

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING AGENDA**

Online & 2 Lincoln St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**6:30 PM**

E-mail: [cyuen@essexjunction.org](mailto:cyuen@essexjunction.org)

[www.essexjunction.org](http://www.essexjunction.org)

Phone: 802-878-6944, ext. 1607

This meeting will be held in-person at 2 Lincoln St and remotely. To participate remotely:

- **JOIN ONLINE:** [Join Zoom Meeting](#)
- **JOIN CALLING:** (toll free audio only): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 953 1240 7791; Passcode: 040339

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
  - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
4. **MINUTES**
  - a. November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025
  - b. November 18, 2025
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. Discussion and Consideration of Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan\* [6:33 PM]
  - b. Discussion and Consideration of 2026 ECOS Plan Review Comments\* [7:30 PM]
  - c. Informational Update on FY27 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)\* [7:45 PM]

**MEMBERS UPDATES** [7:55 PM]

  - d. **STAFF UPDATES** [8:00 PM]
  - e. **ADJOURN** [8:05 PM]

\*attachments included in the packet

*Agenda item timestamps are estimates of the starting time of each topic and are subject to change.*

*This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Planning Commission, like all programs and activities of the City of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the City Manager's office at 802-878-6944 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.*

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
NOVEMBER 7, 2025  
DRAFT**

**PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Elijah Massey, Chair; Diane Clemens, Vice-Chair; Elena Juodisius; Finn Hamilton (non-voting); Scott McCormick; Kirstie Paschall

**CITY COUNCIL PRESENT:** Amber Thibeault, President; Marcus Certa; Tim Miller, Brian Shelden

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jeff Arango, Luke Brockmeier, Dave Contois, (illegible) Contois, Brendan Degraffi, Marshall Distel, Jack Evans, Sarah Lukins, Maggie Massey, Rachel McCloud, Ella Ruehsen, Jak Tiano, Dave

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Massey called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Ms. Thibeault called the City Council meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

**3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda**

None.

**4. MINUTES**

**a. September 4, 2025**

**DIANE CLEMENS made a motion, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to approve the minutes of minutes of September 4, 2025. Motion passed 5-0.**

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discussion and Consideration of Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan**

Mr. Yuen discussed the history of this project and said that the most recent draft plan was made public in June of 2025. City staff and the project team have worked to engage the community, especially regarding building height and changes to the operations of Five Corners. Mr. Arango, of Framework Design, provided a presentation on the project. The Connect the Junction project is federally funded and ten communities in northern Vermont were selected for this funding. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) focuses on creating dense, walkable, mixed-use development near transit. Mr. Yuen said that the City currently adds around fifty new housing units per year. To achieve the mid-range housing targets set by the regional planning commission, the City would need to at least double housing production. Mr. Arango spoke of the benefits and differences between rental and owner-occupied units, and the importance of access to homeownership for the middle class. Mr. Certa said that much of the new development is rental properties, and that opportunities for homeownership are not being provided.

Mr. Arango discussed the big ideas that structure the plan. He said that local developers seem supportive of the plan and of working with the City in general. Mr. Yuen detailed public engagement efforts, noting that staff set up an ice cream stand in front of two apartment buildings on Pearl Street to gain public input. Mr. Arango discussed how additional housing could be added should Essex Junction allow higher buildings. He proposes that Essex Junction increase the height limit to seven stories, with an additional story possible for affordable housing units. Mr. Yuen said that staff are not assuming at every new building will be eight stories tall and believes that most new buildings will be between five and six stories. Mr. Miller asked if there was a possibility that the taller height limits could be for a specific area, Mr. Yuen answered affirmatively. Ms. Clemens discussed slowly increasing building height until the direct City Center area. Mr. Certa suggested creating a 3D rendering of what the area would look like with higher height limits. Mr. Sheldon said that the Pearl Street corridor seems to be the place best suited for higher heights. Ms. Mahony said that these height limits are not requirements, however housing is necessary and this appears to be a good place for it.

Mr. Arango discussed community support for increasing building height along the Pearl Street Corridor and reviewed the reasons that individuals cited for supporting or not supporting the height increase. Mr. Miller spoke of the potential cost differences between different types of building sizes. Mr. Arango discussed how inclusionary zoning has been incorporated into other communities. He said that the “missing middle” housing is the most difficult to deliver with inclusionary zoning projects. Ms. Mahony said that the intention of inclusionary zoning is to mix lower-cost and market rate housing. Ms. Clemens said that the PC may make a recommendation but is ultimately restricted by the City Council’s decisions on building heights.

Mr. Massey requested public comment. Mr. Brockmeier discussed views from higher buildings. Mr. Tiano said that he is the Policy Director at Lets Build Homes but is speaking as an individual. He finds this proposal very well-thought out and a very good way to incorporate affordable housing. Mr. Degraffi said that he is in support of the additional building height proposal. Mr. Evans, of Local Motion, urged the boards to go beyond allowing the seven stories to allow for additional housing. Ms. McCloud spoke of the need for more missing middle housing.

Mr. Arango said that changes in transportation patterns and the development of the Crescent Connector have assisted with traffic calming in the area, and that Essex Junction has always had a strong pedestrian-friendly nature. The Meet Me on Main events showed that pedestrianization can be a strong draw for the community, however permanently closing Main Street is not being recommended at this time. Mr. Arango discussed removing slip lanes and other roadway areas dedicated to turning. Mr. Sheldon and Mr. Miller questioned the closing of Memorial Way, as it is important for public safety and the easy movement of traffic. Answering a question from Ms. Clemens, Mr. Arango said that he did not hear any complaints from business owners regarding food truck competition at the Meet Me on Main event. Essex Junction is only served by one bus route and restricting turns on Memorial Way would not impact this. Mr. Certa said that he is open to short-term tests of restricting turns, however, is unsure of the long-term impact. Answering a question from Mr. Certa, Mr. Arango said that many of the streets in Essex Junction have a slow enough speed limit so that many people may feel comfortable biking in the winter. He believes that there is community support for biking and walking infrastructure. Mr. Yuen said that having the ability to use both bikes and public transit makes living without a car much more tolerable year-round, even if there is a seasonality to cycling. Mr. Evans spoke of the year-round benefits of cycling and said that

winter cycling is one of the largest questions that Local Motion answers. Mr. Arango said that bicycle facilities can be designed at a raised, sidewalk height, rather than with on-street painted bike lanes. Answering a question from Ms. Clemens, Mr. Yuen said that the state retains the responsibility of paving class one state routes however the City can make other changes.

Mr. Arango discussed the installation of a mural on the fire station, activating Railroad Avenue for better community usage and public space investment. He said that additional work needs to be done to move these ideas forward. The next steps include finalizing revisions to the plan, work on the Land Development Code updates, and project completion by mid-2026. Mr. McCormick said that there was significant discussion about building height at the engagement meetings, and that it appears to many are not opposed to taller buildings. He believes that additional discussion needs to be had regarding where the best places are in the City for higher buildings. Ms. Mahony said that approving this plan tonight would not prevent the PC and City Council from making additional changes in the LDC. Ms. Thibeault said that she does not expect the PC to decide tonight. Mr. Massey said that the PC will discuss accepting or adopting the document at the December meeting. Ms. Clemens said that the content of the document has improved since the last draft but noted several errors.

**DIANE CLEMENS made a motion, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to table the report until the December meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**

**b. Introduction of 802 Homes / Homes for All Phase project**

Mr. Yuen said that the state of Vermont is working on an initiative to create ready-to-build, code-compliant plans to assist with infill housing. The City is participating as a development-ready community.

**6. MEMBERS UPDATES**

Mr. McCormick said that he recently attended the Agency of Natural Resources Municipal Day. The Climate Action office is developing plans for integrating climate action into municipal plans. He is meeting with the agency to discuss Essex Junction becoming a pilot community. Ms. Clemens said that she attended the Regional Housing Convening meeting, as the Planning Commission serves as the de facto Housing Commission for Essex Junction.

**7. STAFF UPDATES**

None.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

**BRIAN SHELDEN made a motion, seconded by TIM MILLER, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.**

**SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by DIANE CLEMENS, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned 8:58 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
NOVEMBER 18, 2025  
DRAFT**

**PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Diane Clemens, Vice-Chair; Elena Juodisius; Scott McCormick; Kirstie Paschall

**ADMINISTRATION:** Chris Yuen, Community Development Director; Michael Giguere, City Planner

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Chris Cochrane, Jeff Dube, Matthew Littell, Zoë Mueller, Alex Davis, Camille Wimpe, Samantha Dunn, Jeff Kershner, Chris Welch, Darren Schibler

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was started by Zoë Mueller, the project manager for 802 Homes for the selected consultant (Utile) at 8:00 am.

**2. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a.** Zoë previewed the meeting agenda and noted that Utile will facilitate the discussion using Google My Maps to track notes and map locations relevant to the project.

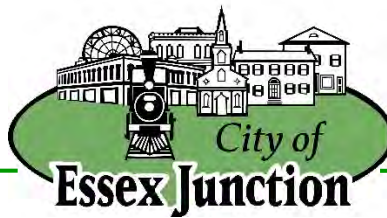
The group discussed Essex Junction's physical development patterns and real estate market conditions to help the consultants understand existing factors influencing the potential for infill development. Jeff noted that a pump station analysis is being conducted by the City and that while the wastewater treatment facility has capacity for additional housing, sewage treatment capacity may need to be increased depending on the rate of residential growth.

Staff and commission members shared insights into the City's regulatory and permitting landscape, including zoning bylaws and dimensional standards, the technical review process for site plan and zoning permit approval, and challenges observed in recent infill development applications. Consultants and state staff offered potential solutions and considerations to strengthen these areas, such as creating a developer project checklist to clarify the technical review process and timeline. Commission members shared direct perspectives as residents of the City, including dimensional challenges of typical properties, community demographics, and past housing policy initiatives such as evaluating a rental registry program.

The group also identified several areas for further exploration of infill potential, including West Street; Church and East Street; Summit Street/School Street; and specific parcels on Maple Street and Pearl Street.

**3. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was concluded at 10:00 am.



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission, Development Review Board, City Council  
**From:** Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director  
**Meeting Date:** Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**Subject:** Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan

**Issue:** Whether to recommend adoption of the *Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan* and what building height limits should be along the Pearl Street corridor.

### **Discussion:** Background

At the November 6 joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting, the consulting team presented the results of the summer engagement and their recommendations for the Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development plan. Key discussion topics included:

- Regulation of building heights along the Pearl Street corridor; and
- The future configuration of the Five Corners intersection and surrounding area.

The Planning Commission tabled a decision on the draft plan until the December meeting. The Planning Commission should now consider endorsing the plan and provide a recommendation on the issues of building height to the City Council. Following an endorsement by the Planning Commission, the City Council may consider adopting the plan on December 17, 2025.

The project team will then continue work on recommended zoning amendments to implement portions of the plan related to housing and development. These zoning amendments recommended as a part of the Connect the Junction plan will be presented to the Planning Commission in early 2026 and will undergo additional public engagement and a formal legislative process before adoption by the City Council.

For reference, the June 2025 draft plan is available at <https://www.connectthejunction.org/documents>.

The following are the main issues discussed at the November 6 meeting, some of which require additional consideration.

### Relationship between Building Height Limits and the Municipal Housing Targets

During the November 6 meeting, the consulting team presented three alternatives for the regulation of building height in the project area:

- Alternative 0: 4 stories, 1 story bonus- estimated capacity: 1,144 homes
- Alternative 1: 7 stories, 1 story bonus- estimated capacity: 1,662 homes
- Alternative 2: 9 stories, 1 story bonus- estimated capacity: 2,008 homes

Alternative 1 would allow the City to accommodate about 55% of the City's "mid-range" housing target of 3,062 new housing units by year 2050.

Commissioner Finn Hamilton brought up the fact throughout the summer, the City’s public outreach material suggested that a building height limit of 7 stories (+1 story affordability bonus) would be sufficient to accommodate the “entire draft housing target in the study area”.



Figure 1: typical illustration displayed during Summer 2025 public engagement

The estimates presented on November 6 reflect an updated analysis that reflects new information learned from meetings with developers and landowners about their redevelopment plans and expected timeframes. This updated analysis also assumes more conservative “market factors” and density assumptions, calibrated against recent developments in the area.

It is possible that some public engagement participants indicated a preference for 8 stories under the previous assumption that such policy would allow the City to fully accommodate the expected housing growth needs. If that is the case, the updated analysis may justify additional height.

#### Affordable Housing Bonus; Inclusionary Zoning

During the November 6 meeting, Commissioner Massey asked whether multiple additional floors could be offered as a density bonus available only to projects that include affordable units. Councilor Certa also raised the possibility of adopting an Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) requirement.

**Inclusionary Zoning (IZ):** IZ would require that a portion of new housing be permanently or long-term affordable. While well-intentioned, this model carries significant economic risk—particularly under Vermont’s current challenging market conditions. According to the Sightline Institute, conventional (i.e., “unfunded”) IZ often backfires: because developers lose rent revenue on required affordable units, a mandatory IZ policy can make projects financially unviable, prompting developers to abandon them entirely. See <https://www.sightline.org/2024/10/28/to-fix-inclusionary-zoning-fund-it/> for more.

In short: when markets are unfavorable, as they are now, IZ may not just deter inclusionary units—it may suppress overall development, reducing both market-rate and affordable housing. This risk is compounded by the fact that designing a robust IZ program requires careful calibration (affordability levels, income targets, alternatives like fee-in-lieu, long-term compliance), as well as substantial administrative capacity—to certify tenant income, monitor restrictions, and enforce covenants. Without that capacity, IZ becomes even harder to manage in a way that meets goals without destabilizing project financing.

**Height Bonus Linked to Affordability**, by comparison, is a lower-risk tool in this environment. Offering an extra story (or appropriate density increase) contingent on including affordable units provides an *incentive*, rather than a mandate. If the economics work—when construction costs, financing, and projected rents allow—developers can choose to take the bonus and build the mixed-income project.

If, instead, the market is weak, developers can simply decline the bonus; they are less likely to abandon the entire project, but may build at a lower scale without the extra story.

This makes the height bonus a more flexible, adaptive mechanism: it rewards affordability when possible, but does not carry the same risk of derailing development when conditions tighten. In other words, it better preserves the feasibility of mixed-income housing in uncertain economic times.

**Recommendation:** Given the current financial climate, staff does *not* recommend implementing a mandatory inclusionary zoning requirement at this time. For simplicity, we suggest continuing to align with the state’s existing affordability bonus structure—allowing one additional story above by-right height for projects that include affordable units. However, it would also be straightforward to extend the bonus to two stories if desired.

### Height limits in specific areas

The Housing Capacity Analysis discussed above assumes the same height limit across the VC district and most of the remainder of the Pearl Street corridor. However, these two areas were presented to the public as distinct areas with the assumption that they are regarded as distinct areas, with distinct characteristics. The Planning Commission may recommend different heights between these two zones, if desired.

Within these two zones, it is possible to have further variations and gradations in the height limit along the corridor. Generally, two contrasting approaches are possible:

- A. focusing height limit increases on areas with larger parcels and greater development potential, or
- B. broadly applying increased height limits across the study area.

Each approach offers distinct advantages and tradeoffs given the City’s goals for housing production, neighborhood compatibility, and predictable redevelopment patterns. These approaches describe a spectrum, not a dichotomy.

### ***Approach A: focusing height limit increases on areas with larger parcels***

#### Advantages

- Focused on areas with higher likelihood of near-term redevelopment: Larger parcels are generally easier for developers to assemble, design, and finance.
- Better capacity for structured parking and open space: Larger lot dimensions can accommodate structured parking, internal circulation, stormwater management, and public-facing open spaces, which help support taller buildings while maintaining good site design.
- Reduced interface impacts: Limiting height increases to parcels with greater setbacks and buffer potential can mitigate shading, privacy, and scale transitions for adjacent lower-intensity areas.
- More predictable urban design outcomes: Concentrating additional height in specific nodes can help avoid scattered, isolated tall buildings.

#### Disadvantages

- Uneven distribution of redevelopment opportunities: Some smaller parcels may become economically stagnant if they cannot access the same development potential as larger

- sites, potentially slowing infill on fine-grained blocks.
- Risk of over-concentration: Height increases on only a few larger parcels may result in a small number of very large projects rather than a broader mix of incremental infill and “missing middle” housing types.
- Limited total capacity: Focusing additional height on a small subset of parcels may not fully capture the study area’s potential to deliver significant new housing supply.

### **Approach B: broadly applying increased height limits across the study area**

#### **Advantages**

- Maximizes housing potential during housing shortage: Area-wide height increases can unlock redevelopment on both large and small parcels, enabling greater total housing production over time and allowing more property owners to participate in TOD-supportive growth.
- Simplifies zoning and increases predictability: Uniform height standards can create a clearer regulatory environment for property owners.

#### **Disadvantages**

- Potential compatibility concerns: Allowing taller buildings on small parcels increases the risk of massing conflicts, shadows, or abrupt transitions, especially where parcels directly abut existing lower-scale residential lots.
- Possibility of piecemeal form: Taller buildings dispersed across many smaller sites may create a less cohesive TOD character if not paired with strong design standards or form-based requirements.

### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission establish general height limits for each of the two primary areas—the Village Center (VC) district and the Pearl Street TOD Corridor. It is reasonable for these two districts to have different height limits, reflecting their distinct contexts and roles within the overall plan.

If the Commission is interested in setting more specific height variations within each district, it may certainly do so. Staff’s only caution is that detailed sub-area distinctions can make the code more complicated and may pre-empt topics—such as aesthetics, transitions, and building form—that are often better addressed through the form-based code work planned in the next phase of the project. For this reason, the Commission may find it helpful to focus on the broader district-level framework unless there is a clear and shared rationale for going further.

This approach preserves flexibility for the Commission while maintaining a clear, practical regulatory structure and allowing form-based standards to address finer-grained design issues.

### **Next Step: Form-Based Code Considerations**

As the Connect the Junction project moves into the next phase, staff invites the Planning Commission to identify topics or concerns to guide the development of form-based code (FBC) standards. Early input will help ensure the code addresses community priorities while supporting new housing growth.

Potential areas for Commission guidance include:

- **Massing and shadow impacts on streets:** Are there particular streets or public spaces where the visual or shading effects of taller buildings are of concern?
- **Massing and shadow impacts on lower-scale residential zones:** Should transitions or height step-backs be required to reduce impacts on adjacent neighborhoods? Keep in mind that extensive step-backs or overly restrictive height transitions can limit the potential for adding new housing units.
- **Historic structures:** While buildings are already protected under the Land Development Code (LDC), does the Commission think the FBC should temper the scale of new development around historic structures, or should historic structures be integrated within larger-scale development? How should the balance between preserving historic context and supporting new development be managed?
- **Design standards to temper visual impact of height:** Are changes in building color, materials, or façade articulation desired above certain heights to reduce perceived bulk?
- **Other community priorities:** Are there additional elements—such as street-level activation, open space, or landscaping—that the Commission would like the FBC to address?

Identifying these priorities now will help the project team draft FBC provisions that reflect the Commission’s objectives while keeping the code flexible and practical for new development.

#### Changes to traffic operations at the Five Corners intersection

The draft plan includes potential future changes to traffic operations at the Five Corners intersection, such as closing Memorial Way and redirecting traffic between Main Street and Park Street via the Crescent Connector. This topic was discussed at the November 6 meeting.

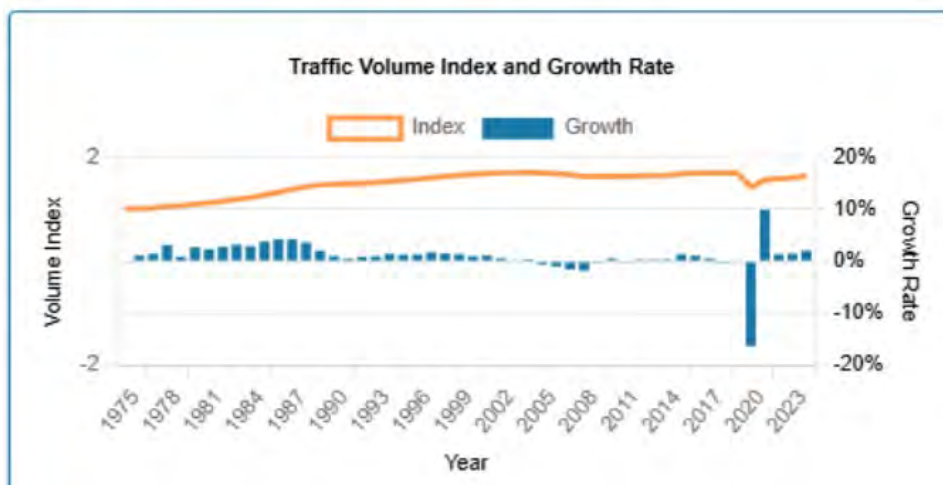
Any changes at the Five Corners would be subject to detailed evaluation through an engineering study and capital planning process, and would require City Council approval before implementation.

Are there specific elements of the proposed changes that the Commission believes should be removed or modified and not advanced for further consideration?

#### Known Errors to be Corrected

- Commissioner Clemens was incorrectly listed as attending the August 13, 2025 public engagement event on page 17 of the public engagement summary. The attendee should have been listed as Kirstie Paschall. This error will be corrected in the record, and Framework has been asked to update the summary.
- Page 16 of the draft plan states: “Traffic counts in Essex Junction have increased in recent years, with the highest traffic on Pearl Street from Susie Wilson Road to Post Office Square and on Park Street at the Five Corners.” As part of the Pearl Street multimodal project, staff reviewed available traffic data with CCRPC and were unable to verify this statement. Data from the VTrans Traffic Count database for locations within Essex Junction indicate that traffic volumes have generally leveled off since the 2000s, likely reflecting workforce changes at Global Foundries offsetting population growth. Because a clear trend cannot be established, this statement will be removed from the final version of the plan.

## Traffic Volume Index and Growth Rate ?



### Cost:

N/A

### Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission first provide guidance on the topics discussed in this memo, including building height limits, form-based code priorities, and the Five Corners intersection, before endorsing the Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan.

### Recommended Motion:

"I move that the Planning Commission endorse the Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, as discussed."

### Attachments:

1. Connect the Junction Summer Engagement Summary
2. November 6 Presentation Slides

# SUMMER ENGAGEMENT

## Summary Report

### CONNECT THE JUNCTION

A Transit-Oriented Development Plan for Essex Junction

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION

October 2025





## CONTEXT | BACKGROUND

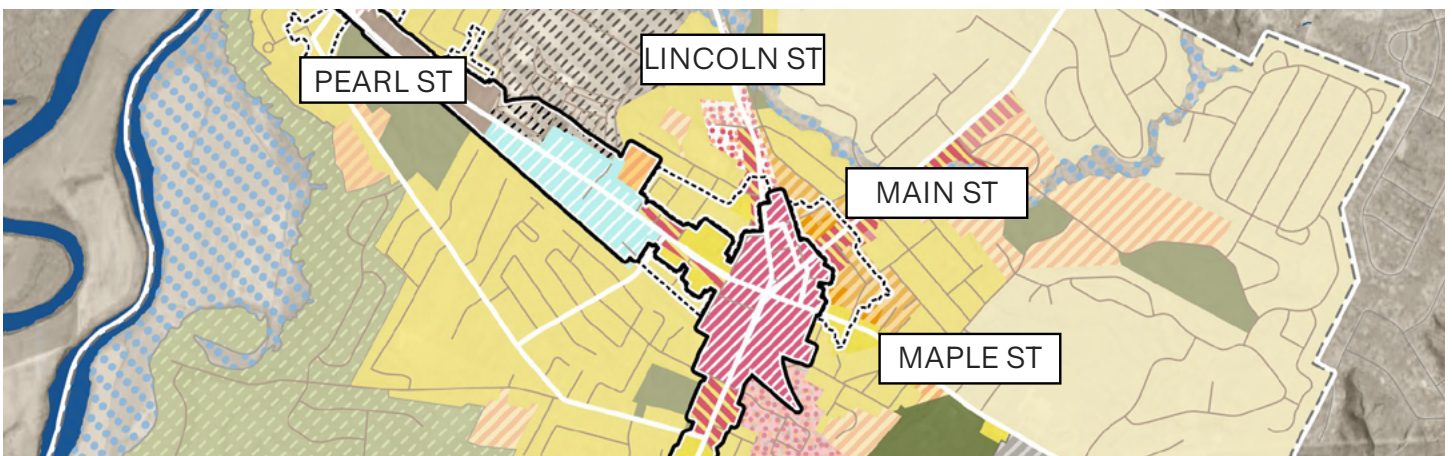
As of writing this report, the City of Essex Junction is in the process of creating a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan that focuses on the City Center and Route 15 corridor. This project is part of the larger TOD project for the Northwest region of Vermont and is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program. This TOD effort plans for the addition of homes and services in convenient, transit-accessible areas to provide a viable alternative to automobile-dependent living, reduce household transportation costs and support walkable town centers while addressing the ongoing housing shortage.

Called "**Connect the Junction**," the TOD Master Plan for Essex Junction will look at land use and transportation strategies to improve walking, biking, and transit access in the Five Corners and Route 15 corridor, and to strengthen the community's access to diverse housing options, local businesses, and public space.

Learn more at [connectthejunction.org](https://connectthejunction.org)



Map (below) showing where 5 major roads converge to form Essex Junction's historic and commercial center.





## CONTEXT | SUMMARY

Between June and September 2025, the City of Essex Junction and the project team conducted an extensive series of public engagement activities to inform the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan. Outreach strategies included: five in-person events, one Online Open House, developer discussions, online surveys, press releases, newsletters, social media campaigns, utility bill mailers, posters, and municipal site updates and announcements.

These efforts reached more than four-hundred community members, generating over 100 written comments and more than 500 sticker responses across all activities. Engagement was intentionally designed to reach a wide array of perspective across a range of community members including renters, families, long-time residents, business owners, land owners, developers, youth and more.

Feedback revealed strong community alignment towards safer and walkable streets as well as small-scale public realm improvements. Opinions differed around building height increases and housing density, most notably between in-person, and online groups.

The rollout of online engagement included a significant hiccup - utility bill mail inserts included a QR code to the online open house which was not mobile or tablet-friendly. This stymied a number of residents interested in leaving comments. To remedy this, a mobile-friendly survey was created to redirect mobile users, and to provide a more accessible forum for providing feedback.

## KEY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS



**3**

Online Tools



**4**

Newsletter  
Mentions



**4,000+**

Utility Bill  
Mail Inserts



**3**

Stakeholder  
Focus Groups



**3**

Press  
Releases



**Multiple**

Social Media Posts,  
Posters/Flyers



**6**

Organized  
Events



**1**

Walking Tour



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | OVERVIEW

  
**400+**  
Participants



### Digital and Media Outreach Analytics

To expand outreach beyond in-person events, the City used Facebook to share updates and encourage participation in the Online Open House and survey. These posts helped increase visibility and drove traffic to the project website throughout the summer engagement period.

| Facebook Post      | Date     | Views | Reach | Impressions | Link Clicks | Interactions   |
|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Junction City News | July 8   | 483   | 294   | 23          | 8           | -              |
| Open House         | Sept 23  | 808   | 534   | 593         | 11          | 4              |
| Survey End Dates   | Sept 30  | 1268  | 843   | 882         | 38          | 4 (2 comments) |
| Survey End         | Oct 8    | 757   | 495   | 542         | 6           | 2              |
| Total              | July-Oct | 3,316 | 2,166 | 2,040       | 63          | 10             |

### Definitions

- **Views:** The number of times your post was displayed.
- **Interactions:** The number of reactions, comments, shares and saves on your post.
- **Link clicks:** The number of clicks, taps or swipes on links within your content, including ads. Content may include formats such as posts, stories, and reels that led to destinations or experiences, on or off Facebook.
- **Impressions:** The number of times your content was on screen.
- **Reach:** The number of people who saw your content at least once. Reach is different from impressions, which may include multiple views of your content by the same people. This metric is estimated.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | OVERVIEW

| Event                                         | Date          | Attendees                                                                                | Key Takeaways                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4th of July Fireworks<br>Tabling              | July 4        | Mixture of residents; casual attendees                                                   | Mainly conversational awareness-building for those who do not normally attend planning meetings.                                                               |
| National Night Out                            | Aug 5         | Mostly families, majority homeowners                                                     | Parents expressed concerns around Main St. closures and traffic, one bike commuter supported latest safety improvements.                                       |
| Maple Street Park<br>Pop-Up                   | Aug 13        | Local youth, plus parents, mixture                                                       | Strong youth engagement with kids supporting taller housing and walkable pathways; mixed-responses from parents                                                |
| Pearl Ice Cream Social                        | Aug 20        | Majority renters and nearby residents                                                    | Deep conversations around housing affordability, safety, and transit; mostly supportive of increasing height and density if well-designed.                     |
| Pearl Ice Cream Social                        | Aug 26        | Majority renters                                                                         | Positive feedback on transit access; sharing of daily experience of bus users and people walking/biking with children.                                         |
| Rotary Club<br>Presentation                   | Sept 3        | Business owners, civic leaders, and long-term residents from Essex Junction and Westford | Comments centered around balancing growth and community identity; pragmatic and future-thinking conversations                                                  |
| Meet Me on Main<br>Open House                 | Sept 27       | Mixture of families, renters, business owners and visitors                               | Strong interest in walkability, safety, and economic revitalization.                                                                                           |
| Meet Me on Main<br>Open House                 | Oct 11        | Mixture of families, renters, business owners and visitors                               | Strong interest in walkability, safety, and economic revitalization.                                                                                           |
| Online Open House<br>and Open House<br>Survey | July -<br>Oct | Primarily homeowners and long-term residents, as well as some younger renters.           | Various comments on building height, parking, and traffic, with homeowners more cautious and renters generally supportive of density and transit improvements. |

### Media: Junction City News

- **June 23** — featured the Connect the Junction Draft Plan Overview segment; generated 107 views
- **August 25 (Pearl St West Segment)** — featured the Pearl Street West Segment Update; generated 43 views, helped maintain visibility of project milestones.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | IN-PERSON RESPONDENTS

**In-person outreach centered on meeting residents where they already spend time.** Staff joined existing community events and hosted a few of their own to connect with people who might not otherwise engage in city planning and reach a broader mix of voices.

### Casual Conversations + Insights

Taking an in-person approach towards engagement helps capture a broader cross-section of Essex Junction residents, including families, youth, renters, and long-term homeowners. These candid interactions offered valuable context that online data alone cannot provide, revealing how people experience their neighborhoods day-to-day and what matters most in their regular routines.

Photos from the Maple Street Park event (bottom) and the Meet Me on Main Event (middle) illustrate the variety of participants and the energy of in-person engagement. These moments capture how public dialogue becomes most meaningful when it's visible, approachable, and rooted in community life.

### Findings and Learnings

Our team found that in-person engagement provided opportunities to explain ideas directly and give participants more context about each concept. This helped clarify misunderstandings, build trust, and ensure that feedback reflected a clearer understanding of the proposals.





## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | ONLINE RESPONDENTS

**The online open house and survey provided a platform for residents** to freely review materials and share feedback at their own pace and schedule. This format expanded participation beyond in-person events and allowed those with limited time or mobility to engage directly in the planning process.

### Reach and Participation

The City mailed every homeowner in Essex Junction a utility bill insert with a QR code linking to the open house, prompting a strong initial surge of responses—approximately 80 submissions within the first few weeks. However, participation tapered over time, reflecting the challenges of sustaining online engagement across multiple months.

### Online Engagement Challenges

While the online open house helped reach a wide audience, it experienced several technical and timing challenges. Some challenges include the following:

- **Utility Bill Mailer** — A QR code linking to the open house was mailed to every homeowner in Essex Junction, resulting in a surge of initial participation and web traffic within the first two weeks.
- **Early Engagement** — The online open house saw strong early interest, with approximately 80 total responses, but participation slowed after the initial campaign period.
- **Accessibility Issues** — The first version of the open house platform was not mobile-friendly, leading to several resident complaints. To remedy, the City released a mobile-optimized SurveyMonkey version to improve accessibility.
- **Limited Follow-Up Participation** — Despite improvements, engagement through the SurveyMonkey format remained limited, suggesting that most online participants had already engaged through the initial version.
- **Competing Campaigns** — The online open house coincided with several other City initiatives and surveys throughout the summer, likely contributing to reduced participation due to engagement fatigue.

### Insights and Learnings

Despite its challenges, the online open house generated the most comments and provided valuable input from residents who might not have attended in person. Many respondents used the open format to share detailed written comments, offering a range of feedback on housing, building height, design, and community character. Lessons from this effort will inform future outreach strategies to ensure smoother accessibility in digital participation tools.

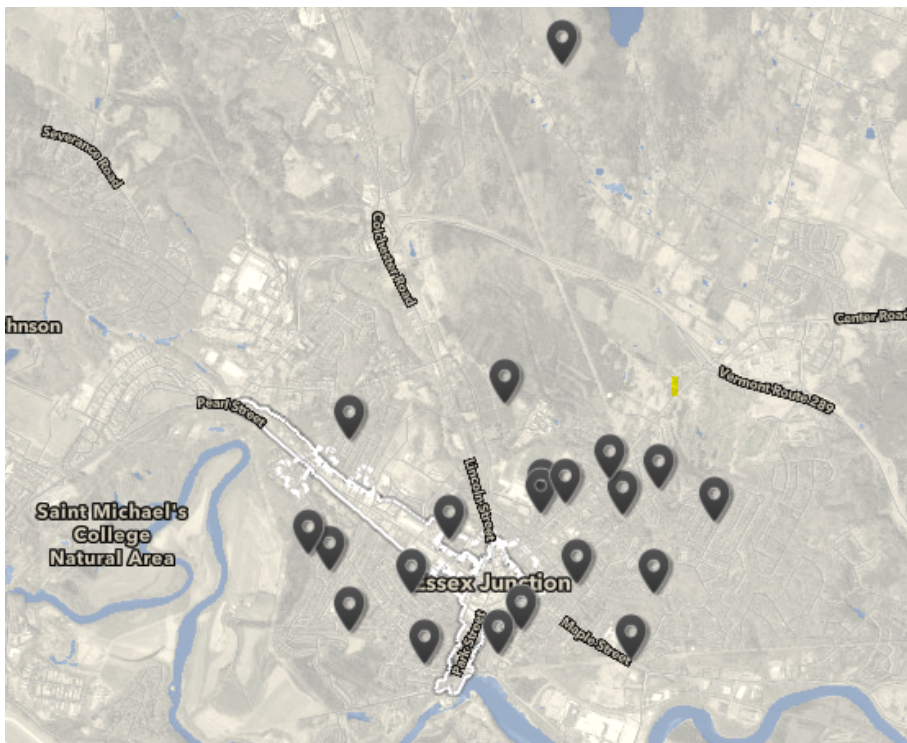


## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | ONLINE RESPONDENTS

The table below reflects the demographics data of only online respondents. To minimize engagement fatigue, demographics boards were not consistently used at in-person events. As a result, this data reflects the groups most likely to engage through online outreach tools.

### Tenure and Age of Participants

| Age        | < 1 y | 1-5 yrs | 6-15 yrs | 15+ yrs | Not A Resident | Total |
|------------|-------|---------|----------|---------|----------------|-------|
| < 18 y.o.  | 0     | 2       | 1        | 3       | 0              | 6     |
| 18-24 y.o. | 0     | 2       | 0        | 2       | 1              | 5     |
| 25-35 y.o. | 4     | 12      | 5        | 4       | 5              | 30    |
| 35-49 y.o. | 1     | 19      | 17       | 27      | 3              | 67    |
| 50-64 y.o. | 1     | 0       | 7        | 46      | 6              | 60    |
| 65+ y.o.   | 0     | 3       | 4        | 31      | 1              | 39    |
| Total      | 6     | 38      | 34       | 113     | 16             | 207   |



### Resident Distribution

Respondents who engaged in the online open house were asked to map their homes. The resulting map to the left shows a relatively even distribution across the city, but no respondents living within the study boundary. In-person events captured more of this population.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | DEVELOPMENT

### Building Height & Housing Density

The plan proposes increased height limits within the study area; feedback included a variety of perspectives that were markedly different between in-person and online events, making it important to distinguish which groups we were hearing more from in each setting.

**Q1.** In general, do you support increased height along the Pearl St. Corridor as a way to address the housing shortage?



yes (94%) - 61 votes

no (6%) - 4 votes



In-Person



yes (47%) - 24 votes

neutral (14%) - 7 votes

no (14%) - 20 votes



Online

### In-Person vs. Online Feedback Comparison

Feedback gathered through in-person events reflected a generally supportive attitude towards increasing heights and housing density. The participants in this group - comprised of a greater proportion of renters, younger families, and downtown residents - saw value in encouraging taller mixed-use buildings as a way to provide more housing and support businesses. Comments emphasized a need towards balancing density with good design and walkable streetscapes and accessible modes of transit for future development.

In contrast, feedback from the Online Open House and survey reflected a more preservation-oriented perspective. This group, comprised more heavily of long-term residents and single-family home owners, favored retaining or even reducing story height limits, from the existing 5-story maximum to a 4-story maximum, citing a desire to maintain views and retain the city's existing look and feel. Cautionary feedback reflected concern around human scale as well as compatibility with the City's existing charm and character.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | DEVELOPMENT

**Q2/Q3.** What is the maximum height you think should be allowed in the Village Center District? The TOD District\*?

### What Height... Is Right?

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2 (Residential)

1 (Retail/Commercial)

### Village Center

42% - 30 votes

13% - 9 votes

32% - 23 votes

7% - 5 votes

4% - 3 votes

2% - 2 votes

### TOD District\*

37% - 21 votes

11% - 6 votes

39% - 22 votes

4% - 2 votes

7% - 4 votes

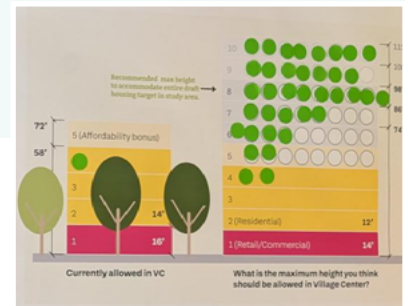
2% - 2 votes



### In-Person

**87%** of in-person respondents favored **8-10 story height increases**

*The image to the right shows the dot-voting board from the “Meet Me on Main” event showing community preferences on building height.*



### What Height... Is Right?

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2 (Residential)

1 (Retail/Commercial)

### Village Center

5% - 3 votes

2% - 1 votes

19% - 11 votes

3% - 2 votes

12% - 7 votes

20% - 12 votes

31% - 18 votes

No Preference

9% - 5 votes

### TOD District\*

2% - 1 votes

0% - 0 votes

20% - 13 votes

12% - 8 votes

9% - 6 votes

24% - 16 votes

26% - 17 votes

No Preference

8% - 5 votes



### Online

8-stories was the **most favored height** among supporters of increasing height limits

over **50%** of online group favored **keeping** existing height limits.

*\*Note: In most survey materials, “TOD” covered the Pearl Street corridor outside of the Village Center and nearby low-density area.*



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | TRANSPORTATION

### [In-Person Responses] - Accessibility & Road Improvements

Participant across all in-person events overwhelmingly supported safer crossing, sidewalks, and improved biking and transit access, and responded positively to “Meet me on Main” car-free events.

**Q2.** Would you support further **vehicle turn movement reduction** if it reduced wait times and enhanced pedestrian and bike safety? \*

yes (98%) - 42 votes

no (2%) - 1 votes



#### Strongly Supportive

Renters  
Younger Families  
Local Youth



#### More Cautious

Homeowners  
Long-Term Residents

#### Pedestrian Safety Measures

Pearl St Median west of West Street Extension  
“makes things safer and reduces conflict”

#### Transit Enhancements

“I wouldn’t mind waiting behind a bus if it meant people could get home safely.”

#### Pearl Street Road Diets

“One lane westbound would be okay; this area is not the real bottleneck for westbound traffic.”

#### Main Street Activation

Praise towards Meet Me on Main car-free event, describing it as “fun, safe, and lively”

#### Vehicle Circulation

Frustration with proposed Pearl Street design changes citing “annoying — having to go around.”

#### Road Impacts

A few residents emphasized “the need for more studies before full implementation”

**18**  
supportive  
in-person  
comments

**6**  
cautious in-person  
comments

*\*Note: For in-person events, staff provided additional context explaining how the concept would function, which may have influenced participant responses compared to online engagement.*

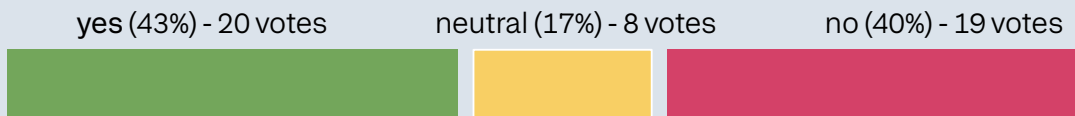


## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | RESPONSES

### [Online Survey Responses] - Accessibility & Road Improvements

The Online Open House survey through online tools drew nearly 80 total responses. Similar to the in-person events, participants emphasized the need for safer more accessible streets, particularly to sidewalks, crosswalks and other traffic calming measures.

**Q2.** Would you support further **vehicle turn movement reduction** if it reduced wait times and enhanced pedestrian and bike safety? \*



*Some participants may have been uncertain about whether Main Street would remain open to vehicles, as the proposal's intent was clarified in person by staff during discussions.*

#### Pedestrian Safety Measures

"Support for intersection redesign to reduce mobility conflicts."

#### Traffic Flow & Congestion

"Traffic changes are okay if they don't make Five Corners even slower."

#### Pearl Street Road Diets

"Pearl St improvements are crucial for public safety."

#### Access & Connectivity

"Support closing Memorial Way, but not Main Street between Five Corners and Railroad."

#### Parking & Vehicle Priority

"Parking is limited. Don't sacrifice vehicle movement for expensive pedestrian spaces."

#### No Additional Restrictions

"Crescent Connector already slows traffic... adding more restrictions will make it worse."

**18**

supportive online comments

**15**

cautious online comments

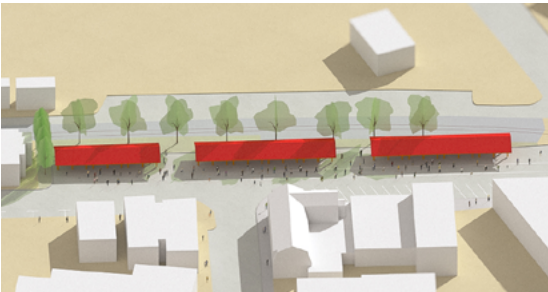
*\*Note: For in-person events, staff provided additional context explaining how the concept would function, which may have influenced participant responses compared to online engagement.*



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | PUBLIC SPACE

### [In-Person Responses] - “Big Four” Improvement Projects

This topic drew the most conversation and hands-on engagement during the summer outreach. Across all engagement events, participants added nearly 70 sticker votes and over 20 written comments on the boards. This reflects a strong community interest in human-scale projects that contribute to Essex Junction’s identity and activate the public realm.



#### **Railroad Ave. Market Structures**

**(100% supportive) - 17 votes**

- “The most exciting idea — something the city really needs.”
- “Great for year-round markets, events, and local vendors.”
- “Would make this area a destination, not just a passthrough.”



---

#### **Pocket Park**

**(100% supportive) - 12 votes**

- “We need small green spaces with shade and seating.”
- “Perfect for families and lunch breaks downtown.”



---

#### **Veterans Memorial / Food Truck Space**

**(80% supportive / 20% cautious) - 16 votes**

- “Good spot for social gatherings and weekend activity.”
- “Noise and circulation near the memorial could be an issue.”
- “Rotating food trucks would keep it interesting.”



---

#### **Murals**

**(100% supportive) - 19 votes**

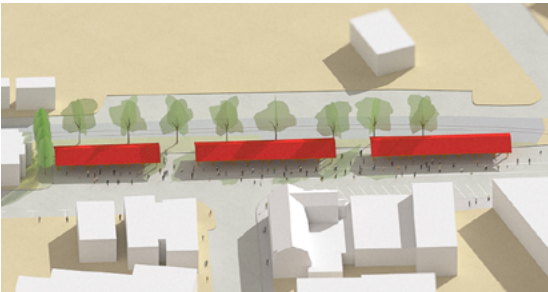
- “fun, colorful, easy to implement.”
- “A way to bring energy and identity to downtown.”
- “Would love to see local artists involved”



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | PUBLIC SPACE

### [Online Survey Responses] - “Big Four” Improvement Projects

Online participants provided more mixed feedback on the four improvement projects; while many appreciated the beautification and the support for activity in the downtown area, there were also concerns around cost, practicality, and fit within Essex Junction.



#### Railroad Ave. Market Structures

**(34% supportive / 28% neutral / 38% cautious) - 47 votes**

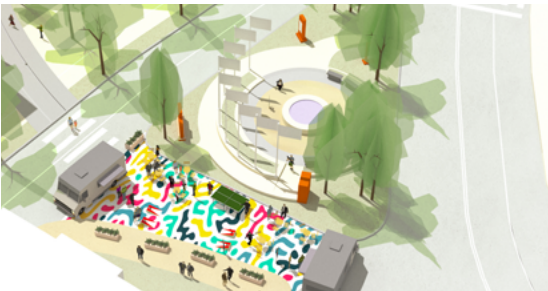
- “I would love to have an open air farmers market in Essex Jct”



#### Pocket Park

**(29% - support / 31% neutral / 40% cautious) - 48 votes**

- “5 corners is not a place for a park—too loud, poor air quality, inadequate parking, completely unattractive area.”
- “Stop wasting money on stupid pocket parks”



#### Veterans Memorial / Food Truck Space

**(36% supportive / 26% neutral / 38% cautious) - 50 votes**

- “We are a small city with a small budget. There really is no need now to build limited use enclosures.”
- “Don’t try to cram more stuff in this dysfunctional crossroads”



#### Murals

**(19% support / 17% neutral / 48% cautious) - 50 votes**

- “...its very important to make sure we are supporting local, female, lgbtqia+, and bipoc artists”
- “Anytime something nice goes up, it get ruined by people who never see the repercussions and could care less.”



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

### Online Events

#### Online Open House

- Launched in early July. After the initial marketing campaign, the City received feedback about technical glitches and the tool not being mobile-friendly.
- A mobile-friendly SurveyMonkey version was added in July.
- The Online Open House was advertised in:
  - June, July, August, and September newsletters, available online and in print editions of the Essex Reporter newspaper.
  - July 8 and September 23 News Releases, with a link pinned to the front page of [essexjunction.org](http://essexjunction.org) for much of the summer.
    - Utility bill insert mailed June 2025.
    - Posters in prominent locations.
    - Social media posts.
- The Essex Reporter ran a story on July 15, 2025.
- “Connect the Junction” had to compete with several other City initiatives for attention, which may have contributed to online engagement fatigue. Other initiatives occurring throughout the summer included:
  - Essex Junction Amtrak Station Open House and Survey
  - League of American Bicyclists online survey
  - Essex Police Community Advisory Board Survey
  - Pearl Street Multimodal Improvements Scoping Study Update Open House
  - Meet Me On Main event series
  - City Rebranding Survey

#### Focus Groups

Consultants met with some previous focus group participants individually to get their input on the draft plan including four property owners owning large lots within the study area with interest in developing.

#### Junction City News

Chris Yuen and Ashley Snellenberger hosted a “Junction City News” introducing the Draft Plan on 6/23/2025. Junction City News is a live show on CCTV, every fourth Monday of each month at 5:25 PM. It features important information residents should know, initiatives, and upcoming events and activities in the City.



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

### In-Person Events

#### July 4 Fireworks Event

On July 4, 2025, the City held an in-person public engagement event from 6:00 to about 8:00pm at the Champlain Valley Exposition grounds. This event coincided with the July 4 fireworks event, held by Essex Junction Recreation and Parks. Open-house summary boards were displayed on easels, with a print-copy of the draft plan available for review. Postcards with a link to the online open house were handed out to those who were interested in the project but did wish to stay discuss with the City representatives.

Few people participated in the sticker voting exercise but those who stopped at the booth learned about the project and shared their thoughts verbally.

#### Population Reached:

- The project team spoke with approximately 40 people- a mixture of City and Town residents.

#### City representatives in attendance:

- Scott McCormick, Planning Commission
- Elaine Haney, City Council
- Brian Sheldon, City Council

#### National Night Out- August 5, 2025

On August 5, 2025, the City held an in-person public engagement from 5:00–7:00 PM to promote the Connect the Junction project at the annual National Night Out event. This event was located outside of Essex High School. The event was hosted by Essex Police Department, with a goal of enhancing the relationship between the community, support services, and emergency services. Various city departments attended the event, where kids activities and free food were offered. The Connect the Junction team set up a booth at this event, as it similarly did during the early phases of this project in 2024

#### City representatives in attendance:

- Michael Giguere, City Planner
- Diane Clemens, Planning Commission
- Estimated participation: ~50 conversations with staff. The National Night Out event attracted families with kids, but the project team mostly spoke with the parents and caretakers.

#### Comments

- One resident was strongly in support of maximizing building height and density around the project area. He believed this will help foster a more cohesive community and develop more interesting street-level uses that are easy to interact with on a whim while walking around.
- Two residents were strongly opposed to building height increases and even expressed a desire to see building heights decrease in the Village Center district, citing blocking the view as their reasoning. After discussing housing needs further, they agreed that 6 stories seemed



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

reasonable.

- One resident was strongly opposed to closing Main Street, citing impacts to local businesses on Main Street as his main reason. Michael discussed some of the proposed alternatives, such as reducing one lane for expanded bicycle and pedestrian space. The resident strongly supported these ideas and even supported removing the diagonal striped parking to accommodate this space. He also expressed a desire to see the Railroad Avenue marketplace structures, stating that this would be a great way to encourage people to visit the City rather than just pass through and could be flexible for all types of events. He discussed his support for other plan concepts, such as a mural program and removing the Memorial Way slip lane for food truck space.
- One resident was opposed to most of the plan in general, stating that he would have preferred to see Essex Junction remain “historic”. After further discussion, he explained that to him, historic meant preserving more trees and greenspace in the community. Michael showed some of the plan concepts that propose to add greenspace and landscaping, which did not seem to convince the resident fully, but they agreed it’s important to the community. This resident also expressed a strong dislike for the triplex at 162 West Street, stating that it’s out of place for the area and wondered if neighboring residents were upset by its construction.
- One resident, a bike commuter, expressed excitement over many of the rechannelization concepts, as he often bikes with his two young kids and was hopeful for more safe routes around the city.
- One resident was in favor of increased building heights to help solve the housing shortage, and asked why people would be opposed to supplying more housing

### Maple Street Park – August 13, 2025

On August 13, 2025, the City held an in-person public engagement event at Maple Street Park, during the last week of summer day camps between 4pm and 6pm. The team set up display boards and solicited feedback from those using the park and swimming pool. The weather was warm and sunny, and the team offered “Pop ice” frozen deserts to draw the attention of families and kids.

#### City representatives in attendance:

- Christohper Yuen, Community Development Director
- Michael Giguere, City Planner
- Diane Clemens, Planning Commission
- Elijah Massey, Planning Commission
- Finn Hamilton, Planning Commission



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

Estimated participation: 60 people, including approximately 25 children and teenagers

### Comment Summary

- One resident asked for a “giant traffic circle” that could help vehicle traffic circumvent Five Corners
- One child asked “why don’t they build houses taller so we can have more homes for people?”
- One resident expressed the feeling that Five Corners is “built out” and does not have room for larger projects
- One resident expressed interest in seeing a “tiered system” of building heights on Pearl Street to help accommodate a variety of commercial/residential goals
- Notably, regarding opinions on building height, children and teenagers consistently indicated a preference for higher maximum heights, including many “sticker votes” for ten stories. Even within the same families, children and teenagers consistently selected higher preferred height limits than their parents.

### 197 Pearl Ice Cream Social - August 20, 2025

On August 20, 2025, City staff hosted an “ice cream social” style public engagement event in front of 197 Pearl Street from 4:30–6:30 PM. Attendees were invited to enjoy scoops of Ben & Jerry’s ice cream while reviewing display boards for both the Connect the Junction project and the Pearl Street Road Diet Scoping Study update. Event outreach included email invitations distributed to residents through the property management company, as well as posters placed at 197 and 203 Pearl Street, as well as the nearby bus stop. The weather was sunny and warm, which was conducive to high participation. Approximately 30 members of the public participated in the event, many of whom engaged deeply, asked many questions and provided comments for both projects.

- City representatives in attendance:
  - Michael Giguere, City Planner
  - Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
  - Finn Hamilton, Planning Commission
  - Elaine Haney, City Council

### Participant comments:

[Resident 1]

- I like the median – it makes things safer and reduces conflict
- When I lived here in 2018, not so bad, but now I have to take whatever I can find [in relation to housing costs / Connect the Junction project]
- More housing is great [in relation to housing costs / Connect the Junction project]



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

### [Resident 2]

- Median is annoying – having to go around
- I wouldn't mind waiting behind a bus for a bit if it meant people could get home safely

### [Resident 3]

- I don't like on-street bike facilities. It's dangerous for bikers and drivers
- I would like to see the median removed eventually, but not a huge deal if it has to stay as I've gotten used to it

### [Resident 4]

- I don't mind the median that much. The turnaround at West Street Ext is quite reasonable
- I understand the need for the eastbound bus stop but I'm concerned about the bus completely blocking the eastbound cars while serving the stop

### [Resident 5]

- I would like to see one of two futures for this section of Pearl Street:
  - + Remove the median, making car access easier, OR
  - + Make this section of Pearl Street fully walkable/bikeable. No half measures

### [Resident 6]

- Median is okay, I like it for safety
- GPS sometimes doesn't know how to navigate this area

### [Resident 7]

- The median is annoying and requires driving past the apartment complex and turning around- having it removed would be nice
- If it's not possible to remove the entire median, perhaps it could be removed at strategic locations
- One lane westbound would be okay, this area is not the real bottleneck for westbound traffic
- Concerns about drivers hitting bikes/peds at driveway

## **235/241 Pearl Ice Cream Social - August 25, 2025**

On August 26, 2025, City staff hosted an “ice cream social” style public engagement event in front of 235 Pearl Street from 4:30–6:30 PM. Attendees were invited to enjoy scoops of Ben & Jerry's ice cream while reviewing display boards for both the Connect the Junction project and the Pearl



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

### **Street Road Diet Scoping Study update.**

Event outreach included email invitations distributed to residents through the property management company, as well as posters placed at 235, 241, and 243 Pearl Street as well as the nearby bus stop. The weather was cool with intermittent drizzle, which may have reduced attendance. Approximately 10 members of the public participated in the event. Staff also observed about 15 cyclists using the Pearl Street sidewalk during the event, a relevant data point for the Road Diet project.

- **City representatives in attendance:**
  - Michael Giguere, City Planner
  - Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
  - Finn Hamilton, Planning Commission
  - Elena Juodisius, Planning Commission
  - Diane Clemens, Planning Commission

### **Participant comments:**

- Resident 1 – The median is a little inconvenient but not a major issue.
- Resident 2 – Supports the 2025 Alternative because they frequently walk and take the bus; emphasized the importance of the proposed eastbound bus stop.
- Resident 3 – Finds the eastbound bus stop proposal very useful.
- Resident 4 – Uses transit with children and currently walks 9 minutes each way; strongly supports the proposed bus stop.
- Resident 5 – Reported that Uber drivers often have difficulty navigating the jughandle turn.

### **Rotary Presentation – Sept 3, 2025**

On July 4, 2025, Community Development Director Christopher Yuen made a presentation to the Rotary Club of Essex and Westford on Connect the Junction. The presentation began with a high-level discussion of the concept of Access to Opportunity, the power of frequent, all-day transit, and why the Pearl St corridor is particularly well-suited to transit oriented development. The presentation then provided a summary of the plan's Big Ideas, with an emphasis on building height, as well as proposed changes to the five corners intersection.

Several participants stayed after to provide for a one-on-one discussion.

### **Population Reached:**

Approximately 40 people attended the Rotary luncheon. This included residents and business owners and community leaders in Essex Junction, the Town of Essex, and the Town of Westford.



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

### Comments and key themes:

- Comment 1: This all seems like a good idea that's worth trying. I remember when the McGillicuddy's building went up and there was a huge outcry about the it changing the character of the Five Corners, but now, it seems to blend in as a part of what people expect as an image of Essex Junction.

### Meet Me on Main / In-Person Open House – September 27 th , 2025

On September 27, 2025, a project team associated with Connect the Junction participated in an in-person public engagement event from 4:00–7:00 PM. The event coincided with the second installment of “Meet Me on Main”, a car-free celebration on a temporarily pedestrianized Main Street with multiple vendors, food trucks, and other activities. Attendees were invited to enjoy cookies, candy, and lemonade while reviewing display boards for both the Connect the Junction project, the Pearl Street Road Diet Scoping Study update, and the Amtrak Multimodal Station Improvement project. Team members were divided into two groups; one group tabled directly on Main Street, and the second group tabled inside Lincoln Hall as a part of public tours of the newly renovated office building.

### Estimated participation:

~100 conversations with staff, ~150-200 people that at least briefly looked at the project boards. Many participants arrived as couples, as a family, or with friends. Most participants were city residents. Participants seemed to represent a broad cross section of age and demographics.

### City representatives in attendance:

- Michael Giguere, City Planner
- Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
- Finn Hamilton, Planning Commission
- Elena Juodisius, Planning Commission
- Diane Clemens, Planning Commission
- Jeff Arrango, Framework
- Sarah Lukins, Framework
- Marshall Distel, CCRPC

### Connect the Junction comments (inside Lincoln Hall):

- Comment 1 – At first I didn't like the McGillicuddys building but I got used to it. It's nice for people to live there and be such a walkable area.
- Comment 2 – (on Five Corners turn movement changes) I would be interested in seeing more studies about this to see traffic impacts.
- Comment 3 – (on building height) It's better to have 8 stories than a giant parking lot
- Comment 4 – Terracing or step backs might help mitigate the feel of additional building height



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

- Comment 5 – My biggest concern is run-down old buildings like Road Res-Q and Rocky’s

### **Connect the Junction comments (on Main Street):**

- Comment 1 – I’m concerned about emergency vehicle access on Main Street. I’d be interested in reducing traffic on Maple Street instead due to lower impact. Traffic laws need to be enforced.
- Comment 2 – Essex Junction’s access to public transit makes it perfectly suited for additional housing. I live in the Town of Essex but hope that the Town can follow the City’s example when it comes to housing!
- Comment 3 – We need more goods and services in downtown to allow people to access these without a car.
- Comment 4 – I’m concerned about increased crime with new development like Burlington. Public safety needs to be a priority.
- Comment 5 – We need a diversity of stores around Five Corners in order to make these concepts possible. Placerville, CA is a good example of a similar-sized community that has done this well.
- Comment 6 – Larger retail spaces might be helpful.
- Comment 7 – Is this growth for the sake of growth or will this benefit locals?
- Comment 8 – Low-income/social status/high buildings vs. higher income residential houses. Better life?

### **Pearl Street West comments:**

- Comment 1 – Visibility at driveways will be important.
- Comment 2 – Could there be targeted gaps in the median?
- Comment 3 – (on the proposed bus stop) I’m concerned about slowing down and inconveniencing drivers during peak commute hours.
- Comment 4 – (on the on-street bike lane) Will bus drivers have to pull into this bike lane to pick up/drop off passengers? This seems dangerous.
- Comment 5 – (on the eastbound lanes) There is only one eastbound lane at the Susie Wilson intersection. Why is this proposed to “fan out” to two lanes before immediately merging into one lane? Wouldn’t it make more sense to keep it as a single lane the entire time?
- Comment 6 – I love the 2025 proposal. I would love to see anything done to make this area more accessible.

### **Meet Me on Main – Finale – October 11, 2025**

On October 11, 2025, a project team associated with Connect the Junction participated in an in-person public engagement event from 4:00–7:00 PM. The event coincided with the fourth installment of “Meet Me on Main”, a car-free celebration on a temporarily pedestrianized Main Street with multiple vendors, food trucks, and other activities. Attendees were invited to enjoy candy while reviewing display boards for both the Connect the Junction project and the Pearl Street Road Diet Scoping Study update.



## SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

Attendees represented a range of life stages including kids with their parents, teenagers, young adults, all the way up through older members of the community. There were approximately as many participants at this event as the September 27 th iteration of Meet Me on Main.

### **Planning Commission representatives in attendance:**

- Elijah Massey
- Scott McCormick
- Finn Hamilton

### **Connect the Junction comments:**

- Most attendees expressed more opinions on the transit-oriented development draft plan rather than the Pearl Street West plan due to the event being held close to Five Corners.
- Folks were generally supportive of more public gathering spaces and supported increased access and safety for non-motorized transportation.
- Feedback varied on the housing shortage and the City's efforts to increase density in the project area.
- Most folks acknowledged the issue, but their preferences on how it should be addressed varied.
- On average, most people acknowledged that increased building height is an effective way to address the housing crisis.
- Some folks emphasized maintaining the current feel of the City's past development patterns and expressed concern over larger development.
- Others were in favor of supporting more units by any means necessary.
- A range of housing unit sizes (larger than just studio and one-bedroom apartments) was repeatedly cited as an important piece to adding additional housing.

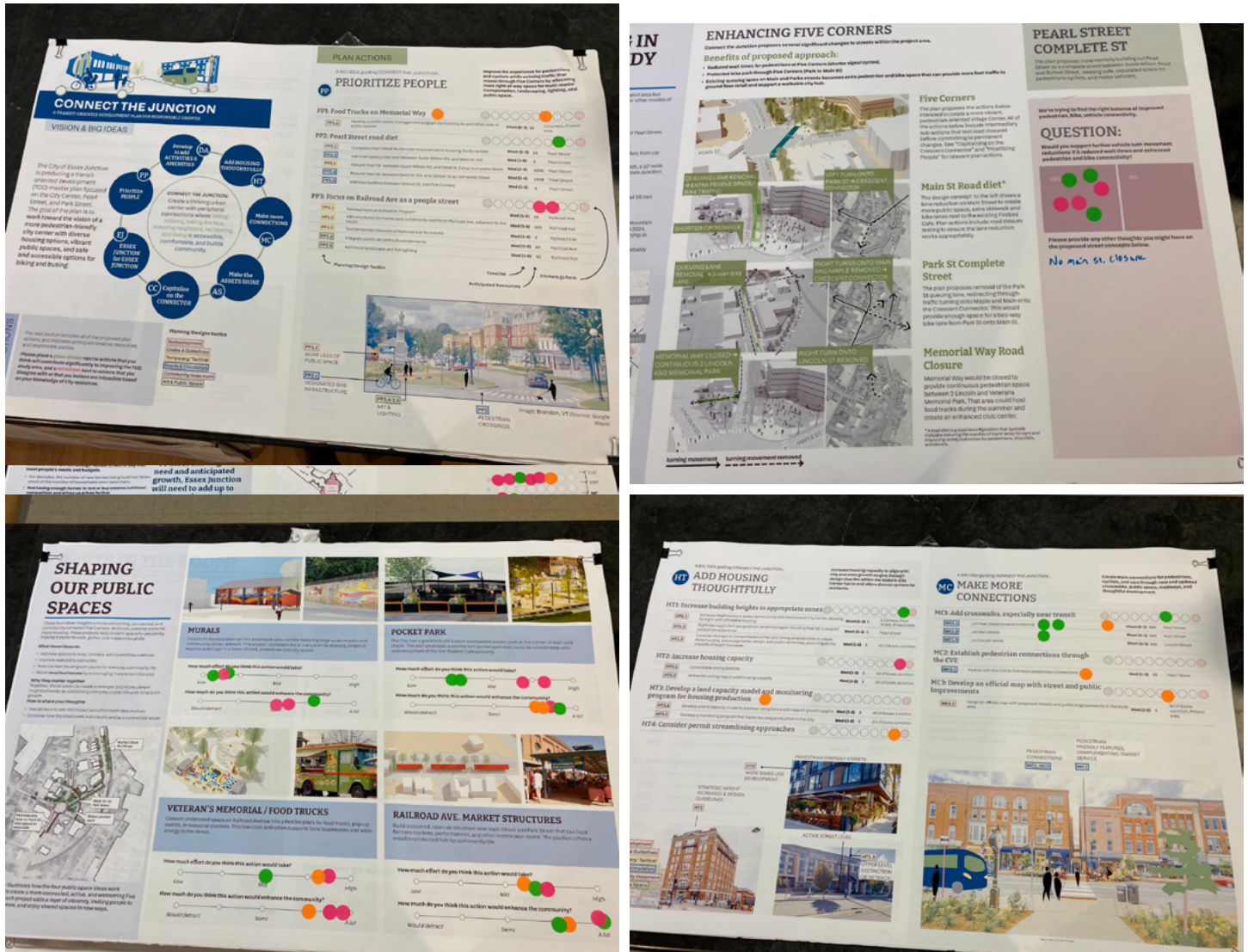


# SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

## Photos from Events

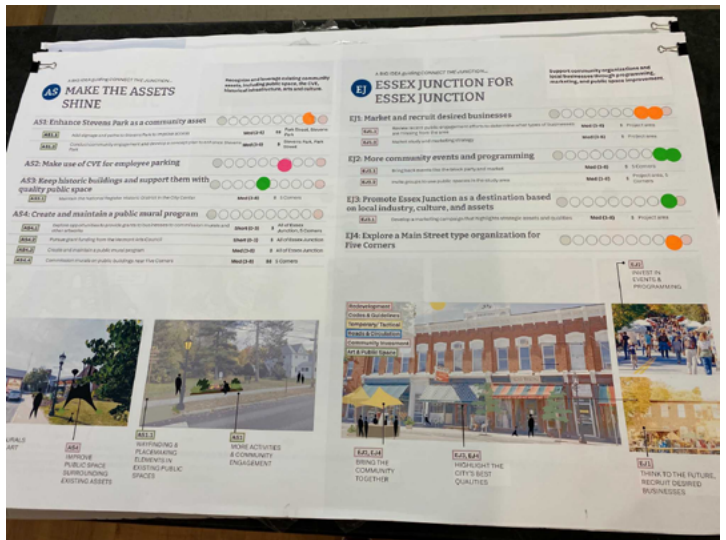
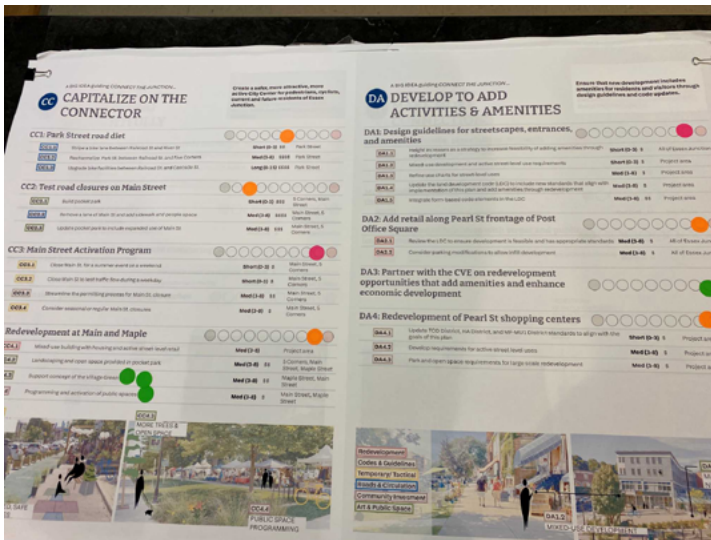
Images of the engagement boards were collected to document community responses and maintain a visual record of the feedback gathered during each outreach event.

## National Night Out- August 5, 2025

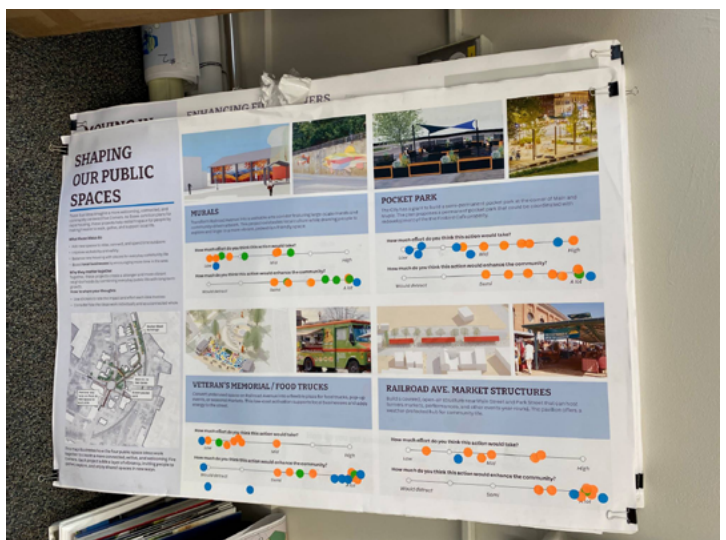
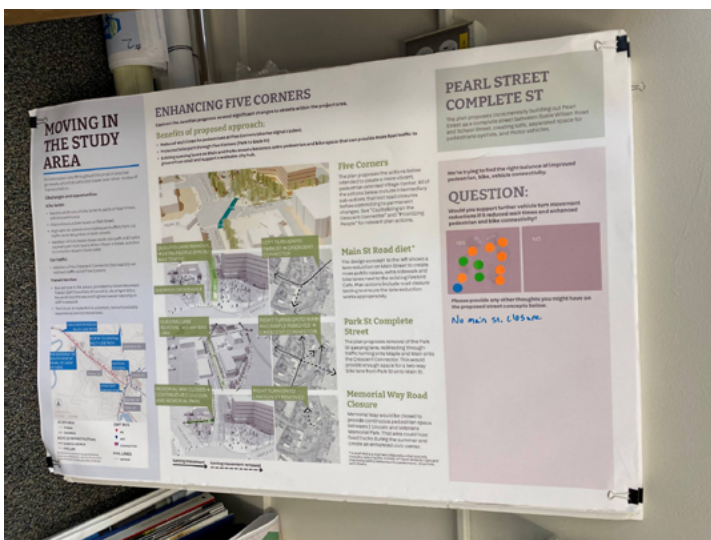
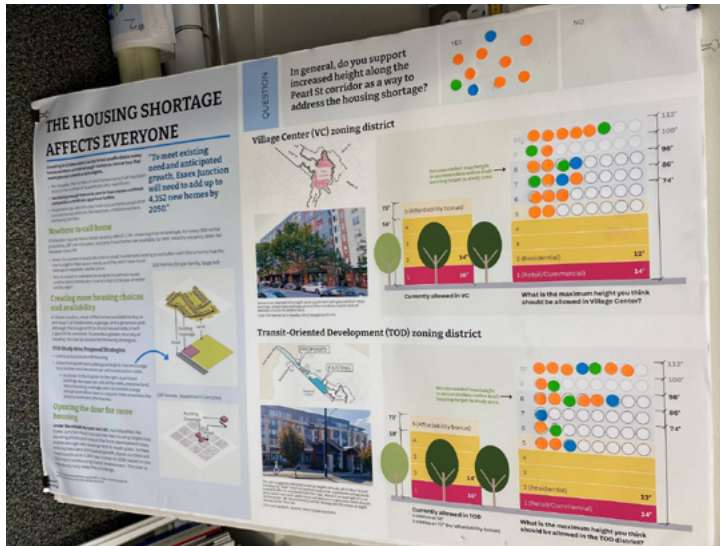




# SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX



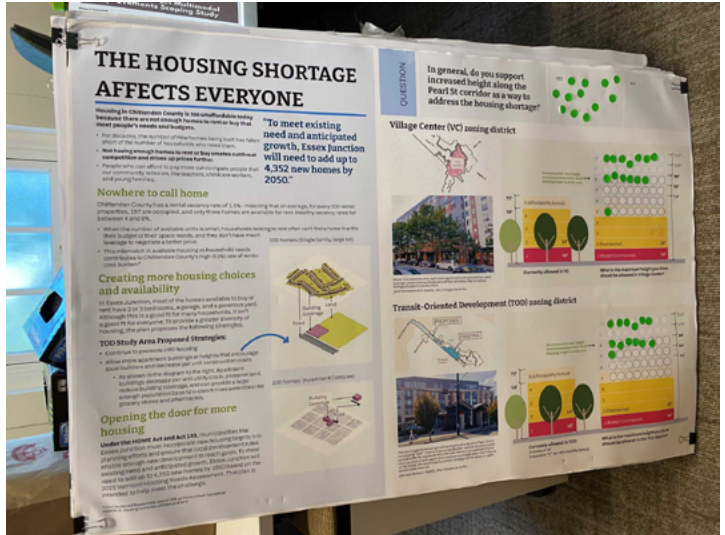
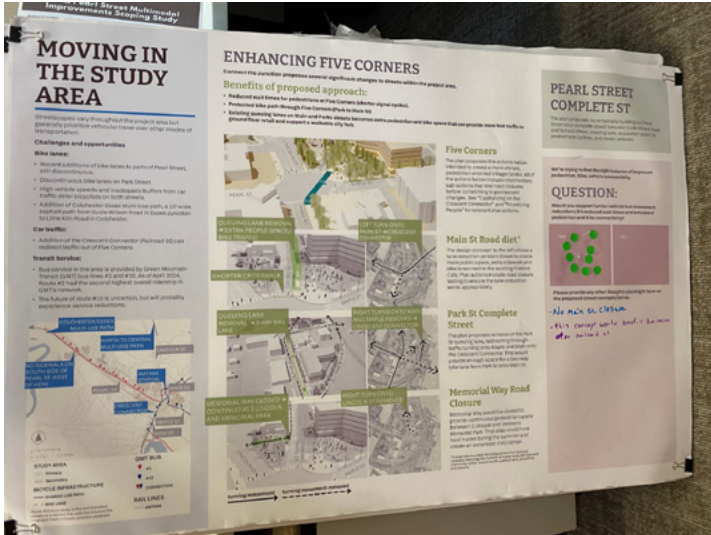
## National Night Out- August 5, 2025





# SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

## 235/241 Pearl Ice Cream Social - August 26, 2025



## Ice Cream Social

Tuesday August 26, 2025  
4:30 to 6:30pm



Join the City of Essex Junction near the front entrance of **235 Pearl St** for a **FREE** ice cream and to share your thoughts on the City's transportation and growth plans for the future of the Pearl Street corridor!



## Junction City News: Draft Plan Overview - June 23

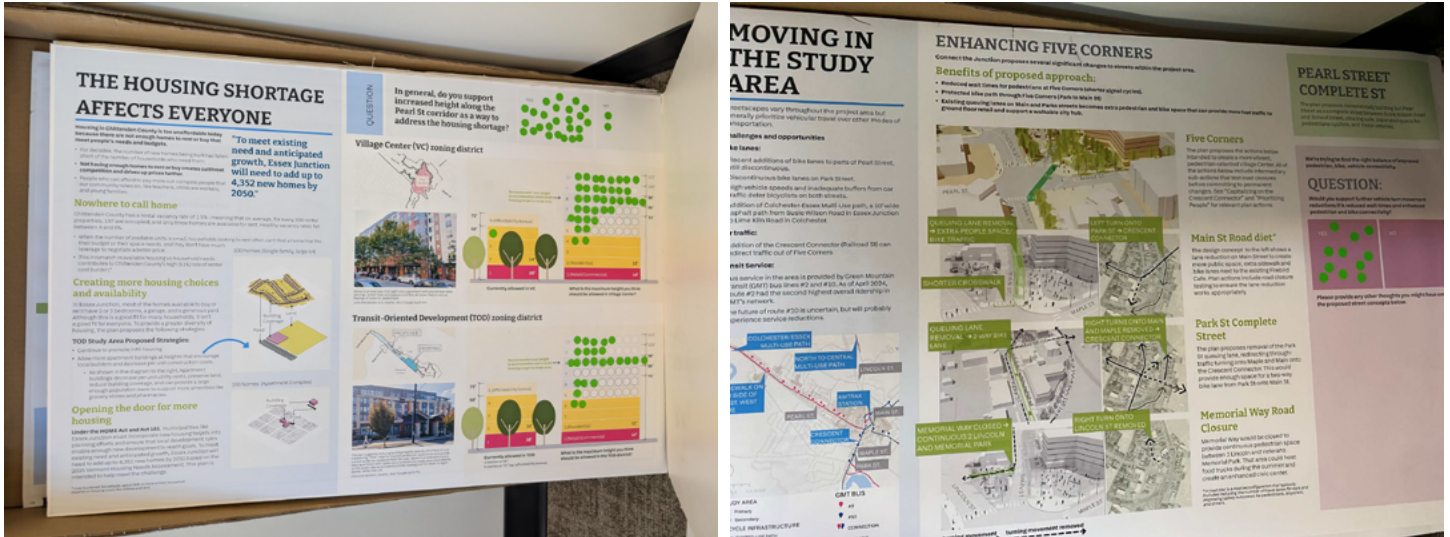






# SUMMER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | APPENDIX

## Meet Me on Main (Outdoor) - October 11, 2025





# CONNECT THE **JUNCTION**

## Transit Oriented Development Master Plan

Joint PC and CC Meeting  
November 6th, 2025



# Agenda

1. Project overview
2. Draft Plan: public engagement overview
3. Key proposals
  - a. Project area height increases
  - b. Five Corner right of way restructuring
  - c. Public space activation
4. Next Steps



Overview:

# PROJECT BACKGROUND



# Project Background

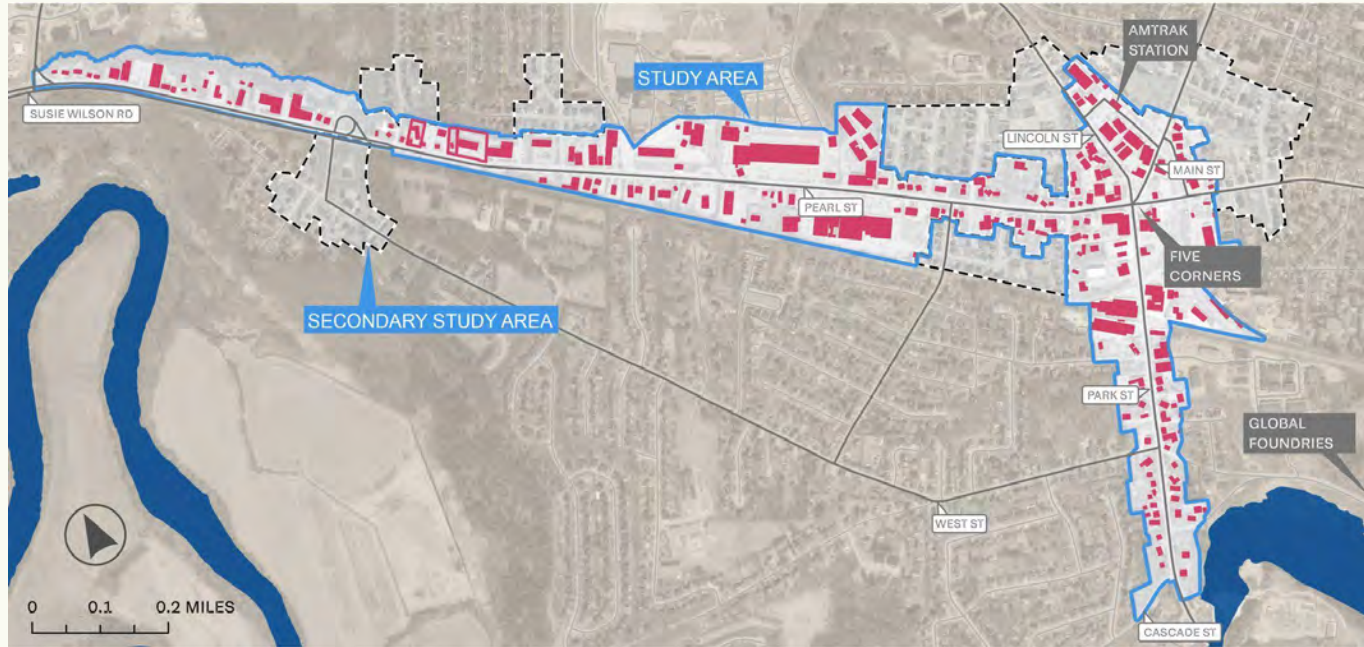
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan
- Federally funded: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program
  - 10 communities throughout Northwest Vermont to develop TOD Plans

What is transit-oriented development (TOD)?

TOD focuses on creating dense, walkable, mixed-use development near transit, creating vibrant, connected communities that enjoy easy access to jobs and services.



# Project Area



- **Primary Focus Area: Village Center, Park Street, Pearl Street Corridor**
- **Secondary Focus Areas: *Potential transition zones***



Planning Objective:

# SUPPORT SMART GROWTH



# The housing shortage is local

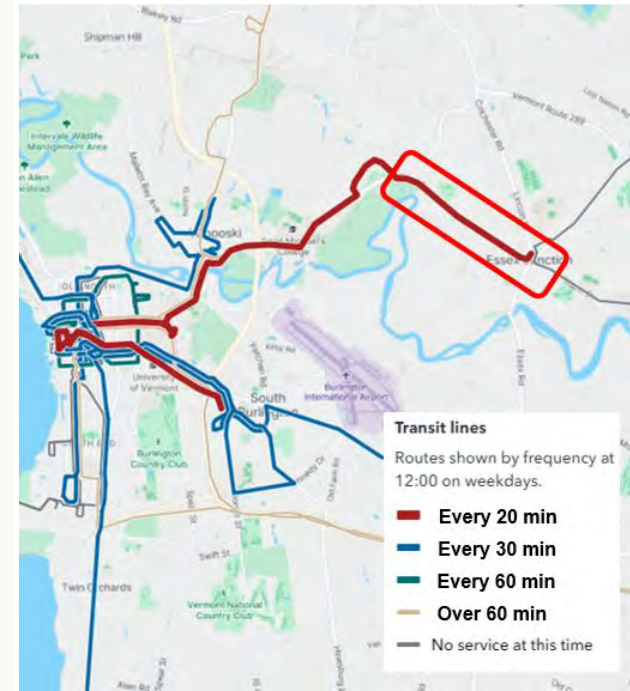
- Housing costs are too high
  - 51% of renters are cost burdened
  - 2% vacancy rate in Chittenden County
- Lack of housing choice and availability
- Adding homes of all sizes in connected, convenient neighborhoods can help address the shortage, shorten commutes, and help local businesses hire.
- Year 2050 housing targets

|                                | Low    | Mid    | High   |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Essex Junction</b>          | 1,529  | 3,062  | 4,594  |
| <b>Chittenden County Total</b> | 15,783 | 31,595 | 47,407 |



# Why TOD (Transit oriented development)?

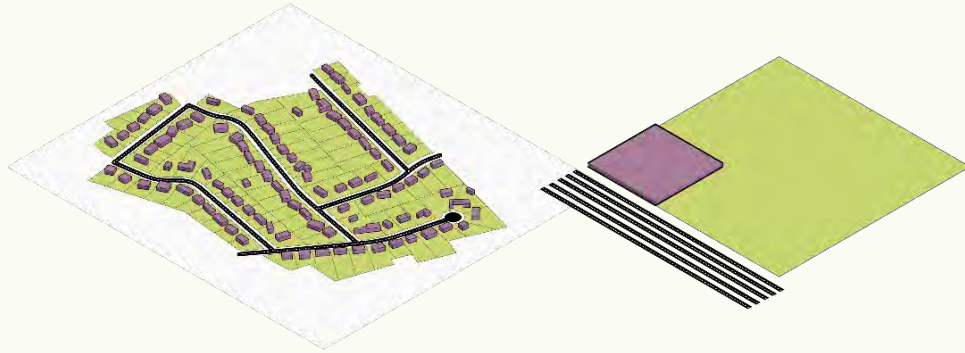
- Pearl Street has existing water, sewer and transit
- Pearl Street has frequent service
- Building around transit can mitigate the need for additional car trips



# Efficiently accommodating growth

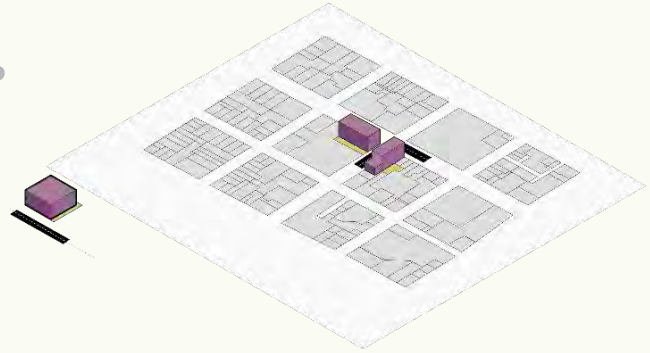
- Proposed changes to municipal code could accommodate around half of Essex Junction's mid range growth target by 2050 within the TOD project area.

100 units @ R2 density



VS.

100 units @ proposed VC density



# Big Ideas - structure the Plan

## PP Prioritize PEOPLE

Improve the experience for pedestrians and cyclists while calming traffic that moves through Five Corners by allocating more right-of-way space for multi-modal transportation, landscaping, lighting, and public space.

## CC Capitalize on the CRESCENT CONNECTOR

Leverage the City's investment in the Crescent Connector with complimentary development of open space, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and supportive retail and housing.

## AA Develop to add ACTIVITIES & AMENITIES

Ensure that new development includes amenities for residents and visitors through design guidelines and code updates.

## HT Add HOUSING THOUGHTFULLY

Increase housing capacity to align with ambitious city and state growth targets through design that fits within the historic City Center fabric and offers diverse options for residents.

## MC Make more CONNECTIONS

Create more connections for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars through new and updated crosswalks, public space, roadways, and thoughtful development.

## AS Make the ASSETS SHINE

Recognize and leverage existing community assets, including public space, the Champlain Valley Exposition Centre, historical infrastructure, arts and culture.

## EJ ESSEX JUNCTION for ESSEX JUNCTION

Support active community organizations and local businesses through programming, marketing, and public space improvements.



framework

# Plan Actions - key themes

## Transportation

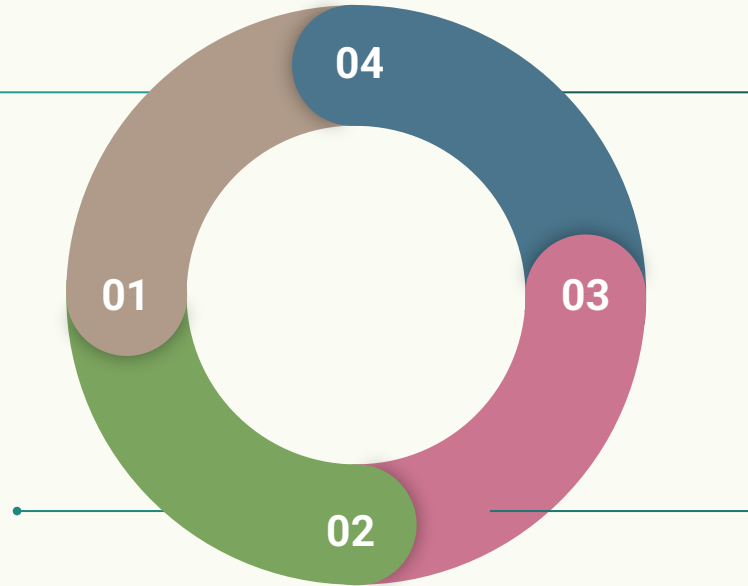
Updating the road network to provide greater safety and comfort for pedestrians, bikers, and residential uses in the study area.

**Keywords:** contiguity, landscaping, public space, walkability, bikeability

## Housing

Allowing more homes in the TOD area to support housing affordability and provide more types of homes to fit different needs and budgets

**Keywords:** housing diversity, affordability, walkability, height increases, transit access



## Services and amenities

Capitalizing on having lots of people in one place to support needed amenities like groceries and pharmacies within walking distance of housing

**Keywords:** economic development, complete community

## Public life & Community Vibrancy

Investing in more community art, public space, and supporting community building and association.

**Keywords:** murals, food trucks, market structures, pocket parks, landscaping, Main St org., events



framework

What we heard:  
Draft plan  
**COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT**



# Community engagement overview



**Multiple**  
Social Media  
Posts,  
Posters/  
Flyers



**4**  
Newsletter  
mentions



**4,000+**  
Utility bill  
mail inserts



**3**  
Press  
releases



**3**  
Online  
engagement  
tools



**6**  
Conversations  
with property  
owners



**6**  
Organized  
Events



**1**  
Walking Tour



**57**  
Online  
survey  
responses



**146**  
Engaged  
with online  
open house



**67**  
online open  
house  
comments



**569**  
Sticker votes



**42**  
Sticky note  
comments



**25**  
Conversations  
with youth



**framework**

# Engagement Timeline



Takeaways:

# KEY PROPOSALS



# HEIGHT INCREASES



# Framing questions

- Should we allow increased heights within the study area?
  - If we allow increased heights, how much additional housing can we expect to encourage?
  - If we allow increased heights, how many additional floors should we allow to maximize benefit?

# Housing capacity based on height: TOD + VC Zones

## Growth target:

**High:** 4,594

**Mid:** 3,062

**Low:** 1,529



**Alternative 0:** 4 stories, 1 story bonus

**Estimated capacity:** 1144 New homes

**TOD Zone:** 467

**Village Center Zone:** 677

**Total annualized:** 46 units

## Recommended



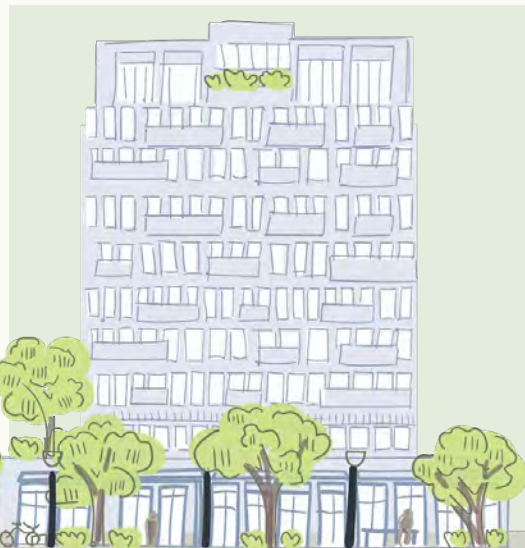
**Alternative 1:** 7 stories, 1 story bonus

**Estimated capacity:** 1662 New homes

**TOD Zone:** 689

**Village Center Zone:** 973

**Total annualized:** 66 units



**Alternative 2:** 9 stories, 1 story bonus

**Estimated capacity:** 2008 New homes

**TOD Zone:** 836

**Village Center Zone:** 1172

**Total annualized:** 80 units

# How we came up with those numbers



# Height Increases: Community engagement takeaways

**Q1.** In general, do you support increased height along the Pearl St. Corridor as a way to address the housing shortage?



In-Person

yes (94%) - 61 votes

no (6%) - 4 votes



Online

yes (47%) - 24 votes

neutral (14%) - 7 votes

no (14%) - 20 votes



# Height increase



In-Person

**87%** of  
in-person  
respondents favored  
**8-10 story height  
increases**

What Height... is Right?

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2 (Residential)

1 (Retail/Commercial)

**Village Center**

**TOD District\***

42% - 30 votes

37% - 21 votes

13% - 9 votes

11% - 6 votes

32% - 23 votes

39% - 22 votes

7% - 5 votes

4% - 2 votes

4% - 3 votes

7% - 4 votes

2% - 2 votes

2% - 2 votes

**Village Center**

**TOD District\***

5% - 3 votes

2% - 1 votes

2% - 1 votes

0% - 0 votes

19% - 11 votes

20% - 13 votes

3% - 2 votes

12% - 8 votes

12% - 7 votes

9% - 6 votes

20% - 12 votes

24% - 16 votes

31% - 18 votes

26% - 17 votes

No Preference

9% - 5 votes

No Preference

8% - 5 votes



Online

8-stories was the  
**most favored  
height** among  
supporters of  
increasing height  
limits

over  
**50%** of online  
group favored  
**keeping** existing  
height limits.



framework

# Balancing public feedback: height increase

## Feedback

### Pros

- More affordable and diverse housing options to meet demonstrated need
- Concentrated population to support local businesses
- Increased development viability and flexibility by maximizing construction type
- Increased likelihood of achieving growth targets
- Generally more fiscally and environmentally sustainable alternative to greenfield development

### Concerns/Challenges

- Conflicts with historic architecture and suburban/rural character
- More housing = more cars, more congestion, and a need for more parking
- Disrupted views
- Decline in public safety
- Poor build quality on some recent development could be exacerbated by height increase

## Recommendation

### Height recommendation

- Allow 7 stories outright and an additional floor as an affordability bonus



### Mitigation strategies

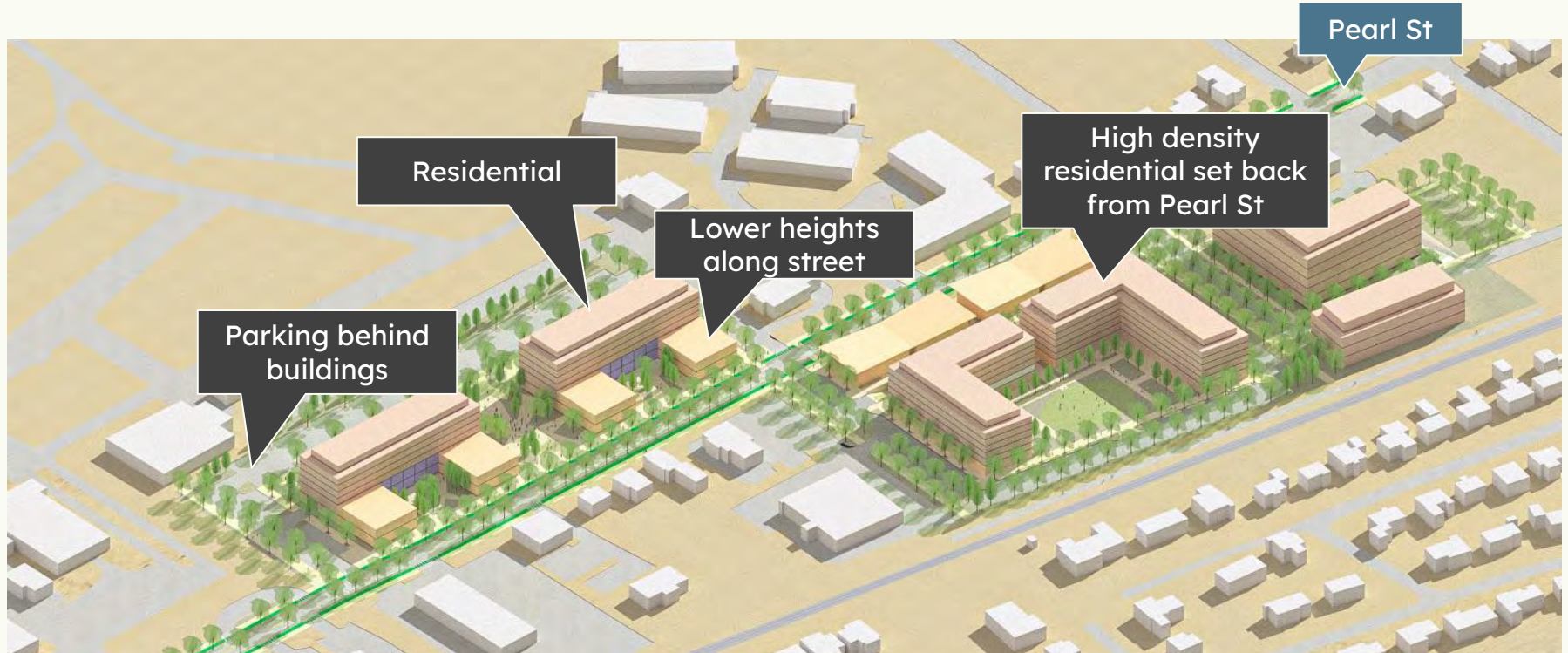
- Calibrate heights along frontages to reduce feeling of scale
- Require transparency, active street uses to increase public safety
- Improve frontage standards to enhance design outcomes



# CC4 | Redevelopment at Main and Maple



## HT1.2 | Consider a lower height limit along certain street frontages including Pearl St.

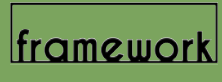


# Discussion

- Should we allow increased heights within the study area?
  - If we allow increased heights, how many additional floors should we allow to maximize benefit?
  - Can mitigation strategies sufficiently address concerns, or are concerns so great that they can only be addressed by keeping the existing height limit?
  - Is there further information that you would need to make a decision?



# Five Corners Right of way reconfiguration



# Framing questions

- Should we modify right of ways in Five Corners as recommended?
  - Do the recommendations provide the right balance of improved pedestrian and bike experience while sufficiently addressing the concerns of vehicular through-traffic?



# Overview of proposed traffic revisions

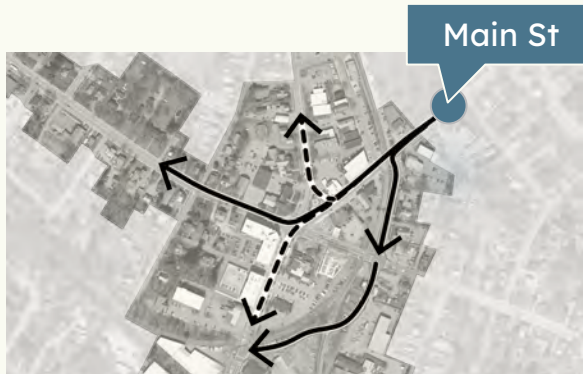
Turning movement removed



Lincoln St



Main St



Maple St



Pearl St

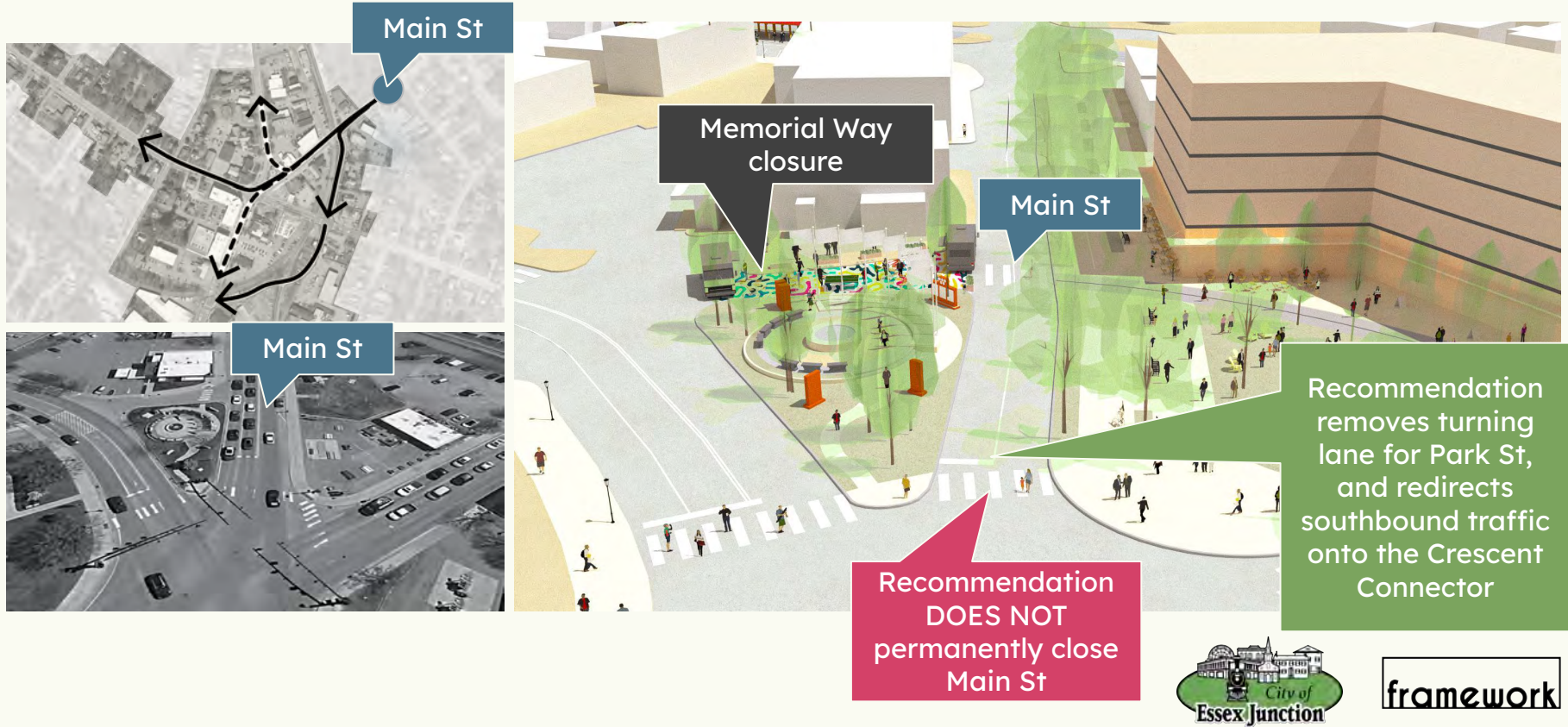


Park St



framework

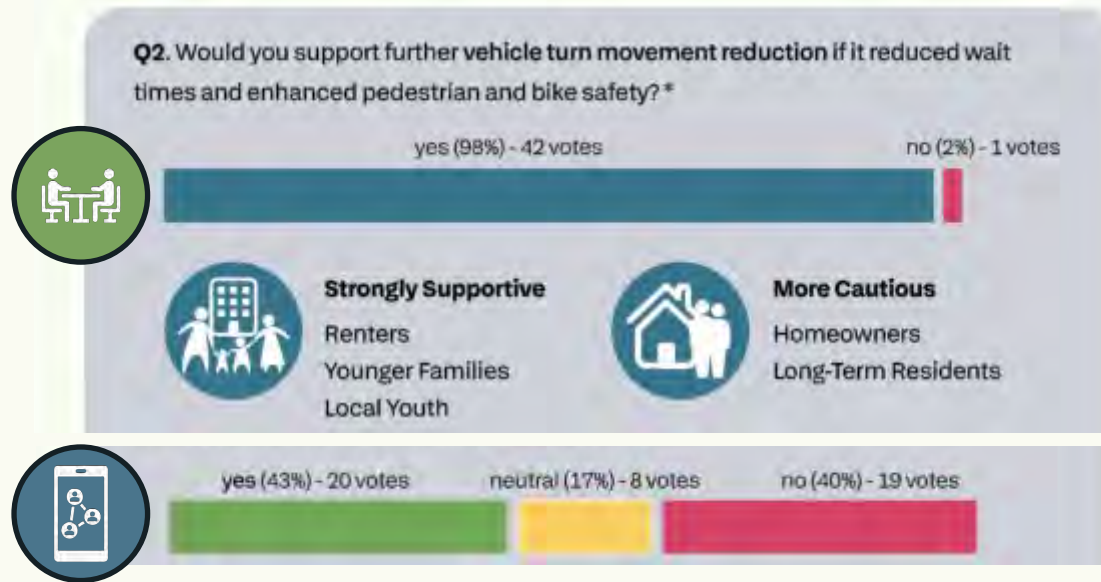
# Main St proposed lane reduction



# Park St proposed lane reduction



# ROW reconfiguration: Community engagement takeaways



# Meet Me on Main events

- The Meet Me on Main events were a proof of concept for temporary closure of Main Street.
- Events were well attended, and participants overwhelmingly positive.



# Balancing public feedback: ROW reconfiguration

## Feedback

### Pros

- Dedicates more space to pedestrians and bikers in support of housing and economic development goals
- Reduces impacts on through-traffic compared to full street closures
- Creates more pedestrian and bike connectivity



### Concerns/Challenges

- Unclear if the Crescent Connector can handle through-traffic volume bound to and from Global Foundries without “unacceptable” slow-downs
- Concern that there isn’t a sufficient biking community to justify reducing vehicular traffic and making serious ped/bike infrastructure investments



## Recommendation

### Recommendation

- Move towards Main and Park St Lane closures (no permanent full street closures are recommended)



### Mitigation strategies

- Complete a traffic study of lane closures to measure implications for through traffic
- Use temporary lane closures to test road diet
- Calibrate light timing and turn movements on the Crescent Connector to better serve through-traffic
- Test pedestrian and bike infrastructure before making permanent investments



# Discussion

- Should we modify right of ways in Five Corners as recommended?
  - Does the recommendation provide the right balance of improved pedestrian and bike experience while sufficiently addressing the concerns of vehicular through-traffic?
  - Do mitigation efforts and phasing sufficiently minimize risk?
  - Is there further information that you would need before making a decision?



# Public Space investments



# Framing questions

- Which public space improvements and programs should move forward?
  - Are there additional public space improvements that should be prioritized?



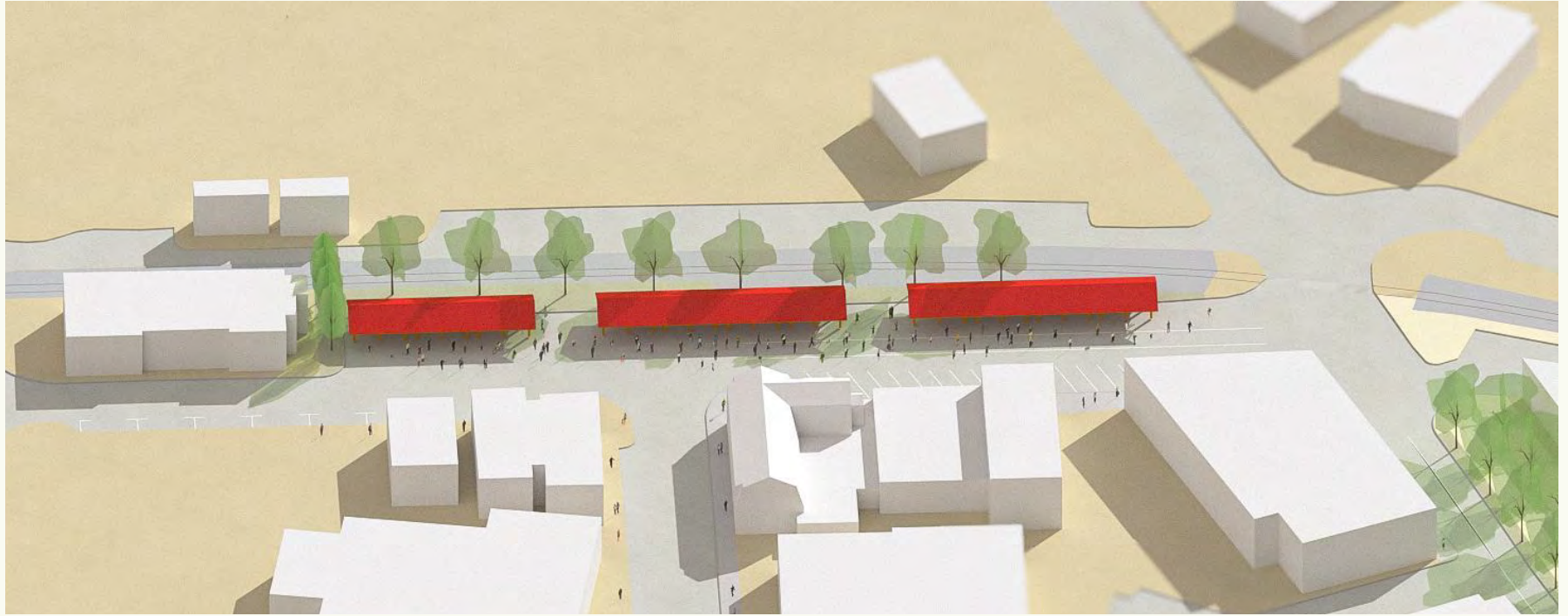
## AS 4.4 | Commission murals on public buildings near Five Corners

2 Lincoln

Essex Junction Fire  
Department



# Activate Railroad Avenue



# ROW reconfiguration: Community engagement takeaways



## Railroad Ave. Market Structures

(100% supportive) - 17 votes

- "The most exciting idea — something the city really needs."
- "Great for year-round markets, events, and local vendors."
- "Would make this area a destination, not just a passthrough."

## Pocket Park

(100% supportive) - 12 votes

- "We need small green spaces with shade and seating."
- "Perfect for families and lunch breaks downtown."

## Veterans Memorial / Food Truck Space

(80% supportive / 20% cautious) - 16 votes

- "Good spot for social gatherings and weekend activity."
- "Noise and circulation near the memorial could be an issue."
- "Rotating food trucks would keep it interesting."

## Murals

(100% supportive) - 19 votes

- "fun, colorful, easy to implement."
- "A way to bring energy and identity to downtown."
- "Would love to see local artists involved"



## Railroad Ave. Market Structures

(34% supportive / 28% neutral / 38% cautious) - 47 votes

- "I would love to have an open air farmers market in Essex Jct"

## Pocket Park

(29% - support / 31% neutral / 40% cautious) - 48 votes

- "5 corners is not a place for a park—too loud, poor air quality, inadequate parking, completely unattractive area."
- "Stop wasting money on stupid pocket parks"

## Veterans Memorial / Food Truck Space

(36% supportive / 26% neutral / 38% cautious) - 50 votes

- "We are a small city with a small budget. There really is no need now to build limited use enclosures."
- "Don't try to cram more stuff in this dysfunctional crossroads"

## Murals

(19% support / 17% neutral / 48% cautious) - 50 votes

- "...its very important to make sure we are supporting local, female, lgbtqla+, and bipoc artists"
- "Anytime something nice goes up, it get ruined by people who never see the repercussions and could care less."



framework

# Discussion

- Which public space improvements and programs should move forward?
  - Are there additional public space improvements that should be prioritized?



# NEXT STEPS



# What comes next?

## 1. Connect the Junction Plan

- a. Make any necessary revisions

## 2. Code Updates

- a. Update the land development code to reflect code-related plan actions





## CONNECT THE **JUNCTION**

a transit-oriented development plan for responsible growth

# THANK YOU!



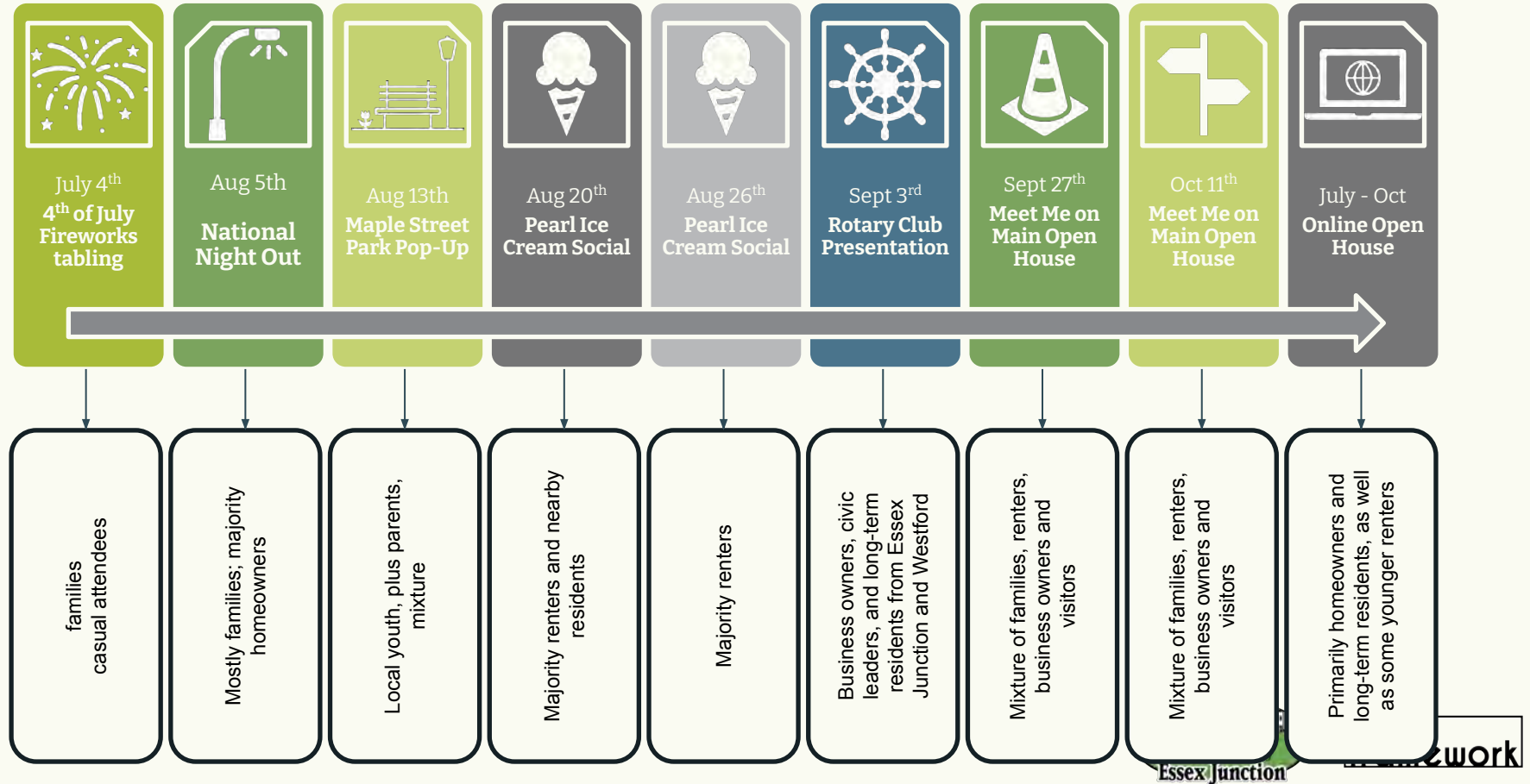
framework

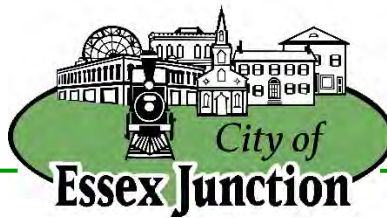
# Plan development: discussion

- Do the plan actions support community liveability?
- Do the plan actions successfully plan for city growth? If not, what additional actions should be considered?
- Do the proposed heights within the study area feel appropriate especially when paired with actions intended to reduce feeling of scale?
- Do the suggestions for changes to traffic flows in Five Corners appropriately balance community needs for walkability with the needs of through-traffic?



# Engagement Timeline





## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, December 4, 2025

**Subject:** 2026 ECOS Plan – Review and Comment Opportunity

**Issue:** Whether to submit comments to the Land Use Review Board regarding the proposed 2026 ECOS Plan

---

### Discussion:

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) has warned its first public hearing to consider adoption of the 2026 ECOS Plan, the regional plan for Chittenden County. The public hearing will be held in a hybrid format on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 6 PM.

The 2026 ECOS Plan includes updates to the regional future land use map, reflecting changes intended to implement location-based Act 250 jurisdiction under Act 181 of 2024.

The Planning Commission may submit comments to the Land Use Review Board (LURB) regarding the 2026 ECOS Plan, including the regional future land use map. Staff have drafted a set of comments that are generally supportive of the ECOS Plan and the proposed map changes. These comments acknowledge that the housing targets represent a significant increase in the rate of housing production and, like neighboring municipalities, Essex Junction anticipates that meeting them will be challenging.

The Planning Commission may choose to endorse the draft comments as prepared or make changes as it sees fit.

### Cost:

N/A

### Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission direct City Staff to submit the comments on the 2026 ECOS Plan as drafted.

### Recommended Motion:

"I move that the Planning Commission direct City Staff to submit the comments on the 2026 ECOS Plan as discussed"

### Attachments:

1. CCRPC Memo on "2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan - First Public Hearing Draft"
2. CCRPC Memo on "2026 ECOS Plan - Summary of Proposed Regional Future Land Use Map Changes"
3. Regional Plan Preapplication Review Comment Form - Draft

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chittenden County Municipal Legislative Body Chairs  
Addison County RPC, Central Vermont RPC, Lamoille County Planning Commission, and  
Northwest RPC Executive Directors  
Alex Farrell, Commissioner, Dept. of Housing and Community Development; Chair, Community  
Investment Board  
Julie Moore, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources  
Anson Tebbetts, Secretary, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets  
Joe Flynn, Secretary, Agency of Transportation  
Kerrick Johnson, Commissioner, Department of Public Service  
Eric Forand, Director, Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management  
Janet Hurley, Chair, Land Use Review Board  
Lauren Hierl and Jon Groveman, VNRC

**CC:** Town Managers/Administrators/Clerks  
Frank Cioffi, Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation  
Jean Hamilton and Ornella Matta-Figueroa, Land Access and Opportunity Board

**FROM:** Charlie Baker, CCRPC Executive Director

**DATE:** November 20, 2025

**RE:** 2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan - First Public Hearing Draft

---

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) has released the First Public Hearing Draft of the *2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan* for a **30-day public comment period concluding with a hybrid public hearing on January 21, 2026 at 6:00pm** pursuant to Title 24 VSA, Chapter 117, 23 CFR Part 450, and 13 CFR 303.6. Folks can attend the public hearing in the following ways:

**Via Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84698154768> (Call in: +1 309 205 3325 | Meeting ID: 846 9815 4768)

**Physical Location:** CCRPC Main Conference Room at 110 West Canal Street, Suite 202, Winooski, VT 05404

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 Development 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 draft 2026 ECOS Plan can be found at <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/ecos-engagement>. **If you would like a hard copy, please let us know and we will provide one to you.**

A report documenting conformance with the goals established in [24 V.S.A. 4302](#) and the plan elements established in [24 V.S.A. 4348a](#), and a description of any changes to the Regional Future Land Use Map, can also be found at <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/ecos-engagement>.

For further information, questions, or to submit written comments, please contact Taylor Newton, Planning Program Director at CCRPC at [newton@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:newton@ccrpcvt.org) on or before the public hearing on January 21, 2026.

## Purpose of this 2026 ECOS Plan Update

CCRPC is responsible for long-term planning for our region. The CCRPC and municipal planning partners use the ECOS Plan to frame and guide planning, project priorities, and investment.

The original ECOS Plan, adopted in 2013, stitched together voices of community members and more than 60 organizations to create and convey a shared vision and planning priorities for the region. The 2026 ECOS Plan updates the original plan. It incorporates new data, and accounts for the shifting priorities of Chittenden County community members. In Spring 2024 and throughout 2025, CCRPC undertook additional community engagement efforts that informed the actions and priorities in this plan. The plan was reorganized from the 2018 version, and the themes of social equity and climate change have been woven throughout the chapters instead of having standalone chapters. Additionally, a new Regional Future Land Use Map was created following the requirements established in Act 181 and outlined in [24 V.S.A. 4348a\(a\)\(12\)](#). These updates give municipalities and regional partners clearer guidance, stronger data, and a more consistent land use framework to support local and regional planning and decision-making. The 2026 ECOS Plan strengthens shared goals across the region and provides a coordinated approach to building a more equitable, sustainable future.

## Organization of the 2026 ECOS Plan

The 2026 ECOS Plan is organized as follows to bring emphasis to the plan's implementation. Additional details can be found in the supplements:

- 2026 ECOS Plan - this main section includes the vision, goals and actions to address the region's concerns
- Supplement 1: Public Process
- Supplement 2: Regional Plan Crosswalk
- Supplement 3: Environmental Benefits and Burdens Analysis
- Supplement 4: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Supplement 5: Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Supplement 6: Enhanced Energy Planning methodology and data guide
- Supplement 7: Housing Data and Housing Target methodology

## Description of Changes to the Regional Future Land Use Map between 2018 ECOS Plan and 2026 ECOS Plan

The following is a summary of changes between the 2018 ECOS Plan Future Land Use (FLU) Map and the proposed 2026 ECOS Plan FLU Map:

- The 2018 FLU map's areas planned for growth are comprised of *Center, Metro, Enterprise, Suburban, and Village* land use areas. These areas were defined based on municipal zoning. The 2018 FLU map uses one *Rural* land use category that does not provide fine-grain distinction between rural subtypes.
- The 2026 FLU map applies the statutory land use categories established by Act 181 and listed in [24 V.S.A. §4348a](#). These categories are now used by all Vermont regional planning commissions to create their FLU map. The 2026 FLU map identifies land use areas by integrating information from municipal plans, adopted municipal policies, and direct extensive community engagement. Following are the key changes:
  - o In the 2026 FLU map, the areas planned for growth are *Downtown Centers, Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas (PGA), and Village Areas*. Compared to the 2018 map, these categories are

generally more compact and aligned with existing and planned infrastructure, services, and walkability.

- o Rural areas are split into *Rural General*, *Rural Agriculture and Forestry*, and *Rural Conservation* subcategories, providing clearer emphasis on conservation priorities, working lands, and climate resilience.
- o In some locations, boundaries for areas planned for growth have contracted to avoid floodplains or ecologically sensitive lands (e.g., along river corridors in Bolton, Huntington, Richmond). In others, the boundaries of areas planned for growth have expanded or shifted slightly to align with municipal future land use maps and/or local plans that have been developed for specific geographic areas and that are intended to supplement municipal comprehensive planning (e.g., Milton town core, Essex Junction downtown, Hinesburg village).
- o Enterprise Areas and other non-residential hubs remain, but are more clearly separated from residential growth categories, clarifying their intended uses. In the 2026 map, Enterprise Areas are also smaller than on the 2018 map because CCRPC created a separate category, as allowed by statute, to capture the Burlington International Airport, Ethan Allen Firing Range, and Camp Johnson.
- o The 2026 map has added several Transition areas. CCRPC used “Transition” to identify a range of areas, including highway interchanges, neighborhoods served by sewer and water but not yet planned for compact growth, and low-density commercial development close to neighborhoods and centers. New Transition areas replace land that was previously in all categories except center (suburban, rural, village, metro, and enterprise areas), providing a helpful indication that more planning is needed in these areas.

**To:** Amber Thibeault, City Council President and Regina Mahony, City Manager  
**From:** Taylor Newton, Planning Program Director  
**CC:** Elijah Massey, Chris Yuen, Scott McCormick, Dan Kerin  
**Date:** November 20, 2025  
**Re:** 2026 ECOS Plan - Summary of Proposed Regional Future Land Use Map Changes

---

Per [24 V.S.A. §4348](#), CCRPC is required to provide the following information to member municipalities at least 30 days prior to the first public hearing required before adoption of the regional plan (ECOS Plan):

*...a written description of map changes within the municipality, a municipality-wide map showing old versus new areas with labels, and information about the new Tier structure under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151, including how to obtain Tier 1A or 1B status, and the process for updating designated area boundaries.*

This memo is intended to fulfill the requirements of the above-cited statute. Please contact me if you have any questions about the content of this memo, the proposed ECOS Plan, or the implementation of Act 181 (802-846-4490 x115 or [tnewton@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:tnewton@ccrpcvt.org)).

## Summary of Regional Future Land Use Map Changes

The following is a summary of changes between the 2018 ECOS Plan Future Land Use (FLU) Map and the proposed 2026 ECOS Plan FLU Map:

- The 2018 FLU map's areas planned for growth are comprised of *Center, Metro, Enterprise, Suburban, and Village* land use areas. These areas were defined based on municipal zoning. The 2018 FLU map uses one *Rural* land use category that does not provide fine-grain distinction between rural subtypes (see Figure 1).
- The 2026 FLU map applies the statutory land use categories established by Act 181 and listed in [24 V.S.A. §4348a](#) (see Figure 2). These categories are now used by all Vermont regional planning commissions to create their FLU map (see Figure 4). The 2026 FLU map identifies land use areas by integrating information from municipal plans, adopted municipal policies, and direct extensive community engagement. Following are the key changes:
  - o In the 2026 FLU map, the areas planned for growth are *Downtown Centers, Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas (PGA), and Village Areas*. Compared to the 2018 map, these categories are generally more compact and aligned with existing and planned infrastructure, services, and walkability.
  - o Rural areas are split into *Rural General, Rural Agriculture and Forestry, and Rural Conservation* subcategories, providing clearer emphasis on conservation priorities, working lands, and climate resilience.

- o In some locations, boundaries for areas planned for growth have contracted to avoid floodplains or ecologically sensitive lands (e.g., along river corridors in Bolton, Huntington, Richmond). In others, the boundaries of areas planned for growth have expanded or shifted slightly to align with municipal future land use maps and/or local plans that have been developed for specific geographic areas and that are intended to supplement municipal comprehensive planning (e.g., Milton town core, Essex Junction downtown, Hinesburg village).
- o Enterprise Areas and other non-residential hubs remain, but are more clearly separated from residential growth categories, clarifying their intended uses. In the 2026 map, Enterprise Areas are also smaller than on the 2018 map because CCRPC created a separate category, as allowed by statute, to capture the Burlington International Airport, Ethan Allen Firing Range, and Camp Johnson.
- o The 2026 map has added several Transition areas. CCRPC used “Transition” to identify a range of areas, including highway interchanges, neighborhoods served by sewer and water but not yet planned for compact growth, and low-density commercial development close to neighborhoods and centers. New Transition areas replace land that was previously in all categories except center (suburban, rural, village, metro, and enterprise areas), providing a helpful indication that more planning is needed in these areas.

The 2018 FLU Map and 2026 FLU Map can be compared side-by-side on [this map viewer](#).

## Summary of Regional Map Changes in Essex Junction

A mapping methodology developed by Vermont regional planning commissions was used to create the regional FLU Map in the 2026 ECOS Plan. The mapping methodology can be reviewed [here](#).

In all municipalities, areas designated as “Rural” on the 2018 ECOS Pan FLU Map have been changed to “Rural General,” “Rural Agricultural & Forestry,” or “Rural Conservation” based on the mapping methodology. All other map changes between the 2018 ECOS Plan and the 2026 ECOS Plan specific to your municipality are described below:

*Table 1 - Summary of Map Changes*

| <b>Geographic Area</b>                                                | <b>2018 ECOS Plan - FLU Category</b> | <b>2026 ECOS Plan - FLU Category</b> | <b>Notes</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Five Corners and area extending along Pearl Street to the Fairgrounds | Center                               | Downtown Center                      |              |
| Area between Church St, East St, and Maple St.                        | Metro                                | Downtown Center                      |              |
| Area along Park St between Iroquois Ave and South St.                 | Metro                                | Downtown Center                      |              |
| Global Foundries campus                                               | Enterprise                           | Planned Growth Area                  |              |

Figure 1 - 2018 ECOS Plan Future Land Use Map

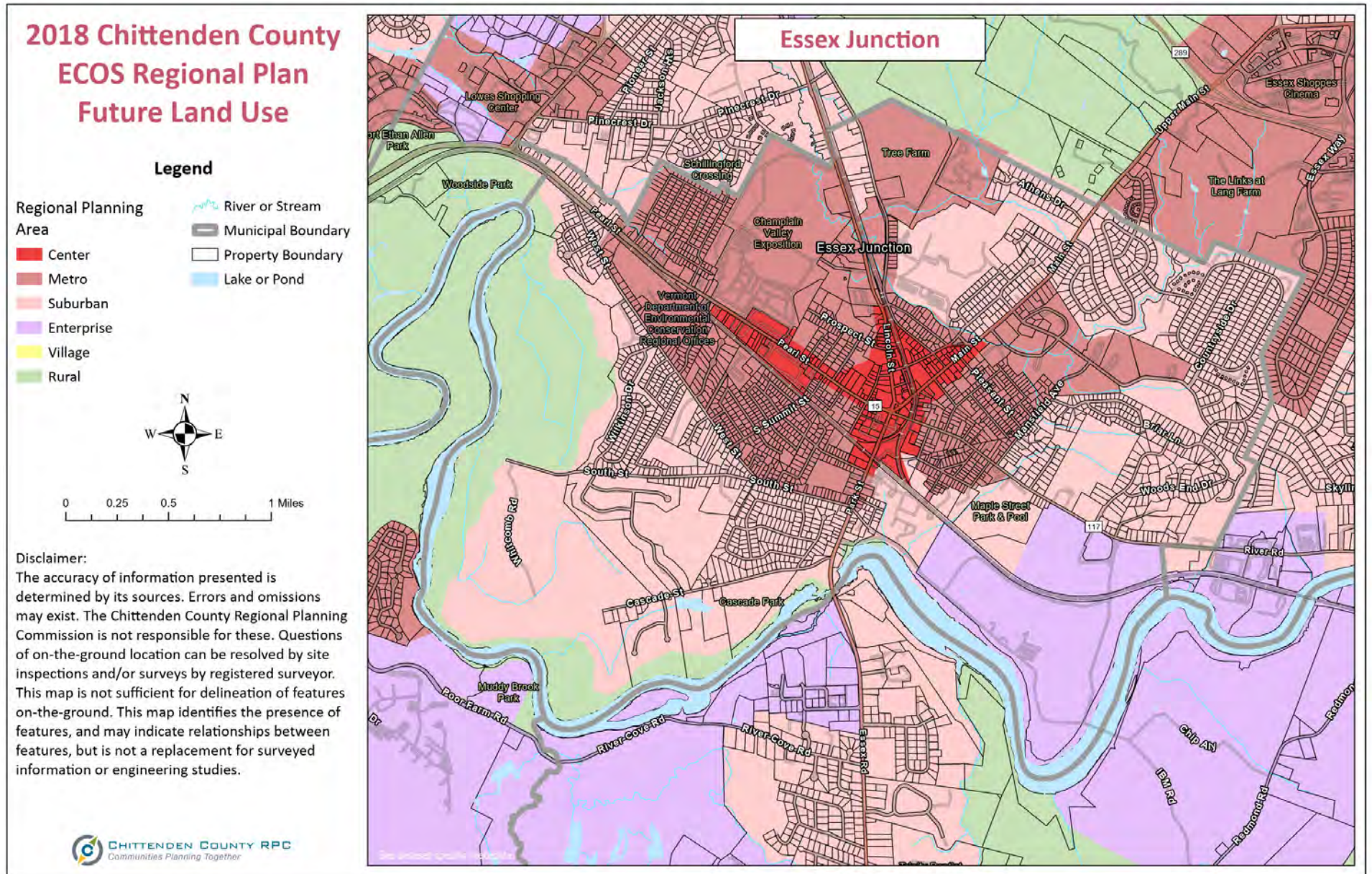
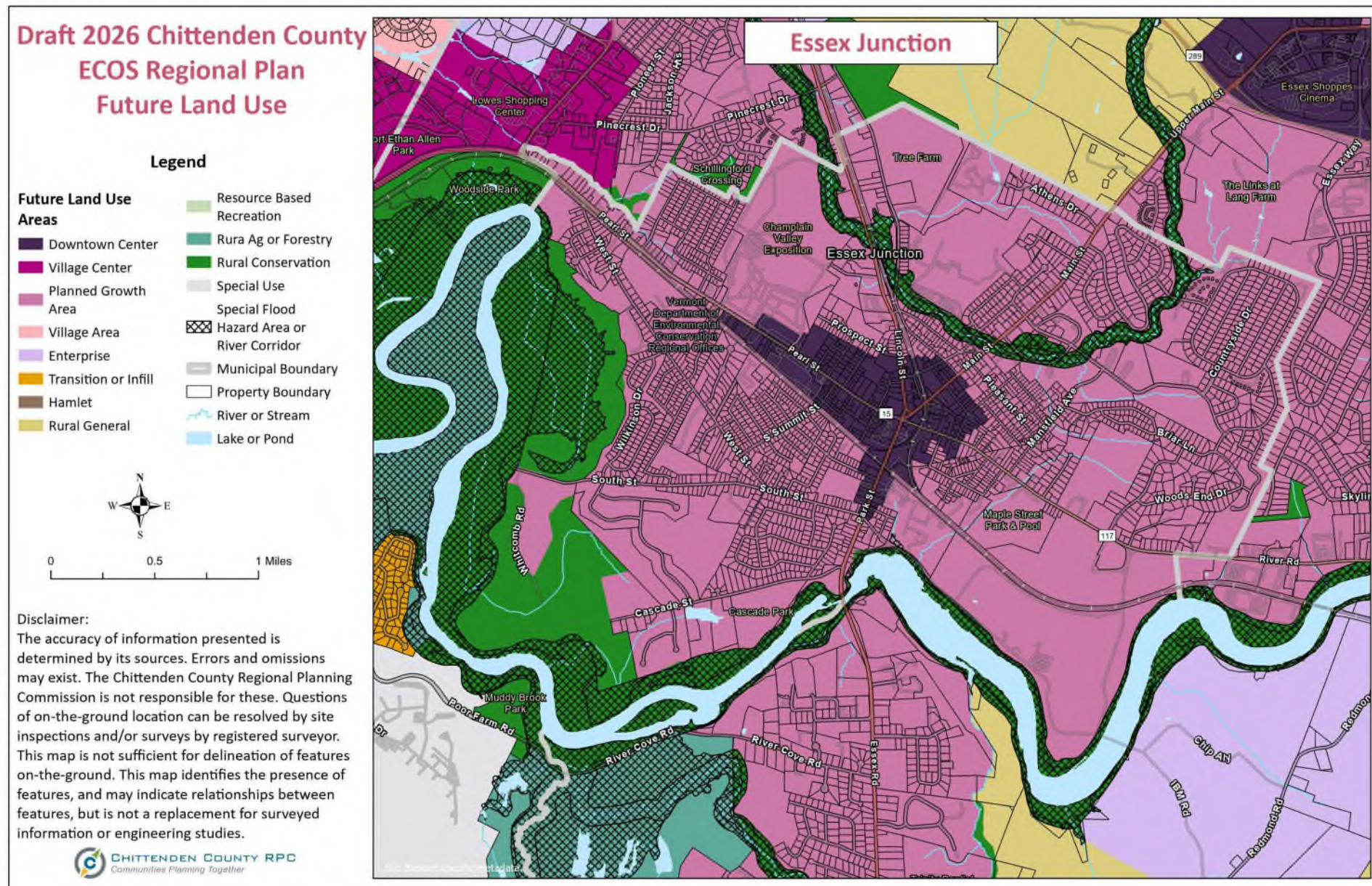


Figure 2 – Draft 2026 ECOS Plan - Future Land Use Map



## Tier 1A and Tier 1B Status

Act 181 updates Vermont's planning framework for coordinating state, regional, and municipal land use. This includes shifting Act 250's jurisdiction from being triggered by the size of the development to being primarily location-based. Figure 3 outlines the two types of location-based jurisdiction that can be requested by municipalities (Tier 1A areas and Tier 1B areas) and how municipalities can obtain Tier 1A or Tier 1B status. Both areas allow for Act 250 exemptions.

### **Tier 1B**

Essex Junction opted-in to Tier 1B on June 11, 2025. The Land Use Review Board will consider this request concurrently with its review of the 2026 ECOS Plan in May or June 2026.

### **Tier 1A**

More information about Tier 1A area status, including draft Tier 1A guidelines developed by the LURB, can be found [here](#).

CCRPC is available to provide technical assistance to municipalities interested in learning more about obtaining Tier 1A status.

Figure 3 - Tier 1A and Tier 1B Information

|                                                                    | <b>Tier 1A</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Tier 1B</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Which areas are eligible?                                          | The following areas as shown on the regional future land use map which meet criteria in <a href="#">10 V.S.A. § 6034(b)</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centers (Downtowns &amp; Villages)</li> <li>• Planned Growth Areas</li> </ul>                                     | The following areas as shown on the regional future land use map which meet criteria in 10 VSA § 6033(c). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centers (Downtowns &amp; Villages)</li> <li>• Planned Growth Areas</li> <li>• Village Areas</li> </ul>                                                                     |
| What are the Act 250 exemptions?                                   | All development is fully exempt                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 50 units or fewer on 10 acres or less for housing and mixed-use development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Who decides where this applies?                                    | Municipal application to LURB for Tier 1A status                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Municipal request to RPC for Tier 1B status. The LURB can approve or deny the municipal request.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Are state planning designations tied to Act 250 exemptions?        | No. The new state planning designations (Centers and Neighborhoods) are defined by the regional future land use map once approved by the LURB. Act 250 exemptions for Tier 1A and Tier 1B also use the future land use map, but are determined through a separate process (see below). |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| When do municipalities have to decide?                             | The application process will be available after January 1, 2026. An RPC must have an LURB-approved regional plan before its municipalities can apply for Tier 1A (CCRPC's is expected in July 2026).                                                                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Until CCRPC warns the second public hearing of the regional plan (anticipated March 18, 2026).</li> <li>2. At any time after the LURB approves the regional plan (anticipated June 2026).</li> <li>3. During future amendments to regional plan (next expected by 2028).</li> </ol> |
| Will our municipality have to enforce existing Act 250 conditions? | Yes. Within Tier 1A areas municipalities must carry forward conditions of prior Act 250 permits for new development permits, with a few exceptions. In approved Tier 1A areas the LURB will no longer enforce permit conditions unless the municipality fails to do so.                | No. The LURB will continue to enforce existing Act 250 permits and conditions in Tier 1B areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| What happens if we don't pursue Act 250 exemptions?                | After the <a href="#">interim Act 250 exemptions</a> expire, development projects will be subject to standard Act 250 jurisdiction throughout your community, including any changes under Act 181                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                                                                       | <b>Tier 1A</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Tier 1B</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What other requirements must municipalities meet to obtain Tier 1A or Tier 1B status? | <p>Per <a href="#">10 V.S.A. § 6034(b)</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Municipality must have an approved municipal plan.</li> <li>B. Tier 1A boundaries must consistent with and be within with Downtowns, Village Centers, or Planned Growth Areas on the approved regional future land use map.</li> <li>C. Municipality must have bylaws that are at least as strong as the state model flood hazard bylaws (per <a href="#">10 V.S.A. § 755</a>) and river corridor bylaws (per <a href="#">10 V.S.A. §1428</a>).</li> <li>D. Municipality must have permanent zoning and subdivision bylaws that do not include broad exemptions for obtaining municipal permits.</li> <li>E. Municipal bylaws for Tier 1A areas must further smart growth principles, regulate physical form and scale, allow for at least 4 stories in areas served by water and sewer, and follow other guidelines to be established by the Land Use Review Board.</li> <li>F. Tier 1A area must be compatible with the character of adjacent historic districts and sites and significant cultural / natural resources.</li> <li>G. Municipality has planned for maintenance of significant natural communities and RTE species in the Tier 1A area, or has excluded them from the Tier 1A area.</li> <li>H. Public water &amp; wastewater has the capacity to support additional development in the Tier 1A area.</li> <li>I. There is adequate municipal staffing for comprehensive planning, capital planning, and development review / zoning administration in the Tier 1A area.</li> </ul> | <p>Per <a href="#">10 V.S.A. § 6033(c)</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Municipality must request Tier 1B status from RPC (“opt-in”) by passing a municipal resolution confirming requirements have been met</li> <li>2. Municipality must have an RPC-confirmed plan &amp; planning process.</li> <li>3. Municipality must have permanent zoning &amp; subdivision bylaws.</li> <li>4. In Tier 1B area, Municipality must exclude or adequately regulate flood hazard areas / river corridors.</li> <li>5. Tier 1B area have adequate water supply &amp; wastewater capacity for compact housing; in Village Areas this may be in the form of soils that can accommodate a community system.</li> <li>6. Municipality must have adequate municipal staff for zoning administration.</li> <li>7. Municipality must be a member of a regional planning commission with a LURB-approved regional plan.</li> </ul> |

## Process for Updating Designated Area Boundaries

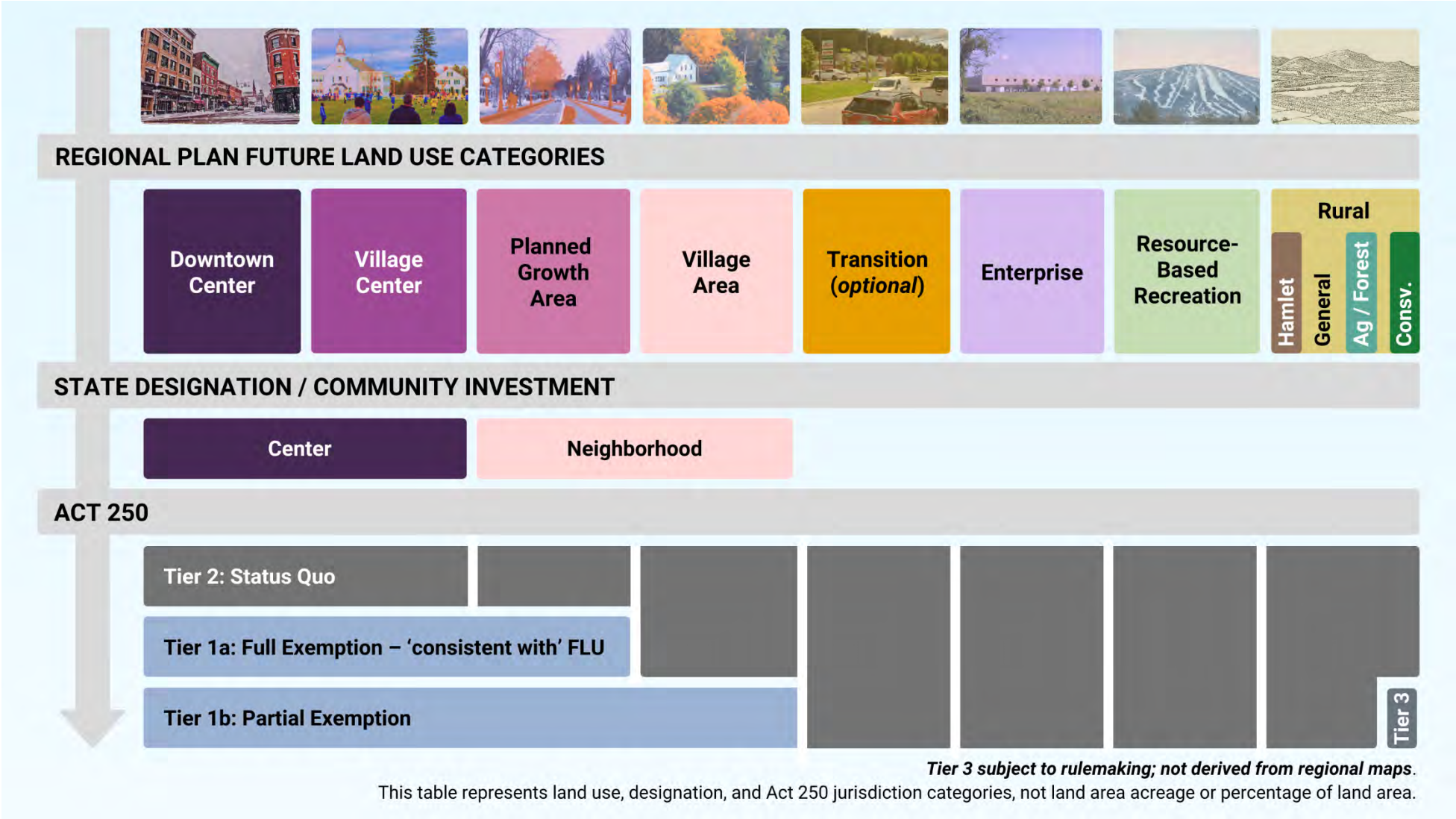
Per Act 181, the state designation program has been consolidated from five programs into two programs: Center and Neighborhood (see Figure 4). This change is outlined in [Title 24 V.S.A. Chapter 139](#).

The regional FLU map defines Centers and Neighborhoods. Upon approval of the 2026 ECOS Plan by the Land Use Review Board (LURB), Downtown Centers and Village Centers on the regional FLU map will be enrolled in the Center designation program. Similarly, Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas will be enrolled in the Neighborhood designation program.

Future changes to the boundaries of designated Centers and Neighborhoods will require change to the regional FLU map via a regional plan amendment, and approval of the amendment by the LURB, or, for changes consisting of fewer than ten acres, via a change to the regional FLU map using a minor amendment process as outlined in [24 V.S.A. 4348\(j\)](#).

All pre-existing state designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, growth centers, and neighborhood development areas existing as of December 31, 2025 will retain benefits under the pre-existing state designation programs until December 31, 2026 or until approval of the regional future land use maps by the LURB, whichever comes first.

Figure 4 - Future Land Use Categories (24 VSA 4348a), State Designation Programs, and Act 250 Tiers



|                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PREAPPLICATION REVIEW: COMMENT FORM</b><br><b>DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN</b> |
| <b>Regional Planning Commission:</b> CCRPC                               |
| <b>Submission Date:</b> December 5, 2025                                 |
| <b>State Agency:</b> Land Use Review Board                               |
| <b>Name of Reviewer:</b> City of Essex Junction                          |
| <b>Reviewer Email:</b> cyuen@essexjunction.org                           |

DRAFT

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Who can submit this form?

If a state agency wishes to make comments on a filed preapplication, this form **must** be used. Members of the public may also use this form to provide written comments or can provide verbal comments at a Board meeting during the preapplication 60-day review period.

### How to submit this form?

This comment form must be submitted electronically by emailing a PDF copy to **Act250.Board@vermont.gov** within **30 days** from notification that the Board has deemed a preapplication complete.

### What is the scope of comments?

The purpose of the Board's preapplication review of a draft regional plan is to provide comments to the regional planning commission on whether draft regional plan conforms with 24 V.S.A. §§ 4302, 4348a, 5803, and 5804.

This comment form lays out the statutory requirements for a regional plan to receive an affirmative determination from the Board. ***This form does not need to be completed in its entirety, and a commentor can elect to complete only certain sections.*** If you have no comments under a given section, leave that section blank.

### What does conformance mean?

Because the draft regional plan is prospective in nature, the Board will review the preapplication to determine if the draft regional plan were implemented in its entirety:

|  |                                                                                                                                |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Would the draft regional plan lead to substantial progress toward meeting the state goals in 24 V.S.A. 4302;                   |
|  | Whether the draft regional plan contains the requirements of 24 V.S.A. § 4348a;                                                |
|  | If the draft regional plan includes neighborhood designations, whether the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §§ 5803 and 5804 are met. |
|  | If the draft regional plan includes proposed s Tier 1B areas, whether the requirements of 10 V.S.A. § 6033(c) are met.         |

## OUTREACH AND NOTIFICATION

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT

24 V.S.A. § 4348 calls on Regional Planning Commissions to “allow for meaningful participation” in the adoption and amendment of a regional plan. Meaningful participation is defined in 3 V.S.A. § 6002. This section reports on the community outreach efforts undertaken for this plan’s development that advance meaningful participation, including information about engagement of Environmental Justice Focus populations, also defined in 3 V.S.A. § 6002.

**Does the preapplication include information about the outreach strategy, how the RPC sought to reach Environmental Justice Focus populations in the development of this plan, and the results of these efforts?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

DRAFT

## PART A – CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLANNING GOALS

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is consistent with the State planning goals as established in 24 V.S.A. § 4302. The application must describe plan compliance.

In this section, the applicant must provide detailed information about how the plan meets the general and specific goals outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 4302(b) and § 4302(c).

### 4302(b) – GENERAL GOALS

- (1) To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and State agencies.
- (2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.
- (3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the State, as well as the community in which it takes place.
- (4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.

**Comments:** With respect to 4302(b)2, CCRPC attended multiple Planning Commission meetings in Essex Junction as a part of their outreach process and promoted their online feedback tool for the Future Land Use Map to solicit feedback for this project directly from residents.

### 4302(c) – SPECIFIC GOALS

**Goal 1:** To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

- (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in downtown centers, village centers, planned growth areas, and village areas as described in section 4348a of this title, and strip development along highways should be avoided. These areas should be planned so as to accommodate a substantial majority of housing needed to reach the housing targets developed for each region pursuant to subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title.

- (B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally and regionally designated growth areas, employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.
- (C) Public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the planned growth patterns of the area.
- (D) Development should be undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles as defined in subdivision 2791(13) of this title.

**Comments:** Essex Junction staff coordinated with other municipal and regional staff members at CCRPC's Planning Advisory Committee to recommend adjustments to the draft housing targets to better reflect Goal 1 of 4302(c). Specifically, Essex Junction staff recommended increasing housing target percentages for the four urban municipalities (Burlington, South Burlington, Winooski, and Essex Junction) from 50% of the region's overall share to 60%. This adjustment was made in an effort to better reflect the smart growth principles defined in subdivision 2791(13) by enabling choice in modes of transportation, as these four communities are already served by the most frequent service on Green Mountain Transit's network and directly connect to important economic centers in the region.

**Are the proposed designated areas (downtown and village centers, planned growth areas, and village areas) adequate to accommodate the regional housing targets as required by 24 V.S.A. § 4202(c)(1)(A)?**

**Comments:** While the physical space of the proposed designated areas are adequate to accommodate the regional housing targets, Essex Junction sent a memorandum in May co-signed by the Planning Commission and City Council supporting the draft housing targets in principle, but noted that additional challenges will need to be overcome to accommodate the medium and high growth targets. Specifically, local zoning and land use regulations will need to be adjusted to accommodate the scale of growth proposed with these housing targets and balance the complex tradeoffs that come with this growth. Additionally, the City shares a wastewater treatment facility with the Towns of Essex and Williston. The facility has approximately 145,000 gallons per day of remaining capacity, enough to support an estimated 692 new housing units. Expanding this capacity would require engineering investment, facility upgrades, pump station upgrades, and other significant capital investment considerations. Additional planning and investment will also be necessary to ensure Essex-Westford School District has adequate capacity to support the expected growth. Finally, even with favorable zoning and infrastructure planning, actual development will depend on market dynamics and will require further coordination with state partners and the development community. Essex Junction is committed to working collaboratively to address the housing crisis and housing targets are achievable.

**Goal 2:** To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 3:** To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 4:** To provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

**A) Highways, air, rail, and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced, and integrated.**

**Comments:** Essex Junction has several ongoing transportation-related projects that support this goal. The City is currently working on a Transit-Oriented Development master planning project, titled Connect the Junction. Once adopted, this plan will likely help support Action 7.8.a of the ECOS plan, which aims to triple transit ridership by 2050. The plan will support this action by concentrating future housing growth around existing frequent transit in the form of Green Mountain Transit's #2 bus line that connects Essex Junction to Burlington. Supporting this service with transit-oriented development will help support many of the sub-goals outlined in the transportation and climate sections of the ECOS Plan. Secondly, the Pearl Street West Multimodal Improvements Scoping Study, which is concluding soon, will improve alternative transportation safety and convenience along Pearl Street/VT15 between West St Extension and Susie Wilson Road. Thirdly, the Amtrak Station Improvements project proposes to design and install a new roof canopy, roadway improvements, and other targeted modifications to enhance the bus and train user experience at the multimodal station.

**Goal 5:** To identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including:

- A) significant natural and fragile areas;**
- B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands;**
- C) significant scenic roads, waterways, and views;**
- D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites, and archaeologically sensitive areas.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 6:** To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources.

- A) Vermont's air, water, wildlife, mineral, and land resources should be planned for use and development according to the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a).
- B) Vermont's water quality should be maintained and improved according to the policies and actions developed in the basin plans established by the Secretary of Natural Resources under 10 V.S.A. § 1253.
- C) Vermont's forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 7:** To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

- A) General strategies for achieving these goals include increasing the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings; identifying areas suitable for renewable energy generation; encouraging the use and development of renewable or lower emission energy sources for electricity, heat, and transportation; and reducing transportation energy demand and single occupancy vehicle use.
- B) Specific strategies and recommendations for achieving these goals are identified in the State energy plans prepared under 30 V.S.A. §§ 202 and 202b.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 8:** To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

- A) Growth should not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.
- B) Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, should be identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 9:** To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

- A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forestlands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low overall density.
- B) The manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.
- C) The use of locally-grown food products should be encouraged.
- D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be encouraged.
- E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 10:** To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

DRAFT

**Goal 11:** To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.

- (A) Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income, and consistent with housing targets provided for in subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title.
- (B) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.
- (C) Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family dwellings.
- (D) Accessory dwelling units within or attached to single-family residences that provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives, elders, or persons who have a disability should be allowed.

**Comments:** Essex Junction is supportive of the ECOS Draft Plan's housing chapter, which adopts a supply and affordability-focused, data-driven approach that aligns with local housing goals. Many of the policy and regulatory changes recommended by Action 1 would greatly improve the City's ability to meet draft regional housing targets, particularly the infrastructure investment, regulatory redundancy reforms, and training opportunities for improving development outcomes. Essex Junction has made significant local efforts that align with this goal, primarily related to zoning bylaw amendments that support the constructio of new homes and to ensure consistency with State laws such as Act 47 of 2023 and Act 181 of 2024. Some highlights of these changes include allowing up to four dwelling units per lot in Residential 1 and Residential 2 zoning districts, allowing for a one-story height bonus for affordable housing developments as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4303, and reducing -off-street parking minimums to one space per residential unit. In February 2025, modifications were made to dimensional requirements to further support housing development, particularly for smaller projects of up to four homes per lot. Some changes include expanded administrative review, two principal structures per lot, reduced setbacks, up to six units per lot in "transitional" zoning districts, clarified design requirements, allowing for tandem parking spaces, and adjustments to PUD requirements. We feel as if the ECOS Draft Plan supports and is aligned with these local efforts and will continue to work with regional and state advocates on housing policy.

**Goal 12:** To plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

(A) Public facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply, and sewage and solid waste disposal.

(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 13:** To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**\* Goal 14:** (14) To encourage flood resilient communities.

***(A) New development in identified flood hazard and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.***

***(B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.***

***(C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.***

*\*This goal is effective until 1/1/28, after which it is replaced with updated language accounting for the forthcoming statewide minimum flood hazard area standards established by rule by the Agency of Natural Resources*

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Goal 15:** To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens as described in 3 V.S.A. chapter 72

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

DRAFT

## **PART B – CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF A REGIONAL PLAN**

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is consistent with the purposes of a regional plan as established in 24 V.S.A. § 4347. “Consistency” is defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)(1), and above.

The application must provide detailed information describing how the plan is consistent with the purposes of a regional plan.

### **24 V.S.A. § 4347 – PURPOSES OF A REGIONAL PLAN**

A regional plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, efficient, equitable, and economic development of the region that will, in accordance with the present and future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and welfare of current and future inhabitants as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development. This general purpose includes recommending a distribution of population and of the uses of the land for urbanization, trade, industry, habitation, recreation, agriculture, forestry, and other uses as will tend to:

- (1) create conditions favorable to transportation, health, safety, civic activities, and educational and cultural opportunities;
- (2) reduce the wastes of financial, energy, and human resources that result from either excessive congestion or excessive scattering of population;
- (3) promote an efficient and economic utilization of drainage, energy, sanitary, and other facilities and resources;
- (4) promote the conservation of the supply of food, water, energy, and minerals;
- (5) promote the production of food and fiber resources and the reasonable use of mineral, water, and renewable energy resources;
- (6) promote the development of housing suitable to the needs of the region and its communities; and
- (7) help communities equitably build resilience to address the effects of climate change through mitigation and adaptation consistent with the Vermont Climate Action Plan adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 592 and 3 V.S.A. chapter 72.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

DRAFT

## PART C – REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is consistent with the regional plan elements as described in 24 V.S.A. § 4348a, except that the requirements of 24 V.S.A. § 4352 related to enhanced energy planning are under the sole authority of the Department of Public Service.

The application must provide details about how the regional plan is consistent with the regional plan elements listed below.

### **(1) A statement of basic policies of the region to guide the future growth and development of land and of public services and facilities, and to protect the environment**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

### **(2) A natural resources and working lands element, which shall consist of a map or maps and policies, based on ecosystem function, consistent with Vermont Conservation Design, support compact centers surrounded by rural and working lands, and that:**

- (A) Indicates those areas of significant natural resources, including existing and proposed for forests, wetlands, vernal pools, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, floodplains, river corridors, recreation, agriculture using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8, residence, commerce, industry, public, and semipublic uses, open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, forest blocks, habitat connectors, recreation areas and recreational trails, and areas identified by the State, regional planning commissions, or municipalities that require special consideration for aquifer protection; for wetland protection; for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors; or for other conservation purposes.
- (B) Indicates those areas that have the potential to sustain agriculture and recommendations for maintaining them that may include transfer of development rights, acquisition of development rights, or farmer assistance programs.
- (C) Indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests. A plan may include specific policies to encourage

the active management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water quality, timber production, recreation, or other values or functions identified by the regional planning commission.

(D) Encourages preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.

(E) Encourages protection and improvement of the quality of waters of the State to be used in the development and furtherance of the applicable basin plans established by the Secretary of Natural Resources under 10 V.S.A. § 1253.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Do the Rural Conservation areas identified on the plan's FLU map help meet the requirements of the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Act (10 V.S.A. Chapter 89) (see 24 V.S.A. 4348a(12)(J))?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

**(3) An energy element, including an analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs, and problems within the region across all energy sectors, including electric, thermal, and transportation; a statement of policy on the conservation and efficient use of energy and the development and siting of renewable energy resources; a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy; and an identification of potential areas for the development and siting of renewable energy resources and areas that are unsuitable for siting those resources or particular categories or sizes of those resources.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(4) A transportation element consisting of a statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities, and a map showing existing and proposed highways, including limited access highways, and streets by type and character of improvement, and where pertinent, anticipated points of congestion, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, and recommendations to meet future needs for such facilities, with indications of priorities of need, costs, and method of financing.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(5) A utility and facility element, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective local and regional community facilities and public utilities, whether publicly or privately owned, showing existing and proposed educational, recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including public schools, State office buildings, hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, wireless telecommunications facilities and ancillary improvements, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage, and other similar facilities and activities, and recommendations to meet future needs for those facilities, with indications of priority of need.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(7) A program for the implementation of the regional plan's objectives, including a recommended investment strategy for regional facilities and services based on a capacity study of the elements in this section.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(8) A statement indicating how the regional plan relates to development trends, needs, and plans and regional plans for adjacent municipalities and regions.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(9) A housing element that identifies the regional and community-level need for housing that will result in an adequate supply of building code and energy code compliant homes where most households spend not more than 30 percent of their income on housing and not more than 15 percent on transportation. To establish housing needs, the Department of Housing and Community Development shall publish statewide and regional housing targets or ranges as part of the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment. The regional planning commission shall consult the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment; current and expected demographic data; the current location, quality, types, and cost of housing; other local studies related to housing needs; and data gathered pursuant to subsection 4382(c) of this title. If no such data has been gathered, the regional planning commission shall gather it. The regional planning commission's assessment shall estimate the total needed housing investments in terms of price, quality, unit size or type, and zoning district as applicable and shall disaggregate regional housing targets or ranges by municipality. The housing element shall include a set of recommended actions to satisfy the established needs.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(10) An economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(11)(A) A flood resilience element that:**

- (i) identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas, based on river corridor maps provided by the Secretary of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1428(a) or maps recommended by the Secretary, and designates those areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property; and**
- (ii) recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated under this subdivision (A) and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and public investments.**

**(B) A flood resilience element may reference an existing regional hazard mitigation plan approved under 44 C.F.R. § 201.6.**

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(12) A future land use element, based upon the elements in this section, that sets forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity, and character of such land uses in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services and that consists of a map delineating future land use area boundaries for the land uses in subdivisions (A)–(J) of this subdivision (12) as appropriate and any other special land use category the regional planning commission deems necessary; descriptions of intended future land uses; and policies intended to support the implementation of the future land use element using the land use categories as defined by 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)**

*Applicants must use the following mapping checklist to demonstrate conformance with this required element of the regional plan.*

Definitions for each land use category can be found in [24 V.S.A. § 4348a\(a\)\(12\)](#). In addition, [Mapping Process and Standards v 3.0](#) summarizes the methodology and planning considerations followed by RPCs in developing the future land use map.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

### Downtown Center

Municipalities with a Downtown Center:

| Municipality                     | Downtown Center Name             | Boundary Note (optional)         |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

## Village Center

Municipalities with a Village Center:

| Municipality                     | Village Center Name              | Boundary note (optional)         |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

DRAFT

## Planned Growth Area

Municipalities with a Planned Growth Area:

| Municipality                     | Planned Growth Area Name/Description | Boundary note (optional)         |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.     | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.     | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.     | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.     | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.     | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text.     | Click or tap here to enter text. |

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

## Village Area

Municipalities with a Village Area:

| Municipality                     | Village Area Name/Description    | Boundary note (optional)         |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Enterprise Areas**

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Transition Areas**

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Resource-based Recreation Areas**

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

### Hamlets

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

### Rural Areas: General

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

### Rural Areas: Agriculture and Forestry

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

### Rural Areas: Conservation

- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards.
- ☐ RPC mapped this area consistent with the mapping process and standards with the following modifications to address local and regional context:

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

## PART D – COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJACENT REGIONAL PLANNING AREAS

Per 24 V.S.A. § 4348(h)(4), for the Land Use Review Board to issue a determination of plan compliance, it must find that the plan is compatible with adjacent regional planning areas. 24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)(2) defines “compatibility” as follows:

(2) As used in this chapter, for one plan to be “compatible with” another, the plan in question, as implemented, will not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan. If a plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan, the plan may be considered compatible if it includes the following:

(A) a statement that identifies the ways that it will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan;

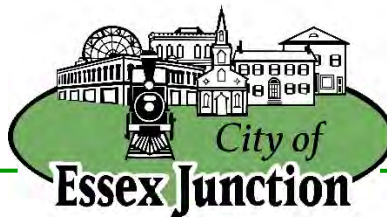
(B) an explanation of why any incompatible portion of the plan in question is essential to the desired effect of the plan as a whole;

(C) an explanation of why, with respect to any incompatible portion of the plan in question, there is no reasonable alternative way to achieve the desired effect of the plan; and

(D) an explanation of how any incompatible portion of the plan in question has been structured to mitigate its detrimental effects on the implementation of the other plan.

**Comments:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Tier 1B Status Requests (see Tier 1B form)**



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Christopher Yuen, Community Development Director

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, December 4, 2025

**Subject:** FY27 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – Informational Update

**Issue:** This memo provides an overview of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's (CCRPC) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) process and informs the Planning Commission of the City's anticipated project applications for FY27.

---

### Discussion:

The UPWP is the annual work program of the CCRPC, funded in part by federal transportation planning funds, through which municipalities can request assistance for transportation planning, data collection, and related studies. This program is one of the City's tools to advance transportation projects and related planning initiatives.

Past City projects under the UPWP include:

- Pearl Street Multimodal Project (previous fiscal year)

Current FY26 projects include:

- Comprehensive Plan Update
- Traffic counts at the Five Corners
- Planning for a pedestrian crossing across Pearl Street near Wileys Court
- Technical GIS assistance
- Infill Housing Project in collaboration with Burlington, South Burlington, and Winooski

More information on the current year UPWP program is available here: [https://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/FY26\\_UPWP\\_Adopted\\_20250521.pdf](https://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/FY26_UPWP_Adopted_20250521.pdf)

### Anticipated FY27 Applications

For FY27, the City anticipates requesting UPWP assistance for:

1. Continuation of technical GIS support and participation in Municipal Consortium Infill Housing Project
2. One transportation scoping study, with options being:
  - o Exploring implementation strategies for the Five Corners improvements identified in the *Connect the Junction* project; or
  - o Planning for a future formal pedestrian connection between Pearl Street and the Agency of Natural Resources lands on West Street

### Process and Timeline

- City staff will collaborate with CCRPC staff to discuss project ideas as necessary
- Upon City Council approval, City Staff will submit applications to the CCRPC by the Friday, January 23, 2026 deadline

The City will submit the finalized FY27 applications following internal prioritization and the budget process. Moving forward, the Strategic Planning process will incorporate input from the Planning Commission and

other committees to inform future UPWP requests, helping the Commission provide input upstream in the planning and prioritization of projects.

**Cost:**

The draft budget includes \$5,000 for GIS services, \$2,500 for the Housing Consortium project, and \$7,000 for the scoping study.

**Recommendation:**

This item is for information only

**Attachments:**

1. CCRPC FY27 UPWP Program Summary

---

November 21, 2025

RE: **CCRPC FY2027 Unified Planning Work Program – Request for Projects**

Dear Colleague:

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is beginning the process of creating the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the upcoming fiscal year (FY2027). This program outlines CCRPC's projects and initiatives for the next year (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027). It helps implement the goals and strategies for our region outlined in the [ECOS Regional Plan](#), and helps municipalities implement their local plans. The current FY26 UPWP can be viewed at: [ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan](https://ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan).

The CCRPC receives funding from local, state, and federal sources for various programs and initiatives. We expect to have about \$2 million available for new municipal and partner projects. Attached you will find a detailed description of the application and selection process. All related documents are also on our website: [ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan](https://ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan). **Completed applications are due by Friday, January 23, 2026. Please email them in Word format to Marshall Distel at [mdistel@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:mdistel@ccrpcvt.org).**

The UPWP Committee will oversee the development process and determine how to allocate available funds to projects that best support our communities and meet the goals of the ECOS Plan. In reviewing project requests, the Committee will consider municipal and partner organization priorities and community engagement. The process will include feedback from the public, stakeholders, interest groups, and member communities.

With increasing demand for limited public funds, we believe this process will help the UPWP Committee recommend projects to the CCRPC Board that benefit both the region and local communities.

Please contact us ([mdistel@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:mdistel@ccrpcvt.org), 802-861-0122) if you have any questions or would like to set up a time to meet to discuss a potential project. We look forward to receiving your submission and value our continued partnership in making Chittenden County such a special place to live, work and play.

Best regards,



Charlie Baker  
Executive Director  
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

---

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

### FY2027 Unified Planning Work Program

#### Introduction

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the CCRPC's annual (July 1 through June 30) work program that outlines the planning activities and projects funded by and through the CCRPC.

To apply for assistance, municipalities and eligible partners must follow the application steps outlined in this document. CCRPC staff are available to discuss project ideas and offer application support. **A PROJECT APPLICATION FORM is required for each project request. If you submit more than one request, please indicate projects in order of priority. There are separate forms to request transportation counts and infrastructure inventories conducted by CCRPC staff.**

**The deadline for completed applications is Friday, January 23, 2026. Please email completed forms in Word format to Marshall Distel at [mdistel@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:mdistel@ccrpcvt.org).** All forms are available for download in Word format on the CCRPC website: [ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan](https://ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan).

#### Eligible Applicants

- CCRPC member municipalities
- Agencies
- Partner non-profit organizations

#### Relationship to ECOS and Local Plans

Projects must be consistent with CCRPC's Regional Plan (the [ECOS Plan](#)). The ECOS Plan serves as the Chittenden County Regional Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Municipalities should identify how and where projects are identified in local plans, capital improvement programs, and other local efforts.

#### Funding Sources

The CCRPC receives funding for a range of project types from diverse sources including:

- the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) to implement the Metropolitan Transportation Plan – *this is the primary source of available funding assistance*;
- the Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD) to implement the ECOS Plan;
- the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources for water quality planning; and
- the Vermont Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security for emergency management planning.
- Funding could also come from grant awards to implement single purpose projects.

---

## Examples of Projects

- **Transportation-Related Projects (Federal Transportation Planning Funding)**
  - o Project development/scoping that will lead to implementation (roadways, bridges, intersections, traffic signals, sidewalks, bike facilities). In addition to long-term alternatives, these projects usually develop short- or medium-term transportation improvements that could be implemented with local funding or through grant programs.
  - o Multimodal transportation planning (Corridor and Area-wide Studies).
  - o Stormwater/Water Quality planning and project scoping consistent with the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP), tactical basin plans or state/regional goals, plans, and permits.
  - o Transportation-related education or outreach to historically excluded and underrepresented populations.
  - o Technical Assistance Projects could include but not limited to Transportation modeling; Signal timing plans and optimization; Data development; Demographics; Stormwater management system inventories; Speed studies; Level-of-Service (LOS) or Volume/Capacity analyses; Stop warrant analyses; Transportation safety analyses; and GIS/data/mapping assistance.
- **Land Use and Energy Implementation Assistance (may be eligible for transportation funding if the project has a transportation connection)**
  - o Chittenden County Better Connections Program: similar to the State's Better Connections Program (<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>), the CCRPC encourages municipalities to coordinate land use decisions with transportation investments that build community resilience, with a particular emphasis on projects that support the implementation of innovative transportation and land use concepts such as:
    - a) Corridor/area wide plans
    - b) Smart growth community plans
    - c) Smart growth bylaw development
  - o Energy Implementation Assistance, including but not limited to:
    - a) Education and outreach conducted to increase awareness and understanding of local, regional, and state energy and climate plans
    - b) Energy-related transportation and land use sector implementation activities (e.g., climate resilience, public transportation, bike-ped projects, compact mixed-use development, electric vehicles, charging infrastructure and e-bikes)
    - c) Electricity sector implementation activities (e.g., electric efficiency and conservation measures, smart grid, appropriate siting of renewables-based generating facilities, electricity/power resilience)
  - o Other, including Health and/or Equity Impact Assessments as part of any of the previous categories.
- **Transportation Counts and Inventories (Conducted by CCRPC staff and interns)**
  - o Traffic counts
  - o Pavement inventories
  - o Road erosion inventories
  - o Sign inventories

- o Culvert inventories
- o Other
- **Non-Municipal Transportation Partner Program Assistance**
  - o CCRPC staff will work with local and regional transportation partners on various programs. Proposed budgets should reflect what can be spent within a fiscal year (July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>). Please note that non-municipal partners are expected to submit a year-end report describing the impacts and outcomes of their program/efforts as a requirement of funding.

For examples of projects funded through previous UPWPs, visit [ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan](https://ccrpcvt.org/annual-work-plan) or contact CCRPC staff for details.

## Ineligible Initiatives

UPWP **transportation funding is for planning projects only**. The list below offers some examples of activities that are not eligible for UPWP funds. If applicants have questions about eligibility, they are encouraged to reach out to CCRPC staff to determine whether a project /activity is eligible.

- Costs for municipal employees
- Right-of-way acquisition
- Detailed design, engineering, and specifications
- Construction of transportation system facilities
- Capital-oriented implementation actions

## Cost Estimates and UPWP Funding History

**UPWP Funding History:** While funding pools have not been determined, CCRPC's UPWP funds have been budgeted as follows in previous fiscal years:

| <b>Regional, Municipal and Partner UPWP Funding</b> |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                                                     | <b>FY2020</b>      | <b>FY2021</b>      | <b>FY2022</b>      | <b>FY2023</b>      | <b>FY2024</b>      | <b>FY2025</b>      | <b>FY2026</b>      |
| <b>Regional</b>                                     | <b>\$370,000</b>   | <b>\$320,000</b>   | <b>\$585,000</b>   | <b>\$215,000</b>   | <b>\$865,000</b>   | <b>\$410,000</b>   | <b>\$245,000</b>   |
| <b>Municipal</b>                                    | <b>\$615,023</b>   | <b>\$757,250</b>   | <b>\$594,000</b>   | <b>\$1,151,613</b> | <b>\$858,750</b>   | <b>\$1,152,021</b> | <b>\$1,138,000</b> |
| <b>Partner</b>                                      | <b>\$672,140</b>   | <b>\$720,340</b>   | <b>\$731,340</b>   | <b>\$845,238</b>   | <b>\$893,935</b>   | <b>\$1,100,975</b> | <b>\$1,135,147</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>\$1,657,163</b> | <b>\$1,797,590</b> | <b>\$1,910,340</b> | <b>\$2,211,851</b> | <b>\$2,617,685</b> | <b>\$2,662,996</b> | <b>\$2,518,147</b> |

For FY27 we anticipate having about **\$2 million** available for new project requests. Please note that we might not be able to work on all the requests due to CCRPC match and staff capacity constraints. Applications must include a total project cost estimate and the local cash match contribution. CCRPC staff may follow up with applicants to discuss how the cost estimate was derived. Partial awards may be considered.

## Community Need and Public Meeting Requirement

**All municipal applications (including match amounts)** must be presented to and approved by the local governing body by the end of March 2026. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the community about the project request, to solicit public comments, and confirm the availability and commitment of local matching funds. **For non-municipal partners**, a public meeting is not required but applications should be approved by their Board or similar governing body.

---

## Contracting and Project Management

Contracting for projects will begin after July 1, 2026. Projects may be implemented using CCRPC staff resources, consultants, or a combination of both. Any consultant retained will be under direct contract with the CCRPC. CCRPC staff will be assigned to each project and will manage consultants in partnership with municipal staff. There may be some exceptions depending on individual circumstances. Regular invoices and progress reports are expected for each project.

## UPWP Project Selection

The UPWP process involves a three-step selection process:

**Step 1:** CCRPC staff will review applications to ensure they meet all program requirements.

**Step 2:** CCRPC staff will review the proposed scope of work for each project and the estimated budget. If the budget is not adequate for the desired scope, CCRPC staff will reach out to the project sponsor with two choices: 1) increase the local match in proportion to the revised study cost to complete the desired scope of work, or 2) reduce the desired scope of work to fit the original proposed budget. Once budgets and scopes have been confirmed for all projects, the submissions will be forwarded to the UPWP Committee.

**Step 3:** CCRPC staff and the UPWP Committee will screen applications based on the following factors:

1. Alignment with Regional Vision: How does the project address the CCRPC's top 10 actions or the eight ECOS strategies ([http://www.ecosproject.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2018-ECOS-Plan-Summary\\_20180807\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ecosproject.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2018-ECOS-Plan-Summary_20180807_FINAL.pdf))? (mandatory)
2. Documented Project Need: Demonstrate how the project need is documented? Is the project identified in a local plan? Or does this project address a newly identified need? (mandatory)
3. Was a public meeting held (or will be held by the end of March 2026) to solicit input from residents and others regarding the project? (mandatory – include documentation)
4. Is the proposal an inter-municipal initiative?
5. How will the project have a positive impact on the transportation system and/or advance the strategic planning objectives of the community when implemented? What is the sponsors' plan for implementing recommended improvements?
6. Public Engagement: What is the public outreach plan for the project? How does the project engage economically disadvantaged populations to improve outcomes?
7. Applicants' past performance as determined by the CCRPC.
8. CCRPC Staff and match availability.

Applications that best meet the factors listed above will be considered first for funding. If there are more worthy submissions than available funding, the UPWP Committee will consider regional priorities, geographic balance, and project type to aid in selecting projects.

---

## UPWP Schedule

|                         |                                                             |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| November 21             | FY27 UPWP applications released                             |
| December/January        | CCRPC staff available to meet with municipalities           |
| January 21              | CCRPC public forum for UPWP input                           |
| <b>January 23, 2026</b> | <b>FY27 UPWP application deadline</b>                       |
| January to March        | Three UPWP Committee meetings                               |
| April 7                 | Draft UPWP presented to TAC                                 |
| April 8                 | Draft UPWP presented to PAC                                 |
| April 15                | Draft UPWP presented to CCRPC Board / Public Hearing warned |
| May 20                  | CCRPC Board holds public hearing and votes on FY27 UPWP     |
| July 1                  | FY27 UPWP takes effect                                      |

For more information, contact Marshall Distel, [mdistel@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:mdistel@ccrpcvt.org), 802-861-0122