zoning.
- Oversight is needed to ensure that existing Priority Housing Projects (PHPs) are actually meeting their affordability requirements.
- There is interest in exploring subsidies, tax abatements, and employer-supported housing models—such as master leases—as tools to make housing more affordable.
- Participants noted that Vermont's housing market is broken and that addressing it will require long-term investments in infrastructure, streamlined permitting processes, and solutions to the high cost of land and construction materials.
- Housing should be located near jobs and essential services to reduce dependence on personal vehicles, as long commutes limit time available for health-promoting activities.
- The lack of housing options for seniors contributes to Vermont's broader housing challenges by disrupting the housing cycle and limiting opportunities for new families to move in.

- There is interest in expanding walkability analyses in planning maps, particularly in suburban areas, to help foster more village-like and pedestrian-friendly environments.
- Participants noted that the state's construction industry is struggling and expressed interest in revitalizing the sector, especially if accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are expected to play a larger role in future housing strategies.
- There is also growing interest in alternative housing models, including tiny homes, and continued discussions about how they can be integrated into the development landscape.

Summary of Feedback – Natural Resources Focus Group
Date: 2/18/25 | **Location:** Zoom | **Attendees:** 10 | **Representation From:** Winooski Conservation District; NOFA-VT; Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation; Department of Health; Vermont Natural Resources Council; Climate Action Office; Land Access and Opportunity Board

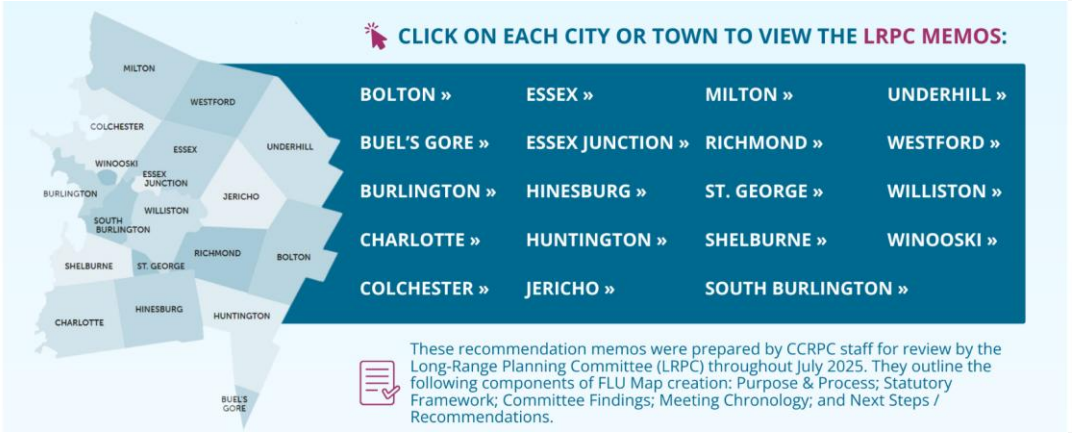
- It is important to consider how to integrate nature into designated growth areas and how to allow for housing development in rural areas; the traditional separation of housing from natural and working lands—reflected in Act 250 and Smart Growth paradigms—should be reexamined in light of people's desires to live rurally and the growing interest in smaller-scale food production.
- Land access should include both the ability to own land for farming or other uses and the ability to access land without ownership, such as through public spaces or other shared resources.
- New approaches to land access are still evolving, and it can be difficult to determine when and how to engage in these conversations as regional planning processes continue to advance.
- The map reveals a fragmented pattern of agricultural soils across the region, prompting interest in preserving agricultural soils—even in small patches—near population centers, with the understanding that these decisions often require locally led conversations.
- River corridors are currently being mapped by the state Rivers Program, and different regions may be working with different types of data (e.g., Northwest RPC is conducting additional hydrological modeling); as regional plan maps are finalized, CCRPC should coordinate with other partners to avoid confusion about data and regulatory interpretations.
- Agricultural soils were identified as both important and finite resources that should be protected through regional planning.
- Participants noted that Vermont currently faces—and will continue to face—challenges related to food security.
- Golf courses were identified as an inefficient use of land, with some participants suggesting they could be better utilized for housing or farming.
- There is a need for more small-scale farming, and participants emphasized that the prevailing model of large-parcel, commercial agriculture is increasingly outdated; planning efforts should explore how to maximize the productive use of remaining farmland.
- Participants recommended that planning definitions and policies reflect the role of wildlife habitat preservation in reducing the risk of wildlife-to-human transmission of disease.
- Statewide groups and advocates often find it difficult to stay coordinated and strategic, and they expressed challenges in identifying and acting on timely opportunities to influence planning and policy change.

Summary of Feedback – State Agency Partners Focus Group
Date: 3/13/25 | **Location:** Zoom | **Attendees:** 9 | **Representation From:** Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation; Vermont Housing Finance Agency; Vermont Agency of Transportation; Vermont Climate Action Office; Land Access and Opportunity Board; Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets

- Although some elements of Vermont Conservation Design are incorporated into the current mapping, the RPC should be aware that relying solely on the highest priority interior forest blocks and wildlife habitat omits smaller connectivity blocks that still hold regional ecological importance; the RPC should remain open to local feedback about including these areas.
- While municipalities will be asked to identify Tier 1A and 1B areas (planned for growth and eligible for regulatory exemptions) over the coming year, it is likely that many will need additional time to decide—both on Tier designations and on the underlying regional land use categories—so the RPC should offer opportunities to incorporate these requests beyond the initial mapping window.
- There are inherent tensions between promoting development in compact centers and ensuring flood safety and resilience; if these areas are included, local conversations will be necessary to determine safe approaches to development.
- The forthcoming updated floodplain maps, along with the river corridor and infill data required under the Flood Safety Act, should be incorporated into the regional maps once finalized.
- The RPC should remain aware of how the Land Use Review Board might interpret Rural Conservation areas in Tier 3 discussions, as statutory language acknowledges that not all Rural Conservation areas are appropriate for Tier 3; these maps will influence that process and should be developed with this overlap in mind.
- The potential environmental benefits (e.g., access to green space) and burdens (e.g., floodplain development) for Environmental Justice populations—including low-income individuals, people with limited English proficiency, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities—must be explicitly incorporated into how the maps are created.
- It is important to ensure that prioritizing compact housing development does not result in the exclusion of people from communities where only large-lot housing is available and prohibitively expensive to build.
- While there has been significant emphasis on engaging Environmental Justice populations, participants emphasized that engagement alone is insufficient; the planning process—and its later implementation—must ensure that these communities are not harmed or left behind.
- This planning process attempts to braid together multiple complex values—including compact settlement, support for Environmental Justice populations, housing promotion, economic development, and the preservation of agriculture and forestry—which is both important and challenging; participants noted the need to carefully consider how to frame the work, navigate inherent tensions, and connect high-level goals with local implementation on a fast-moving timeline.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMOS

These recommendation memos were prepared by CCRPC staff for review by the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) throughout July 2025. They outline the following components of Future Land Use Map creation: Purpose & Process; Statutory Framework; Committee Findings; Meeting Chronology; and Next Steps / Recommendations.



Adoption Process

AGENCY COMMENTS

The following state agencies reviewed and commented on the draft ECOS Plan during the Land Use Review Board (LURB) pre-application review period in Fall 2025. Their official comments are available upon request.

- **Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)** commended the Plan's focus on forest block and habitat connectivity and encouraged further alignment with Act 171 and the Climate Action Plan. They recommended clarifying language in the energy section around forest carbon sequestration and avoiding development in ecologically sensitive areas.
- **Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)** expressed general support for the structure and content of the plan. They requested clarification around terms like "planned public investment areas" and recommended refining the strategies tied to housing targets to better connect with Downtown Designation goals.
- **Vermont Emergency Management (VEM)** suggested strengthening the plan's integration with Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs) and emphasized the importance of aligning strategies across municipalities to address climate risks.
- **Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)** appreciated the plan's emphasis on multimodal access and equity. They encouraged a clearer description of how transportation investment priorities are developed.
- **Public Service Department (PSD)** supported the plan's treatment of energy resilience and equity. They also recommended more actionable steps for advancing weatherization and grid modernization goals.

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LURB COMMENTS

The LURB provided feedback on the Chittenden County ECOS Plan pre-application in December 2025. Their comments focused on ensuring consistency with 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 and the standards for regional plan approval. Full comments are available upon request.

1. General Plan Comments:

- The Board required adding content related to education and scenic, recreation, and historic resources to advance all required state planning goals under 24 V.S.A. § 4302.
- Reviewers emphasized including additional detail in specific sections to support formal compliance, particularly around conformance with Act 171 (forest block protections), Act 174 (energy planning), and Act 181 (housing target implementation and neighborhood designation readiness).
- The Board appreciated the plan's attention to equity and environmental justice and suggested more explicit connections to implementation strategies.

2. Future Land Use Map Comments

- Reviewers noted that the proposed map aligns well with VAPDA Mapping Standards v3.0.
- The Board found that some areas labeled as Downtown or Village Centers did not meet statutory criteria due to scale, infrastructure, or zoning.
- Planned Growth Areas (PGAs) raised questions about walkability, scale, and alignment with future designation potential. Some PGAs appear too expansive or centered on primarily industrial uses.
- Rural Conservation future land use area were supported overall, but reviewers recommended greater clarity on mapping methodology—especially for small pockets of conservation land within Rural General areas.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Between November 20, 2025, and January 21, 2026, CCRPC received 93 comments from 11 individuals via the online Konveio platform and through direct email. Commenters provided feedback on many sections of the Plan, with recurring themes including:

- **Housing Affordability and Choice**: Many commenters emphasized the need for more diverse, affordable housing options across all community types (not just in growth centers). Several expressed concern about exclusionary development patterns and the limited availability of housing, and housing types, in rural areas.
- **Growth and Infrastructure Costs**: Some expressed concern about the financial implications of accommodating population growth, including strain on infrastructure and public services.
- **Transportation Access and Safety**: Respondents raised the importance of expanding walkable and bikeable infrastructure, improving transit service, and ensuring safety across all modes.
- **Plan Accessibility and Data Visualization**: A few commenters suggested that the plan could be made more user-friendly through simplified language and clearer graphics.
- **Integration of Equity and Climate Goals**: Several praised the plan's attention to equity and climate but asked for more specific implementation actions.

CCRPC staff responded to all submitted comments and made select edits or clarifications in the plan where appropriate.

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SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The first public hearing warning was published in Seven Days on November 26, 2025. At the January 21, 2026, public hearing, five members of the public attended, including one in-person. Comments focused on housing, transportation, and the relationship between local and state decision-making. Attendees generally expressed interest in how the plan addresses growth, land use, and livability.

A second public hearing was warned on XXXX and held on May 20, 2026. Placeholder for 2nd Public hearing...

Conclusion & More Information

The public engagement process described in this supplement reflects CCRPC's commitment to transparency and equitable, community-informed planning. Across both phases of engagement, the voices of residents, municipalities, and partners have shaped both the content of the 2026 ECOS Plan and the ways in which CCRPC approaches meaningful collaboration and accountability. As the plan moves toward implementation, CCRPC remains dedicated to continuing this dialogue, ensuring that its work evolves alongside the needs and aspirations of Chittenden County communities. The relationships fostered throughout this process will serve as the foundation for shared progress in the years ahead.

For more information about the ECOS Plan and to view all associated engagement materials, visit the ECOS Engagement webpage: ccrpcvt.org/ecos-engagement.

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