

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Plan Amendments

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4384(c) which states:

*“When considering an amendment to a plan, the planning commission shall prepare a written report on the proposal. **The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A §4302 of this title.**”*

“If the proposal would alter the designation of any land area, the report should cover the following points:

1. *The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use.*
2. *The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on:*
 - (A) *the municipal tax base; and*
 - (B) *the need for public facilities.*
3. *The amount of vacant land which is:*
 - (A) *already subject to the proposed new designation; and*
 - (B) *actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose.*
4. *The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of:*
 - (A) *appropriate alternative locations;*
 - (B) *alternative uses for the area under consideration; and*
 - (C) *the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated.*
5. *The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability and existing development in the area.”*

How is the plan, as amended, consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A §4302?

The Hartland Planning Commission (HPC) finds that the Hartland Town Plan (hereinafter referred to as the “The Plan”) is consistent with the Vermont Planning Goals established in 24 V.S.A §4302. The Plan was written with the intention of making substantial progress toward the attainment of the Vermont Planning Goals through the Plan’s goals, policies, and recommendations. The HPC did not determine that any Vermont Planning goal is not relevant to the Plan.

If the plan would alter the designation of any land area, what is the probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use?

The 2025 Plan contains a Future Land Use (FLU) element and map that significantly amends the 2017 FLU element and map. The 2025 Plan’s FLU element and map contains the following land use areas:

- Rural Business (RB)
- Industrial (IND)
- Rural Residential (RR)
- Village Centers (VIL)
- Rural Area (R)
- Rural Agricultural and Forestry (RAF)

The Rural Business (RB) area subsumes the 2017 Town Plan’s Rt 4/Rt 12 and I-91 Interchange areas. The intent of the RB area is to provide a mix of some commercial land uses and housing near the intersection of state and federal highways that allow for some further development of appropriate housing and commercial land uses. This change should not result in any increase in traffic from the previous FLU areas.

The Industrial (IND) area amends portions of the 2017 Town Plan’s Industrial area. The Industrial area in the 2017 Town Plan south of the North Hartland Village Center is now part of the Village Center area of North Hartland. The intent of the IND area is to provide an area that are suited for industrial and commercial land uses. Further development of conforming commercial industrial land uses is appropriate in these areas. The impacts from this change may be more residential in the part that was previously industrial. Roads in the area have plenty of capacity.

The Rural Residential (RR) area amends portions of the 2017 Town Plan’s Rural Residential area. Notably, a portion of the 2025 Rural Residential area now separates the Village Center areas of Hartland Four Corners and Hartland Three Corners. There is also a new portion of the Rural Residential area in the northeast of the town, north of the Village Center area of North Hartland. The intent of the RR areas is to designate an area suitable for a medium density of housing, and some commercial land uses, outside the VIL areas. Further development of conforming land uses is appropriate in this area. This change will have minimal impacts as it represents land use that is mostly in place now.

The Village Centers (VIL) are amended from the 2017 Town Plan's Village areas. Notably, the Village Center areas of Hartland Four Corners and Hartland Three Corners are no longer contiguous. These two village centers are now separated by a portion of the Rural Residential area. The boundaries of the 2025 Town Plan's three Village Center areas have been amended from the boundaries of these areas in the 2017 Town Plan. In addition, the 2017 Town Plan's Industrial area south of North Hartland is now part of the Village Center area of North Hartland. The intent of the three VIL areas is to provide a mix of denser land uses, including commercial, housing, and public amenities and facilities, that serve as a focal point for the community. Further development is appropriate in these VIL areas. This change is more in keeping with the planning goal of compact settlement surrounded by open countryside in that it helps to create a break and avoid linear development. The change may engender land use between the villages that has less of an impact than was promoted previously.

The Rural Area (R) is significantly reduced in size compared to the 2017 Town Plan due to the creation of the Rural Agriculture and Forestry FLU area and the creation of a small enclave of the Rural Residential FLU area north of the North Hartland Village Center. The intent of these R FLU areas is to provide low-density housing, as well as some agricultural and silvicultural land uses. The effect of this change is minimal as the previous area had an 'overlay' forest block designation that had somewhat the same effect as the new RAF area, but this is clearer.

The Rural Agricultural and Forestry (RAF) FLU area is a new one that subsumes the majority of the 2017 Town Plan's Rural Area FLU area and the forest block overlay. The intent of the RAF is to provide low-density housing and larger natural resource-based agricultural and forestry operations. This area largely has the same effect as previous in that further development must be carefully regulated to maintain its rural character and the viability of its rural character and agricultural and silvicultural operations.

The alteration of these FLU areas should not result in a substantial increase in traffic or have a substantial impact on the surrounding areas. These FLU areas take into consideration the existing or reasonably anticipated land uses.

The RAF and R FLU areas encompass the most rural portions of the Town's land area. There is not likely to be new development concentrated in these areas that would substantially increase traffic or have an unanticipated impact on these areas or their surrounding areas.

If the plan would alter the designation of any land area, what is the long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on (A) the municipal tax base; and (B) the need for public facilities?

There is no anticipated long-term negative impact on the municipality's tax base or its provision of public facilities, such as the need for additional town roads or road upgrades, from altering these FLU areas. The intent of altering these is the same as the previous plan – to concentrate further development in roughly the same areas, while lessening further development in the Town's rural landscape. This concentration of further development within these suitable FLU areas should discourage sprawl and maintain the sustainability of the Town's current infrastructure by increasing the municipal tax base in a cost-effective manner.

If the plan would alter the designation of any land area, what is the amount of vacant land which is (A) already subject to the proposed new designation; and (B) actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose?

The RB FLU area subsumes the 2017 Plan's Rt 4/Rt 12 and I-91 Interchange areas, in addition to some parcels designated as Rural on the 2017 FLU map. No land was already under this designation, but effectively there is little change in the purpose and there is sufficient vacant land to meet the desired need. It is not, and was not, intended that these areas are significant growth nodes.

The RAF area subsumes portions of the 2017 Plan's Rural area, including much of the land that also had the forest block overlay as an additional policy layer. As the intent of this area is to provide low-density housing and larger natural resource-based agricultural and forestry operations, it contains many larger, rural parcels that are suited for that purpose.

The boundaries of the R, IND, VIL, and RR FLU areas are amended from the 2017 Town Plan FLU map. The parcels included within these areas were carefully selected for the intended purposes and no additional land is needed for those during the life of the new Plan.

If the plan would alter the designation of any land area, what is the suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of (A) appropriate alternative locations; (B) alternative uses for the area under consideration; and (C) the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated?

The Plan's proposed FLU areas have been tailored to promote uses that are compatible with the state planning goals, the roads in the area, the land itself, and largely with existing development. Given that the areas essentially bound the type of existing land uses they promote, there is minimal negative impact expected. It is hoped that the villages will gain most of the new residential development, but they have excellent road access for commuters. The lower density R and much lower density RAF areas will absorb some development but the policies in place should mitigate effects on scale and location of development. The RR area presently contains moderately-dense housing. The IND area presently contains industrial land uses. The RB areas presently contain a mixture of commercial land uses. The three VIL areas contain a mixture of dense housing, commercial, and municipal land uses.

There are no better alternative locations suitable for the Plan's altered FLU areas, given the road network and development capacity of the land.

The designation of the Town's land areas into these proposed FLU areas is intended to have the impact of encouraging further development and clustering of appropriate land uses in the FLU areas suited for that purpose.

If the plan would alter the designation of any land area, what is the appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area?

The size and boundaries of these FLU areas are appropriate given the capability of these lands to serve these intended purposes. The villages have room to grow, the IND areas have room for more businesses, and the RAF area has sufficient size to promote the limited agriculture and forestry operations in Town. The quality of large forest blocks and habitat connectors in Town is not great due to past development, but the Plan seeks to preserve the limited remaining ecological value present. The flat bottomlands along the Connecticut River are the only sizable areas of cropped farmland, and along with some upland pastures represent future agricultural areas and the Plan recognizes this.