

Municipal Plan Review Tool

City of St. Albans – Final Review

This form addresses the statutory requirements of the State of Vermont for town plans, as cited in the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, Title 24 V.S.A Chapter 117 (the Act). It includes the 12 required elements found in § 4382 of the Act; the four planning process goals found in § 4302(b), the 14 specific goals found in § 4302(c); and the standard of review found in § 4302(f), which covers consistency with goals and compatibility standards.

During the Regional approval and confirmation process, specified in § 4350 of the Act, the regional planning commission is required to assess town plans and the process whereby they are developed according to the criteria of the Act. Sections of relevant statute are quoted at each question.

Required Elements § 4382		Met	Not Met
1	Statement of Objectives, Policies, Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Land Use Plan and Map	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Transportation Plan and Map	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Utility and Facility Plan and Map	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Rare Natural Resources/Historic Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Educational Facilities Plan and Map	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Implementation Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Compatibility Statement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Energy Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Housing Element	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Economic Development Element	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Flood Resiliency Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 State Planning Goals § 4302		 Met	 Not Met
1	Compact village centers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Economy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Natural and Historic Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Efficient use of Energy and Renewable Energy Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Agriculture and Forest Industries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Use of Resources and Earth Extraction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Safe and Affordable Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Public Facilities and Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Child Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Flood Resiliency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Environmental Justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TOWN PLAN REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Title 24 Chapter 117: Municipal and Regional Planning and Development

24 V.S.A. § 4382. The plan for a municipality

(a) A plan for a municipality may be consistent with the goals established in section 4302 of this title and compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region and with the regional plan and shall include the following:

(1) A statement of objectives, policies and programs of the municipality to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment.

Met

Pages: Throughout plan

Comments:

Goals, policies and actions are listed at the beginning and end of each chapter.

(2) A land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land uses, that:

Met

Pages: 88-89, 97-107

(A) Indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture (using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8), residence, commerce, industry, public and semi-public uses and open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, and areas identified by the State, the regional planning commission, or the municipality 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.

MAPS

Present Land Use Plan

Prospective Land Use Plan

(B) Sets forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and service.

(C) Identifies those areas, if any, proposed for designation under chapter 76A of this title and for status under 10 V.S.A. §§ 6033 and 6034, together with, for each area proposed for designation, an explanation of how the designation would further the plan's goals and the goals of § 4302 of this title, and how the area meets the requirements for the type of designation to be sought.

(D) 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.

Comments:

A and B are addressed in the Land Use chapter. Designations are discussed in the Downtown and Economic Development chapters. Forest blocks and habitat connectors are mapped and discussed under Community Resilience.

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(3) A transportation plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities showing existing and proposed highways and streets by type and character of improvement, and where pertinent, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, with indications of priority of need;

Met Pages: 72-78
MAP Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

All are addressed in the Transportation section of the City Operations and Infrastructure chapter. Circulation, access management and traffic control; Pedestrian and Bicycle Accessibility and Circulation, Street maintenance and improvements; public parking; public transit; passenger rail

(4) A utility and facility plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective community facilities and public utilities showing existing and proposed educational, recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage and other similar facilities and activities, and recommendations to meet future needs for community facilities and services, with indications of priority of need, costs and method of financing;

Met Pages: 54-57, 64-72
MAP Utility and Facility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Education and recreational facilities, public sites, buildings, hospitals, libraries are shown on Facilities map. Water and wastewater are shown on a separate map. Stormwater infrastructure is shown on water resources map. Good identification of planning role for health, wellness and social support services.

Energy transmission infrastructure is not mapped. Consider mapping.

(5) A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources;

Pages:

Comments: Natural areas are discussed under Community Resilience.

Historic features are discussed in the Downtown chapter, including historic district.

(6) An educational facilities plan consisting of a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system;

Met Pages: 58-59
MAP Educational Facility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments: Educational facilities and resources are discussed under wellness and prosperity. Schools are shown on the Facilities map.

(7) A recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan;

Met

Pages: Throughout the plan.

Comments:

Implementation actions are listed at the end of each chapter.

(8) A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans of adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title;

Met

Pages: 111-112

Comments:

Our Role in the Region chapter discusses how the plan relates to the St Albans Town Plan and Regional Plan.

(9) An energy plan, including an analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems within the municipality, a statement of policy on the conservation of energy, including programs, such as thermal integrity standards for buildings, to implement that policy, a statement of policy on the development of renewable energy resources, a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy;

Met

Pages: 90-93, 108-110

Comments: Addressed in Community Resilience chapter: Greenhouse gas emissions, energy cost burden, energy efficient housing, renewable generation, transportation energy conservation. The land use section promotes patterns and densities of development that will reduce energy use.

(10) A housing element that shall include a recommended program of public and private actions to address housing needs and targets as identified by the regional planning commission pursuant to subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title. The program shall use data on year-round and seasonal dwellings and include specific actions to address the housing needs of persons with low income and persons with moderate income and account for permitted residential development as described in section 4412 of this title.

Met

Pages: 29-40

Comments:

The housing chapter thoroughly discusses all points above, including data and proposed actions to address housing need. Housing targets for St. Albans City are included.

(11) 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.

Met

Pages: 41-49

Comments:

Economic development chapter discusses city efforts for economic growth and the current character of the city's economy.

(12)(A) A flood resilience plan 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 subdivision (12)(A)(i) of this subsection and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

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

Met
Pages: 83-87

Comments: Community resilience chapter addresses flood resilience. Floodplain, river corridor, wetlands, hydric soils, and upland forests are mapped. Flood vulnerability map shows municipal infrastructure and public investments in relation to floodplain and river corridor. Actions to mitigate risks to public safety are identified. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is referenced.

GOALS AND STANDARDS OF REVIEW

24 VSA § 4302

(a) General purposes . . .

(b) It is also the intent of the legislature that municipalities, regional planning commissions and state agencies shall engage in a continuing planning process that will further the following 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.

(c) In addition, this chapter shall be used to further the following 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.

Consistent

Pages: 31, 43-44, 97, 108-110

(A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to 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, or employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.

(C) Public investments, including 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.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Land use chapter addresses all goals above. Downtown center and planned growth area are discussed in housing chapter in relation to housing targets. Economic development chapter discusses encouraging economic growth downtown. Objective O.9.1.3 references smart growth.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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.

Consistent

Pages: 41-49

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Economic Development chapter contains specific policies and implementation actions to expand economic opportunities.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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

Consistent

Pages: 58-60

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Educational resources section discusses primary, secondary, alternative/non-traditional, and post-secondary education opportunities. Policies and actions related to the city's planning role in education are identified.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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.

Consistent
Pages: 72-78, 79-81

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

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Transportation section addresses this goal. Plan supports public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. Policies and actions further transportation goals.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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

Consistent
Pages: 14, 82, 88-90

(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

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Plan addresses historic resources in the Downtown chapter. Natural resources, including water resources, are discussed under Community Resilience.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:
Consider addressing significant scenic roads, waterways and views.

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

Consistent
Pages: 82-95

(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. No. 181 Page 60 of 171 2024 VT LEG #377893 v.1

(C) Vermont’s forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.

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How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Community Resilience Objective: “Mitigate the effects of development and City operations on air quality, wildlife, significant natural and fragile areas, and important water resources, including stream corridors, aquifers, and wetlands.” Environmental sustainability details resources and efforts to conserve them, including parks and urban tree canopy. Forest blocks and habitat connectors are mapped. Efforts to improve water quality are discussed, including improvements to stormwater infrastructure.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

Goal 7: To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

Consistent
Pages: 82-95

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency are discussed in Community Resilience, including specific policies and objectives.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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

Consistent
Pages: 54-55

(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.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Plan summarizes existing recreation facilities in the City and outlines programs and projects for the City to complete that will further this goal.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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

Consistent
Pages: 21, 88

(A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands 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.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The City Plan does support agricultural industries through policies that support the Farmer’s Market. More specific mention of the role Farmer’s Market’s have in providing access to local food is recommended. The City Plan references the Urban Forest Strategic Action Plan and the importance of a healthy tree canopy in the city.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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.

Consistent

Pages: 102

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Plan contains statement that the City does not have any resource extraction operations and recommends that such operations not be permitted in the City.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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

Consistent

Pages: 29-40

(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 multifamily and manufactured housing should readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional 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 or disabled or elderly persons should be allowed.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The Plan emphasizes the importance of providing safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters. Housing targets and needs for low to moderate income residents are included in the plan. Land Use chapter includes goals for making sites for multi-family more readily available, including reclassifying the Residential 8700 district to allow for greater densities.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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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.

Consistent

Pages: 62-81

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The City Plan goes above and beyond meeting this goal. The City's finances are comprehensively discussed. The Plan is clear that the rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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.

Consistent

Pages: 57-58

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Childcare section addresses this goal, including the current number of existing childcare facilities and the city's planning role in expanding childcare access.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

Goal 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.

Consistent

Pages: 85-87

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Plan discusses flood hazard and river corridors and limiting further development in these areas. The plan also meets this goal through references to the City Hazard Mitigation Plan.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

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

Consistent

Pages: 53

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Plan references state definition of Environmental Justice and discusses efforts to understand how implicit bias can impact the delivery of City services, programs and events through the Belonging, Equity and Inclusion committee.

If the goal is not relevant or attainable, how does the plan address why:

Regional Plan and Adjacent Community Plan Compatibility

Regional Plan

Does the municipal plan propose any changes to future land use districts when compared with the existing zoning map (or previous municipal plan if no zoning exists)?

Comments: Yes. Changes to districts are discussed in the Land Use chapter, including establishing a new Civic Recreation District, a new Multifamily district, a new Mixed Use district, and reclassifying the Residential 8700 district in the future to allow for greater residential densities. The plan also proposes expanding and altering design review districts.

Is the municipal plan compatible with its regional plan?

Comments: Yes. Compatibility with the Regional Plan is discussed in the Our Role in the Region chapter, including policies and actions to ensure that “the City’s role as the region’s largest historic growth center will be a source of mutual benefit.”.

Adjacent Municipalities

Is the municipal plan compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region?

Comments: Yes. Compatibility with the St. Albans Town Plan is discussed in the Our Role in the Region chapter. Joint planning efforts and shared goals and initiatives are discussed.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)

(1) As used in this chapter, "consistent with the goals" requires substantial progress toward attainment of the goals established in this section, unless the planning body determines that a particular goal is not relevant or attainable. If such a determination is made, the planning body shall identify the goal in the plan and describe the situation, explain why the goal is not relevant or attainable, and indicate what measures should be taken to mitigate any adverse effects of not making substantial progress toward that goal. The determination of relevance or attainability shall be subject to review as part of a consistency determination under this chapter.

(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.

24 V.S.A. § 4350. Review and consultation regarding municipal planning effort

(a) A regional planning commission shall consult with its municipalities with respect to the municipalities' planning efforts, ascertaining the municipalities' needs as individual municipalities and as neighbors in a region, and identifying the assistance that ought to be provided by the regional planning commission. As a part of this consultation, the regional planning commission, after public notice, shall review the planning process of its member municipalities at least twice during an eight-year period, or more frequently on request of the municipality, and shall so confirm when a municipality:

(1) is engaged in a continuing planning process that, within a reasonable time, will result in a plan which is consistent with the goals contained in section 4302 of this title; and

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(2) is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes.

(b)(1) As part of the consultation process, the commission shall consider whether a municipality has adopted a plan. In order to obtain or retain confirmation of the planning process after January 1, 1996, a municipality must have an approved plan. A regional planning commission shall review and approve plans of its member municipalities, when approval is requested and warranted. Each review shall include a public hearing which is noticed at least 15 days in advance by posting in the office of the municipal clerk and at least one public place within the municipality and by publication in a newspaper or newspapers of general publication in the region affected. The commission shall approve a plan if it finds that the plan:

(A) is consistent with the goals established in section 4302 of this title;

(B) is compatible with its regional plan;

(C) is compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region; and

(D) contains all the elements included in subdivisions 4382(a)(1)-(10) of this title.