

III. LAND USE

The manner in which inhabitants occupy and use land creates a complex pattern of development that affects the social, economic, and natural resources within and beyond the immediate area. Poor planning and unregulated land use can have negative impacts on communities in terms of the natural environment, quality of life, and local economic resources. Planning for the efficient use of land resources can result in the betterment of towns and the natural environment.

All towns in the Region have written comprehensive plans. In addition, many communities have enacted implementation measures such as zoning and subdivision regulations and created Conservation Commissions in an effort to address land use issues in a more comprehensive manner. However, communities throughout the Region are faced with problems such as insufficient funding, overburdened community facilities, rising real estate costs and property taxes, loss of revenue, lack of sufficient and accurate data and/or technical expertise, and unplanned or undesirable growth.

Planning efforts should place an emphasis on those characteristics that are unique to the Region. Most towns in southern Windsor County were developed in the traditional Vermont pattern of a compact village center surrounded by rural countryside. In order to maintain this pattern, economic growth should occur first in areas such as village or urban centers where infrastructure and vacant structures already exist and can accommodate additional growth. Above all, towns should continue to set the stage for their own development by planning for growth to accommodate the needs of current and future residents in keeping with the unique character of their town.

A. Land Use Trends

1. Historic Settlement Patterns

Historic sites and structures, utilities and facilities, community services, commercial and residential development, employment, transportation, recreational opportunities, farms, and other features are all woven together with the natural environment to make up the unique fabric of the Region. The predominant pattern of village centers surrounded by working rural landscapes reflects the history of the Region, and contributes to the quality of life that residents cherish. In general, the municipal plans in the Region seek to preserve these historic land use patterns. And, these patterns continue to form the basis for the land use goals, policies, and recommendations described later in this chapter.

Towns in the Region were first established in the mid- to late-1700s. Settlers came primarily from southern New England attracted by the availability of land and an abundance of natural resources. Settlement patterns were affected by access to waterways, agricultural soils, transportation routes, and protection from New England's severe climate. Those areas with rugged terrain were sparsely settled, while villages were settled primarily along rivers and streams, with farms around the perimeter. The Black River, the Williams River, and Mill Brook provided a major source of power for the Region's mills and encouraged industry to develop along the waterways. Larger settlements occurred in towns such as Windsor in the

fertile Connecticut River Valley, Chester in the Williams River Valley, and Springfield and Ludlow in the Black River Valley.

Access to metropolitan areas, recreational opportunities, water, good soils, and other social and environmental factors continue to determine where growth is likely to occur. More recently, the growth in the popularity of the Region for skiing and tourism has increased development in Andover, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, and West Windsor. The influence of tourism is now felt throughout the Region. Most of the commercial and industrial development has occurred along the major highways interconnecting the villages, and along the state and interstate highway systems. Because of this trend, strip development, and seasonal traffic congestion are emerging problems in the Region. Towns should remain aware of the potential for strip development, and include prevention strategies and tools such as cluster development, mixed use zones, and the official map in their town plans and zoning regulations.

2. Current Land Use/Land Cover

As the Current Land Use/Land Cover map (**Appendix A - Map 1**) shows, large areas of the landscape in the Region are forested. Although this map is based on orthophotographs taken in 1994, the distribution of land uses has remained fairly consistent over the last decade. Those lands that are forested for timber usage contribute to the local economy, and those that aren't provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities, and maintain the air and water quality that are important for the quality of life of the Region's residents.

Over the last five years, the greatest development trend has been single family homes and small subdivisions in the more rural towns. Development in these areas has been largely dependent on site limitations. Recent changes to state regulation of residential on-site wastewater systems allow for greater development of lands with steep slopes and shallow depth to bedrock. Since many of these constrained lands may now be suitable for supporting on-site septic systems, local planners should assess the possible consequences on land use patterns in their towns.

U.S. Census 2000 population figures show a clear trend for residential growth in outlying rural towns and slower growth in regional centers. Near Okemo Mountain Resort in Ludlow, the development of second homes and vacation condominiums has occurred at a rapid pace. According to 2000 Census figures, the number of seasonal housing units increased by 13.7% between 1990 and 2000. Most of these units were developed on the mountain or in other rural areas, and outside of the Village. As buildable land on the mountain becomes scarce, these larger developments are likely to move to outlying towns such as Andover and Cavendish.

While the use of agricultural land is not as prevalent in the Region as it was in the past, the farms and open fields that remain are extremely valuable for their contributions to the aesthetic quality of the landscape, the Region's food supply, and for their ability to provide flood storage and wildlife habitat. Agricultural land also tends to be the most flat and buildable land in many communities in the Region and may be considered prime for industrial development. In developing or updating comprehensive plans, towns should

prioritize areas of aesthetic and resource significance and consider higher intensity development for areas closer to public utilities and services.

Windsor and Springfield, which have extended water and sewer service to industrial parks outside their downtowns, should consider carefully the area between their industrial parks and downtown areas. With available water and sewer, these areas could easily be consumed by strip development and sprawl. The trend toward revitalization of downtowns and infill redevelopment of brownfield sites can help to counteract this development pressure outside downtowns.

The natural resources maps (**Appendix A - Maps 4 - 9**) show publicly owned lands, Public Water Supply Source Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Inventory sites, wetlands, floodplains, and wildlife habitat areas that have been mapped by the State or Federal government. Descriptions of these features may be found in the Natural Resources chapter of this Plan. These areas continue to be important for protection of public water supplies and for the rural character and aesthetic qualities that make the towns in the Region special. Development that is too close to surface waters, encroaches on Public Water Supply Protection Areas, or fragments areas of contiguous forest land can threaten both the quality of life and the health of humans and wildlife residing in the area. When determining future land use patterns for the Region, the connection between these and other important natural areas, such as vegetated buffers adjacent to surface waters and wetlands, must be considered in conjunction with the patterns of settlement that have occurred over the years.

3. Growth Management Act

The Vermont Legislature enacted Act 200, amending the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117), including the first state planning goal: “to plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside” (24 V.S.A. § 4302(c)(1)). The following tools have been created by legislation to help achieve this and other state planning goals.

a. Downtown Program

The Vermont downtown program was created in 1994 to support downtown revitalization efforts. In 1998, the Downtown Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A) created a process to establish designated downtowns. Towns may choose to develop downtown revitalization plans and apply to be designated by the Downtown Development Board. Designations are valid for five years, at which point towns can reapply. Some of the benefits of this voluntary downtown designation include eligibility for the Downtown Transportation Fund, priority consideration is given by any state agency administering any state and federal assistance program, and eligibility for State tax credits. For more information on program benefits see 24 V.S.A. §2794. Designated downtowns in this Region currently include Windsor and Springfield. Ludlow is currently preparing an application.

b. Village Center

In 2002, the Downtown Development Act was amended, establishing a new category of designation as village centers. Designated village centers are eligible for many of the same benefits as Downtowns, but are not eligible for the Downtown

Transportation Fund. See 24 V.S.A. §2793a(c) for more information on these benefits. Cavendish and Proctorsville are designated as village centers.

c. New Town Center

24 V.S.A. §2793b enables municipalities to apply to the Downtown Development Board for designation of a new town center as long as no traditional downtown or new town center already exists. New town centers should encompass an area planned for or developing as the municipality's central business district. Existing or planned urban infrastructure is also needed in order to accommodate this growth by providing urban streets with curbs and sidewalks, public water and sewer systems, and public parking. There are no designated new town centers in the Region at this time.

d. Growth Centers

In 2006, Act 183 was enacted establishing a process for the State to designate locally planned growth centers. The Vermont Downtown Board was expanded to review and approve applications for designated growth centers. There are currently no designated growth centers in the Region.

A planning coordination group – staffed jointly by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the Land Use Panel of the Natural Resources Board – was established to assist municipalities in applying to this program. At the request of a municipality considering growth center designation, regional planning commissions will provide technical assistance in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2793c(a)

Growth centers must include the areas within or adjacent to designated downtown, village center or new town center, and be able to accommodate the majority of growth anticipated by the municipality over a twenty-year period. The required planning process for growth centers includes twenty-year projections of population, housing and employment growth; mapping the proposed growth center area including resources, infrastructure and capacity for growth; conduct a build out analysis to determine if the proposed area can accommodate the anticipated twenty-year growth. In addition, the growth center plan should discourage growth in the rural areas outside of the growth center and establish implementation measures, including land use regulations.

Statutory Definitions per 24 V.S.A. §2791:

Village Center: means a traditional center of the community, typically comprised of a cohesive core of residential, civic, religious and commercial buildings, arranged along a main street and intersecting streets.

Downtown: means the traditional central business district of a community, that has served as the center for socio-economic interaction in the community, characterized by a cohesive core of commercial and mixed use buildings, often interspersed with civic, religious, and residential buildings and public spaces, typically arranged along a main street and intersecting side streets and served by public infrastructure.

New Town Center: means the area planned for or developing as a community's central business district, composed of compact, pedestrian-friendly, multistory, and mixed use development that is characteristic of a traditional downtown, supported by planned or existing urban infrastructure, including curbed streets with sidewalks and on-street parking, stormwater treatment, sanitary sewers and public water supply.

Benefits of designation include regulatory and financial incentives for growth centers, such as:

- Off-site mitigation of primary agricultural soils at lower mitigation ratios;
- Streamlining the Act 250 review process by allowing for a master plan permit for the growth center;
- The ability to create Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district(s) within growth centers to fund infrastructure improvements;
- Priority consideration for funding, including state public facility improvements, wastewater facility improvements, brownfields remediation, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program implementation grants, Downtown Transportation Fund, Transportation Enhancement improvements, and housing renovation and affordable housing construction programs.

e. Vermont Neighborhoods Program

In 2008, Act 176 was enacted creating the Vermont neighborhoods program, which seeks to stimulate new housing development in areas within and surrounding designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers and growth centers. The program is administered through the Department of Housing and Community Affairs in coordination with the Natural Resources Board. The Downtown Development Board reviews and approves Vermont neighborhood applications in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2793d. Benefits include the relaxation of Act 250 regulations, exemptions from the land gains tax and reduced permit fees. There are no designated Vermont neighborhoods in the Region.

B. Future Land Use

1. Future Land Use Map

For the purposes of this Plan, the following future land use categories have been established. These categories are defined below and depicted on the Future Land Use map (**Appendix A - Map 3**).

- Regional Centers;
- Town Centers;

Statutory Definitions per 24 V.S.A. § 2791:

Growth Center: means an area of land that is located either in or adjacent to a designated downtown, village center or new town center as approved in a town plan; will accommodate the majority of growth anticipated over a twenty-year period; and contains a mix of uses in an urban density consistent with 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B).

Noncontiguous lands might be allowed where natural or physical constraints exist as long as it is necessary to accommodate future growth and the combined growth center area functions as a single integrated area.

Vermont Neighborhood: means an area of land that is in a municipality with an approved town plan, a confirmed planning process, zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations; and is in compliance with the following:

- Located either within a designated downtown, village center, new town center or growth center, or an area outside but contiguous of the above designated districts and is not more than 100% of the total area of the downtown district, 50% of the village center district, or 75% of the new town center;

- Contiguous lands compliment the designated districts by integrating new housing and provide the infrastructure and density criteria in § 2791(15)(B).

- Village Centers and Hamlets;
- Medium-Density Neighborhoods;
- Resort Centers and Recreational Areas;
- Industrial Sites;
- Rural; and,
- Resource.

These categories are meant to serve as a guide to the desired types and intensities of future uses appropriate for each area by describing the values, or functions, that it provides for the Region. The overarching goal of this Regional Plan is *to encourage growth in the areas of concentrated development described below in order to maintain the traditional, Vermont landscape of densely-populated villages surrounded by open fields and large blocks of forested lands*. Development is inappropriate if, on a regional scale, whether alone or combined with other uses in the area, it threatens the intent of the category descriptions below.

The Future Land Use Map is general in nature, and the boundaries of different areas were drawn with this in mind. They are not meant to be detailed representations of present conditions, nor are they intended to be precisely bounded areas of completely segregated land uses for the future. Development in any of these areas is largely dependent upon, but not limited to, the following:

- Suitability of the soils;
- Site limitations;
- Presence and condition of existing natural resources such as but not limited to floodplains, primary agricultural soils, geologic formations, archaeological evidence, and rare, threatened or endangered species;
- Available community infrastructure, facilities or services;
- Slope of the land and how it relates to stormwater issues as well as safe emergency vehicle access to the site; and
- Local regulations.

a. Regional Centers

Regional centers include the central business districts of Ludlow, Windsor and Springfield. These areas provide regional services, shopping and employment opportunities. They are served by infrastructure – including but not limited to urban road networks, sidewalks, public water and wastewater systems – that support the highest densities in the Region. A high-density mix of uses such as commercial, residential, civic, light industrial and public gathering spaces should be concentrated in these areas. Multi-storied buildings that mix retail uses with residential and/or professional offices are typical. Redevelopment, urban in-fill and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and “Brownfield” sites are encouraged in these areas. Public transportation services, pedestrian and other non-vehicular infrastructure should be provided. Buildings should be oriented to the street with streetscaping, trees and public gathering spaces provided in order to create a functional and pleasant pedestrian environment. Adequate on- and off-street public parking, and off-street private parking should be provided. Regional centers should be immediately

surrounded by medium-density neighborhoods, and then by a low-density, rural working landscape.

b. Town Centers

Town centers include the villages of Chester/Chester-Depot, Cavendish, Proctorsville and North Springfield. Town centers are similar in density to regional center, but are smaller and provide localized shopping and services, with limited employment opportunities. These areas are served by public water and wastewater services, and provide additional infrastructure supporting a high-density mix of uses. High-density residential and medium-density commercial and civic uses and public gathering spaces are encouraged. As with regional centers, redevelopment of existing buildings, adaptive reuse of “Brownfield” sites and in-fill are encouraged, as well as providing pedestrian and other non-vehicular infrastructure, orienting buildings to streets, streetscaping, trees and public gathering places. On-street public parking and off-street private parking located to the side or rear of buildings should be provided. Town centers are surrounded by some medium-density residential neighborhoods, and then by low-density rural/working landscape.

The village of Ascutney is also encouraged to function as a town center with the future provision of public water and/or wastewater services.

An additional area designated as a town center is located along River Street (VT Route 106) half-way between the Springfield regional center and the North Springfield town center. This area currently exhibits a mix of strip commercial development, but is encouraged to redevelop over time as an area of concentrated development with a mix of land uses, consistent with this town center category.

c. Village Centers and Hamlets

Village centers include the smaller villages of Brownsville, Felchville and Perkinsville (see Town Centers above for discussion on the village of Ascutney). Hamlets include Downer’s Corners, Gassetts, Peaseville, Simonsville, South Reading and Weathersfield Bow. These areas are generally not served by public water or wastewater services, so densities are encouraged as soil conditions allow. However, the future provision of water and wastewater services is encouraged. Privately owned community water and/or wastewater systems may allow for increased densities. Concentrated areas of moderate-density residential uses should be encouraged, with commercial and civic uses, such as neighborhood stores, places of worship, recreational facilities and primary schools. Sidewalks or paths should be provided along major roadways or connecting to important destinations, including schools, recreation facilities and post offices. Village centers and hamlets should be surrounded by a low-density rural/working landscape.

A village center is also designated for the area in Ludlow along VT Route 100 just north of VT Route 103. This is an area of emerging strip development, but is encouraged to cluster future development in a mix of land uses consistent with the village center category description.

d. Medium-Density Neighborhoods

These neighborhoods include the medium-density residential neighborhoods that immediately surround regional and town centers in Chester, Ludlow, Springfield and Windsor. Medium-density neighborhoods are typically served by interconnected streets, public sidewalks, and public water and wastewater systems. These areas may also include limited commercial and civic uses, such as places of worship, recreational facilities and schools. Commercial uses should be limited to small-scale operations that are compatible with the surrounding residential uses, such as neighborhood stores and home occupations. Neighborhood areas should be surrounded by a low-density rural/working landscape.

e. Resort Centers and Recreational Areas

Resort centers and recreational areas are unique features that influence the balance of the cultural, natural and infrastructure systems surrounding them. They are located in areas with abundant scenic and natural resources that are attractive for their recreational, tourism, and/or second home opportunities.

Resort centers can generate significant traffic during the peak tourist seasons of winter and autumn foliage. Their influence extends throughout and beyond the regional context. Though they offer significant seasonal employment opportunities, the high cost of housing and typically low wage scale can result in increased commuting from beyond the host community. Transportation issues are difficult to address due to the seasonal fluctuations associated with resorts. Development often includes condominiums, second homes, time-share interests and recreational structures. Resort centers in the Region are shown on the Future Land Use Map as points, but include broader areas surrounding Okemo Mountain Resort (including the Okemo Base Lodge and Jackson Gore areas) in Ludlow, and Ascutney Mountain Resort in Brownsville. Both resorts are expanding or considering expanding into four-season resorts, which may change their traffic impacts, growth patterns and other influences.

Recreational areas include Lakes Pauline and Rescue in Ludlow. The roadways and dense housing surrounding the lake represent potential threats to water quality from failing septic systems, and sedimentation and other pollutants from the roadways.

f. Industrial Sites

Industrial sites include areas where existing and future industrial activities are encouraged, including new development, redevelopment and the conversion of previous non-industrial uses. Growth in these areas is intended to provide jobs for residents and increase municipal tax bases. The designation of industrial sites is to locate businesses in areas without creating adverse impacts on adjacent land uses. Industrial uses, which are important to the region, need to be located in areas where off-site impacts such as noise, traffic and light/glare can be mitigated. Landscaping or other screening should be provided between all industrial uses and abutting incompatible land uses and major roadways. Industrial sites are shown on the map as points, but include traditional industrial parks as well as other sites designated for industrial uses.

The industrial site located along Clinton Street in Springfield immediately southeast of the Springfield Regional Recreation Center is intended for redevelopment, allowing for a mix of uses but primarily targeting future industrial uses for local jobs.

g. Rural

Most land in the Region lies outside of the areas designated for concentrated growth. Rural areas support a variety of different land uses, including low-density residential, small-scale commercial and outdoor recreation. These areas are rural in character and are generally valued for environmental and recreational uses as well as for the primary purpose as a working landscape, which includes agricultural, forestry and earth extraction uses. These working landscape activities contribute to the economy by providing jobs in the natural resource sector as well as attracting tourists who want to take advantage of the recreational opportunities. The RPC shall review Act 250 applications for earth extraction operations on a case-by-case basis for positive benefits for the Region as well as negative impacts on the environment, infrastructure and adjacent land uses. Development within rural areas is largely dependent upon local regulations and site limitations, including but not limited to the suitability of the soils, the presence of floodplains, and distance from community facilities and services.

It is in the interest of the Region that rural character shall remain the dominant feature of these rural areas. Rural character includes significant amounts of open space, compatible building styles, low-density residential settlements, lightly traveled two lane roads, and numerous agricultural and forestry operations.

Much of the recent development in the Region has occurred in rural areas even though it is encouraged in designated areas of concentrated development.

Development in rural areas should avoid sprawl and strip development land use patterns. Small-scale commercial uses are encouraged in nodes or clusters, rather than in a linear development pattern along major roadways. Residential uses are encouraged, but should be clustered or built along the periphery of important fields and other natural resources in order to minimize negative impacts. Large developments are encouraged to employ innovative site designs, such as planned unit developments (PUDs) and/or “crossroads hamlet” land use patterns, in order to cluster residential units, minimize road networks and limit site disturbances. Traditional hamlet patterns are emphasized over suburban, gated or cul-de-sac patterns.

h. Resource

Resource areas represent natural areas that require protections because of their fragile nature, irreplaceable value, and unique or important ecological functions. These areas consist of the following sub-groups:

- (1) High elevation areas over 2,500 feet in elevation;
- (2) Steep slopes in excess of 25 percent gradient;
- (3) Class 1 and 2 wetlands;
- (4) Permanently conserved lands, both public and private;

- (5) FEMA-designated floodways;
- (6) Critical wildlife habitat areas and wildlife travel corridors as mapped by the Department of Fish and Wildlife; and
- (7) Prime agricultural soils (as defined by the USDA).

Resource areas are generally more remote than rural areas. A combination of conserved lands and a working landscape that allows for outdoor recreation, hunting, forestry and agricultural activities are encouraged. As in rural areas, the RPC shall review Act 250 applications for earth extraction operations on a case-by-case basis for positive benefits for the Region as well as negative impacts on the environment, infrastructure and adjacent land uses. Residential or commercial buildings are discouraged. Very low-density residential uses shall cluster or locate at the periphery of natural resource areas in order to minimize negative impacts. All land uses, including roads and utilities should avoid fragmenting large blocks of forested lands, wildlife habitat and wildlife travel corridors. High elevation areas should remain as predominately wilderness areas, but wind energy and telecommunication facilities may be allowable if the facilities and access roads minimize impacts on natural resources and aesthetics.

C. Special Considerations in All Land Use Categories

1. Supporting Traditional Land Use Patterns

As the Region's population and economy grows and expands, each community will be affected differently. Factors such as geographic location, natural resource constraints, regulations, public policy, and public investments contribute to the direction that new growth takes in any community. The future land use categories described above are intended to support traditional land use patterns, be consistent with the state planning goals, and incorporate "Smart Growth Principles" as defined in state statute.

The future land use categories do not mean that all growth should only occur in regional centers and not in rural areas. Rather they reflect a regional policy that intensive development should occur first in those communities best able to accommodate it, and in the appropriate densities to maintain the traditional land use pattern. They also reflect a regional policy that scarce public funding for improvements in infrastructure should be directed in ways that support the current and desired scales of growth. For example, a large-scale investment in wastewater or pedestrian facilities would be more appropriately made in a regional center than in a rural area. Furthermore, these categories reflect a regional policy to prioritize the reinvestment in villages and brownfield sites over greenfield development in rural or resource areas.

2. Resource Protections and Working Landscape

The rural and resource areas were developed in order to protect specific natural resources and traditional rural economic activities. However, there are several important resources that may occur within any of the land use categories, and which merit special attention and protection. They include: Public Water Supply Source Protection Areas; FEMA-designated floodplains; slopes between twelve and twenty-five percent gradient (12 - 25 %); vegetated

areas next to surface waters; Class 3 wetlands and vernal pools); Natural Heritage Inventory sites; regionally significant historic sites; and other locally defined sensitive natural areas and scenic resources. Development should avoid or minimize negative impacts to these resources.

3. Interstate Interchanges and Major Highway Corridors

There are two Interstate 91 interchanges: Exit 7 in Springfield and Exit 8 in Ascutney; both are discussed in more detail in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP, Volume 2 of 2). Interchanges are prime areas for development due to their generally favorable site conditions and easy access for trucks and the traveling public. These areas also serve as gateways to the Region. In many locations throughout the country, interstate interchanges have experienced unplanned strip development which negatively impacts: the capacity and safety of the highway system, aesthetic and natural resources in these areas, and the economic and cultural viability of traditional villages.

Executive Order 07-01 was signed by the Governor in 2001 to encourage land uses at Vermont interchanges to be consistent with state land use goals. In 2004, the RPC developed Interstate Exits of the Region: Study and Policies that is discussed in more detail in the RTP. The Town of Weathersfield developed the I-91 Exit 8 Interchange Master Plan in 2008, which recommends incorporating the current strip commercial development along Exit 8 into the village of Ascutney through improved local regulations, including access management, roadway and pedestrian connections, and site plan review standards. The Town of Springfield created an Exit 7 zoning district to accommodate services for the traveling public, while also protecting major highway systems and not competing with downtown businesses. Development in interchange areas should be consistent with these initiatives and local regulations.

State highway corridors and intersections form the transportation network that is essential for access to jobs, services and emergency services. Poorly planned adjacent land use developments and access management can have a detrimental effect on these highway systems. The functionality of interstate interchanges and the state highway network should be preserved to maintain or improve capacity and safety, reduce vehicular delays and to not preclude future intersection expansion needs.

4. Energy Conservation

Effective land use planning should promote energy conservation. The future land use categories are, in part, established to encourage energy conservation by concentrating development in smaller, dense village areas with a mix of uses that encourage travel by walking, bicycling and public transportation, and reduces the energy required to provide town services.

The siting, design and construction of buildings significantly influences the energy demands for heating, cooling and lighting the structure. Innovative site designs - through building orientation, construction and landscaping - are encouraged to take advantage of solar heating and passive cooling in order to reduce energy demand otherwise used for traditional heating and cooling systems. Energy efficient lighting, such as LED fixtures, is encouraged to

reduce electricity consumption. See the Energy Chapter for more discussion on energy conservation.

LAND USE GOALS

1. To preserve the historical development pattern of mixed-use urban and village areas surrounded by open land, agriculture, forest, and low-density residential use.
2. To direct growth and development toward areas of the Region where it will be most effective and efficient to provide the necessary public infrastructure and services.
3. To achieve the concentration of infrastructure development within areas determined by town plans as desirable for growth.
4. To establish land uses and land use patterns that protect and enhance the values defined in this chapter.
5. To provide a regional transportation system that encourages and complements historic land use patterns.

LAND USE POLICIES

1. Development should be consistent with the future land use categories and map.
2. Revitalization of downtown areas, including the appropriate use, maintenance and reuse of existing historic structures and other existing buildings whenever possible, should be encouraged.
2. Excessive commercial development along major transportation routes (i.e., strip development) is discouraged. Access management and innovative commercial development that maintains the characteristics of existing villages, hamlets, and towns is encouraged.
3. Towns are encouraged to adjust zoning and subdivision regulations to allow for densities that protect or enhance the existing settlement patterns and resources.
4. In order to maintain the existing settlement patterns, higher density residential, commercial, and industrial development should be located in Regional Centers, Town Centers, and areas identified as desirable for growth in municipal plans.
5. Town efforts to attract and locate viable and appropriate businesses in areas targeted by the town for growth should be supported.
6. Where towns support residential, resort, and mixed use development tailored to the tourist and ski industries, such development should be sited and designed to protect the settlement patterns and natural resources of the town and Region.

7. Priority for the use of public funding for the maintenance or improvement of infrastructure shall be for those that support concentrated development in Regional, Town and Village Centers.
8. Use of public funds for the development of affordable housing and assisted living facilities within Regional, Town and Village Centers shall be supported.
9. Use of public funds for the conservation of natural resources is encouraged.
10. Local efforts to encourage compatible development adjacent to significant natural resources (waterways, large forested areas, wildlife habitat, etc.) by requiring buffer strips, visual screening, and other mitigation devices should be supported.
11. The RPC should assist towns to eliminate or mitigate the effects of development on natural resources that extend beyond town borders or are considered regionally significant as determined by the affected towns and the Region.
12. The placement of municipal and other government buildings should be in established downtown and village centers in order to maintain and encourage the vitality of downtown areas.
13. Programs that help owners of farm and forestland bear the financial responsibility of resource protection should be supported.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Help towns to evaluate proposed development projects for possible adverse effects to important natural resources, both within and beyond town borders.
2. Work with communities to develop a process for designation of growth centers.
3. Assist communities with developing effective bylaws, including zoning and subdivision regulations, that are consistent with the purpose and intent of their town plans and that consider the needs and plans of adjacent towns and the Regional Plan.
4. Support town, public, and private conservation organizations in protecting significant cultural resources, farmland, forestland, shorelines, and significant plant and animal species and their habitat.
5. Encourage state and federal agencies to contact local planning commissions and the RPC when considering the location or relocation of government buildings.