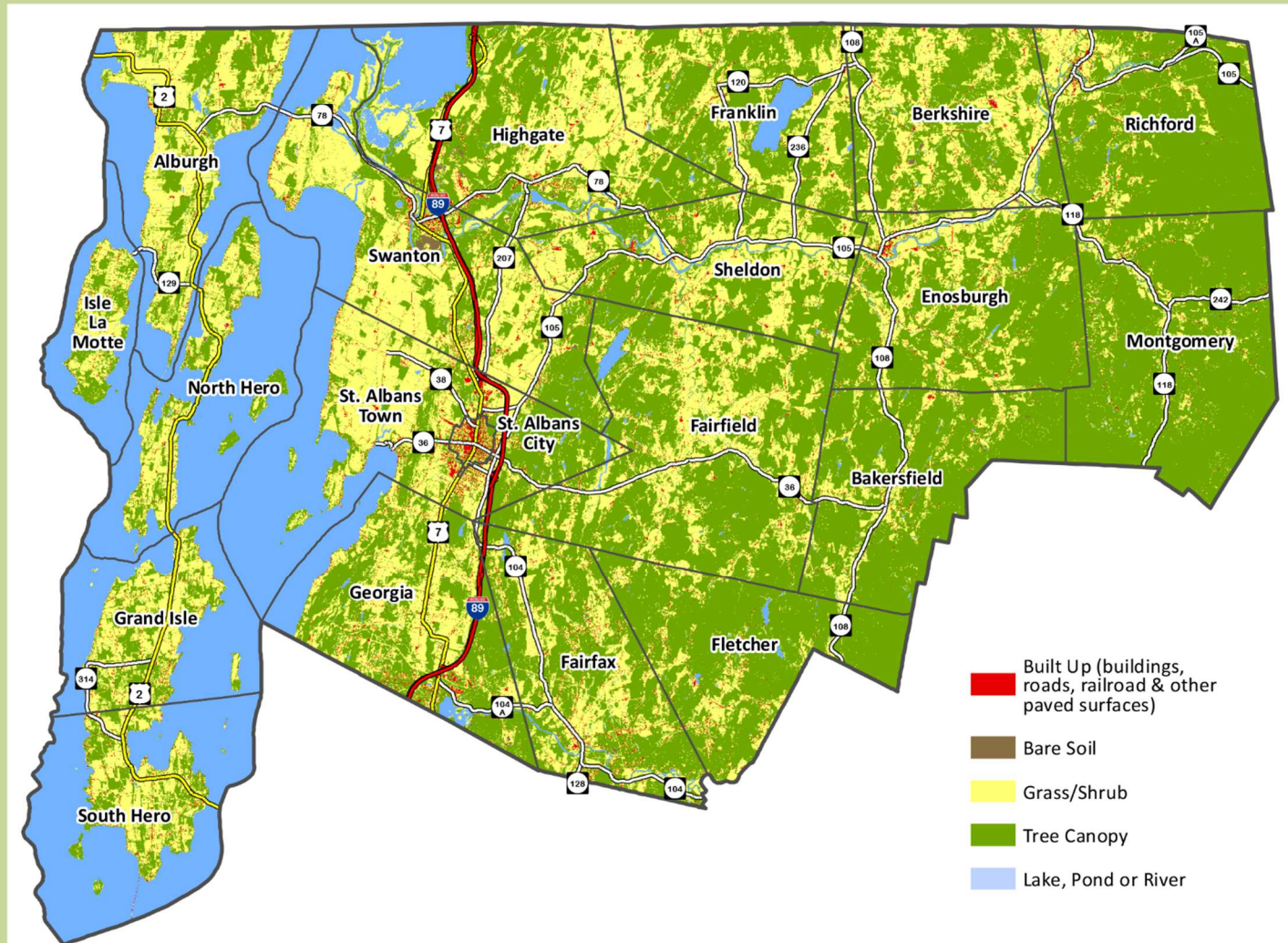


LAND USE

GOALS

1. Preserve and enhance the region's historic settlement pattern of compact centers, neighborhoods and growth areas, separated by rural countryside and the working landscape.
2. Maintain healthy and diverse forest and conservation areas as well as a strong working landscape of agriculture and forestry.
3. Target future economic growth primarily in the region's downtown and village centers, village areas, planned growth areas, and enterprise areas.

MAP 12: Current Land Use



SOURCE: National Land Cover Database (NLCD)

CURRENT LAND USE

The region is composed of two counties with distinctly different land features that have influenced unique human settlement and use patterns over time (Map 12).

The northwest region's largest urban area is St. Albans City and the surrounding gateway areas in St. Albans Town (combined population of 13,865). Several other smaller village centers offer sub-regional services to residents, including Alburgh and South Hero in Grand Isle County and Fairfax, Swanton, Enosburg Falls, and Richford in Franklin County.

St. Albans is host to a thriving historic downtown and surrounding neighborhoods that support a regional hospital, manufacturing and other commercial development that draw commuters from surrounding towns and several large retail establishments. Along with the quaint storefronts, central green and walkability of the city center, outdoor recreation in the greater region is a significant draw with Hard'ack providing a downhill ski hill, trail running, mountain biking and frisbee golf; endless opportunities to enjoy and recreate on Lake Champlain; the Missisquoi and Lamoille Valley Rail Trails; hunting and snowmobiling in the abundant fields and forestland, and hiking and skiing further to the east in the Green Mountains.

Franklin and Grand Isle Counties are consistently among the fastest-growing counties in Vermont (growth data is presented in the Introduction and Housing sections of the plan). This high growth can largely be attributed to the region's proximity and ease of access to Chittenden County in combination with St. Albans City's vibrant downtown and amenities. As land and housing prices in Chittenden County continue to increase, many people are trading a longer commute for more affordable land and housing and a more rural setting. Naturally, household growth rates are highest in the towns in the southern part of the region and along Interstate I-89. Housing development in rural areas across the county, but especially in these high growth towns, has resulted in farmland conversion, parcelization and fragmentation of forest blocks.

Smart Growth Principles

The term "smart growth principles" (as enacted into law under 24 V.S.A. § 2791) means growth that:

- Maintains the historic development pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside
- Develops compact mixed-use centers at a scale appropriate for the community and the region
- Enables choices in modes of transportation
- Protects the state's important environmental, natural and historic features, including natural areas, water quality, scenic resources and historic sites and districts
- Serves to strengthen agricultural and forest industries and minimizes conflicts of development with these industries
- Balances growth with the availability of economic and efficient public utilities and services
- Supports a diversity of viable businesses in downtowns and villages
- Provides for housing that meets the needs of diverse social and income groups in each community
- Reflects a settlement pattern that, at full buildout, is not characterized by:
 - ◊ Scattered development located outside of compact urban and village centers that is excessively land consumptive
 - ◊ Development that limits transportation options, especially for pedestrians
 - ◊ The fragmentation of farmland and forestland
 - ◊ Development that is not serviced by municipal infrastructure or that requires the extension of municipal infrastructure across undeveloped lands in a manner that would extend service to lands located outside compact village and urban centers
 - ◊ Linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway

With sufficient planning, regional and local planners can mitigate and repair problematic consequences and conditions created by cumulative commercial and residential development, such as traffic congestion, lack of or insufficient infrastructure and services, lack of or poorly designed parking, pedestrian inaccessibility, sprawl and as noted above parcelization and fragmentation of forest and farmland. While recognizing the opportunities that residential and commercial expansion brings to the region in terms of economic growth, it is critical to strike a balance between embracing smart growth for a healthy economy and community, while carefully managing it to preserve traditional settlement patterns and natural resources.

To guide land use planning and development in this state, the Vermont Planning and Development Act outlines 15 planning goals and 9 smart growth principles. If followed, these principles will prevent sprawl by focusing development in compact, pedestrian-friendly Centers, Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas. The 15 state planning goals from 24 V.S.A. §4302 establish a policy framework for land use planning in Vermont. All municipalities are encouraged to adopt local plans that further these goals. The act enables communities to utilize numerous regulatory and non-regulatory tools to implement these goals, including but not limited to zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations.

Farms and Farmland

Franklin County remains the second most productive agricultural county in the state, generating 24% of Vermont's farm sales in 2022 (US Census of Agriculture). Although farmland is abundant in both counties, the setting in each county is very different. On average, farms in Grand Isle County are significantly smaller in size and tend to be more diversified than farms in Franklin County.

In Franklin County, the average size of farms reached a high of 301 acres in 1978 and has since fluctuated with an overall decline to an average size of 258 acres in 2022. The amount of land in farms is decreasing (182,060 acres in 2022, down 24% since 1978), while the number of farms is also decreasing but at a lesser rate of 6% since 1978 (707 farms in 2022).

Dairy farming and maple sugaring are the dominant farm types in Franklin County. Maple sugaring is a growing industry both in number of farms and land area and accounts for 40% of the county's land in farming at 75,350 acres in 2022. The county is the biggest producer in the state with 275 maple syrup farms, 2,436,351 taps and 913,802 gallons of syrup produced in 2022 (about 30% of the state's syrup). Dairy farming on the other hand is under threat with a decreasing number of farms (see discussion below). The farming land use data supports the trend of small and medium farms (primarily dairy) consolidating into fewer larger farms, along with a thriving maple syrup industry and growth in other diversified farming.

In Grand Isle County, the number of farms has been increasing since 2002 after a steady decline over decades, reaching 130 farms in 2022. The average size of farms in Grand Isle County also peaked in 1978 at 248 acres, declining to a low of 110 acres in 2022 (equivalent to the average size of farms in 1940). The amount of land in farms has also been on a decreasing trend although there was a modest increase from 2002 to 2017, before declining to 14,272 acres in 2022. The data in Grand Isle supports the trend of dairy farms consolidating into fewer farms off-set by increases in smaller, diversified farms, including orchards, grapes and vegetables.

Dairy production is the leading agricultural industry within both counties accounting for 60-70% of agricultural sales. The industry has been experiencing a decreasing amount of farm numbers as a result of consolidation

and discontinuing operations. The consolidation of small and medium-sized dairy farms has been consistent and is a major factor affecting the working landscape in the region. The number of farms with milk cows decreased in Franklin County and Grand Isle County from 2017 to 2022. At the same time, the value of fluid milk shipped from these farms has increased, reflecting the consolidation of smaller farms into larger farms. Competition is high and requires large scale production to be successful in shipping conventional fluid milk. In response, there is growth in diversified and value adding farming in both counties. For example, the amount of land used for harvesting vegetables in Franklin County increased from 127 acres to 351 acres from 2017 to 2022 and in Grand Isle County 54 acres to 59 acres during the same period. Diversification and value-added production are key strategies for small and medium producers to stake out a place in the market. (Sources: Census of Agriculture).

There are many strategies that municipalities can implement to strengthen agriculture and maintain the number of small and medium farms in the region. This includes incorporating pro-agriculture land use policies in town plans and bylaws, such as encouraging accessory on-farm businesses, encouraging the conservation of farmland through the purchase of development rights or other means, supporting programs that assist new farmers succeed, whether through land access, business planning or other training, and working with farmers and local groups to promote diversified agriculture, value added production and strengthening the regional food system.

Strategies for Supporting Agriculture

- Support agriculture in municipal plans.
- Conduct an agricultural resource inventory.
- Establish agricultural districts.
- Adopt local right-to-farm laws.
- Clarify and streamline permitting for accessory on-farm businesses.
- Establish or support land trusts.
- Establish a transfer of development rights.
- Adopt local tax stabilization plans.
- Increase local awareness of agricultural issues.
- Encourage the production of value-added products and the purchase of locally produced products.

Forestland, Wildlife Habitat and Natural Areas

Across the region, roughly half of the land area is made up of forests. Of this, 75% of those acres are in current use as of 2022. Many of the highest priority interior habitat blocks are located in eastern Franklin County as part of the Cold Hollow to Canada wildlife corridor. In comparison, only 15% of land area in Grand Isle County is forested. In both counties, the amount of forested land has been relatively consistent since 1985. Wetlands make up 46,200 acres in the region, with Grand Isle County having a higher percentage of its land consisting of wetlands than Franklin County.

The region supports settlement patterns with connected blocks of forestland, wetlands, riparian areas and other habitat to sustain viable wildlife populations and biodiversity, which support a healthy ecological system. State statute encourages municipalities and regions to address protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors—which are vital to wildlife conservation—while also supporting forest industries. This is discussed in more detail and mapped in the Natural and Cultural Resources chapter.

Tools for protecting wildlife habitat and other natural resources are shown in Figure 3. The NRPC encourages all municipalities in the region to consider implementing one or more of these tools to manage growth and, ultimately, protect natural resources. By working to preserve corridors of wildlife habitat and large tracts of undisturbed forest, our communities can share the forest with a thriving wildlife population.

FIGURE 3: Regulatory & Non-Regulatory Tools for Natural Resources Protection

Tools for Natural Resources Protection: Zoning Based Options

- Change allowed uses and/or minimum lot size requirements in zoning districts.
- Revise planned unit development (PUD) provisions for conservation.

For lot size requirements:

Allow a smaller minimum lot size for PUDs than for subdivisions.
Establish a maximum lot size for subdivisions or PUDs.

For review triggers:

Require that all subdivisions be reviewed as PUDs.
Require that all subdivisions of a certain size be reviewed as PUDs.

For open spaces:

Provide a density bonus for “managed” open space or for other desired features or standards.
Require a percentage of open space.
Provide incentives for or require planned connections of open space between multiple parcels of land.

- Increase flexibility for Accessory Dwelling Units and two-unit dwellings.
- Develop road limitations and/or standards to reduce forest and habitat fragmentation.
- Limit development with regard to the availability of or access by municipal services.
- Restrict development within deer yards, bear habitat and/or other natural habitats.
- Exclude high value resources and undevelopable land from density calculations.
- Establish a transfer of development rights program.

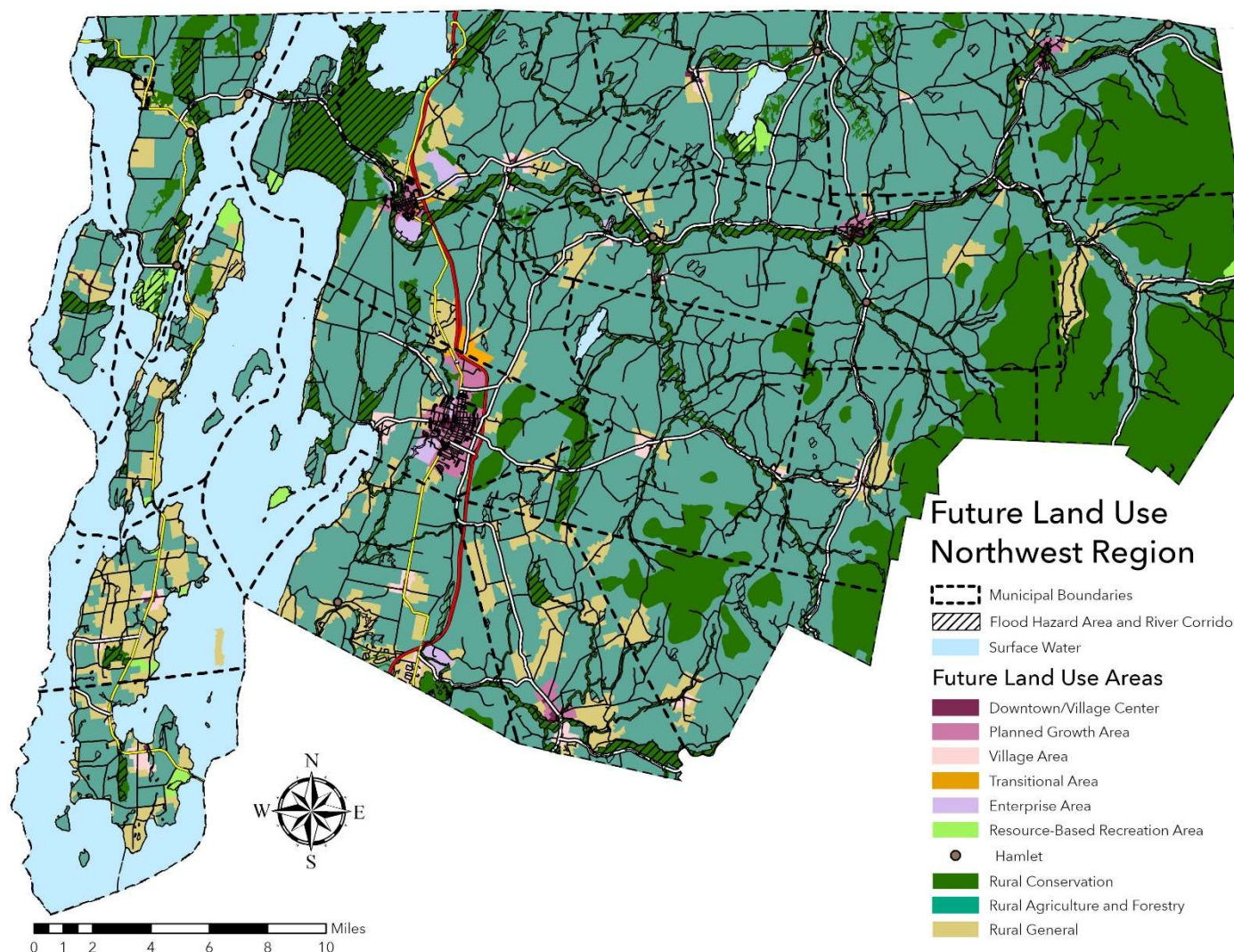
Tools for Natural Resource Protection: Non-Zoning Based Options

- Create a conservation commission.
- Implement impact fees.
- Update town plans.
- Provide training for municipal officials and board members.
- Seek funding for municipal systems or expansion.
- Obtain Growth center designation and complete master plans.
- Establish road standards.
- Develop road limitations and/or standards to reduce forest and habitat fragmentation.
- Ensure adequate municipal infrastructure/facilities.
- Obtain Village/downtown designation.
- Create or update a capital budget.
- Complete a Town Forest Management Plan
- Support forest landowner cooperatives or land conservation

FUTURE LAND USE

The NRPC has divided the region into several Future Land Use (FLU) Planning Areas to encourage concentrated settlements in and around downtown and village centers along with careful management of valued resources. These future land use planning areas are illustrated in Map 13 and include Downtown Centers, Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, Village Areas, Transitional Areas, Enterprise Areas, Resource Based Recreation Areas, Rural: Agriculture and Forestry Areas, Rural: Conservation Areas, and Rural: General Areas (See Table 5 for descriptions). It is important to note that the FLU Planning Areas designated in this plan are regional planning tools, not regulatory zoning districts. When reviewing land uses for conformance with this plan, emphasis will be placed not on whether the use is located entirely within or just outside a particular area, but on the impact the land use will have on underlying resources and how the use will affect the intent and function of the particular land use planning area.

MAP 13: Northwest Region Future Land Use Planning Areas [updated map]



Future Land Use Planning Areas (FLUs)

Centers, Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas: This plan recognizes 1 Downtown Center and 30 Village Centers (Maps 14 and 15). Centers are the mixed-use core areas bringing together community, economic activity and civic assets.

This plan also recognizes [65](#) Planned Growth Areas and 20 Village Areas (Maps 14 and 15), which are the residential and/or mixed-use walkable neighborhoods that surround most but not all Centers. Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas have specific statutory criteria that define what areas are eligible (24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(12)(B) and (C)), which are summarized in Figure 4 (page 113).

When approved by the Land Use Review Board, all Centers, Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas mapped by this plan will become Designated Areas by the State of Vermont - either a Center or Neighborhood (see

Designated Area section below). Additionally with local approval, Centers, Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas are eligible for certain Act 250 permit exemptions (see Act 250 section below).

TABLE 5: Future Land Use Planning Area (FLU) Descriptions

Downtown/Village Center Town and city centers with a mix of residential, business, and civic uses including schools, parks, and town offices. Will become State Designated Center and eligible for Act 250 exemption.
Planned Growth Area Existing mixed-use neighborhoods and adjacent open lands near Centers that have local planning, zoning and infrastructure necessary to support substantial growth and become economic and cultural hubs for surrounding towns. Will become State Designated Neighborhood and eligible for Act 250 exemption.
Village Area Existing neighborhoods and adjacent open lands generally within ¼ mile of Village Centers with local planning and zoning that support neighborhood residential and mixed-use. Will become State Designated Neighborhood and eligible for Act 250 exemption.
Transition Area Areas that are regionally planned for growth but don't qualify for other FLU areas due to lack of infrastructure and/or local planning
Enterprise Area Major industrial areas
Resource-Based Recreation Area Major recreational areas
Hamlet Historic settlements that are mostly residential and not planned for future growth
Rural General Low-density rural residential areas and some limited commercial development
Rural Agriculture & Forestry Forests and farmland
Rural Conservation Areas of significant natural resources including flood hazard areas, river corridors, wetlands, and areas over 1000 feet in elevation

[^remove flood hazard areas](#)

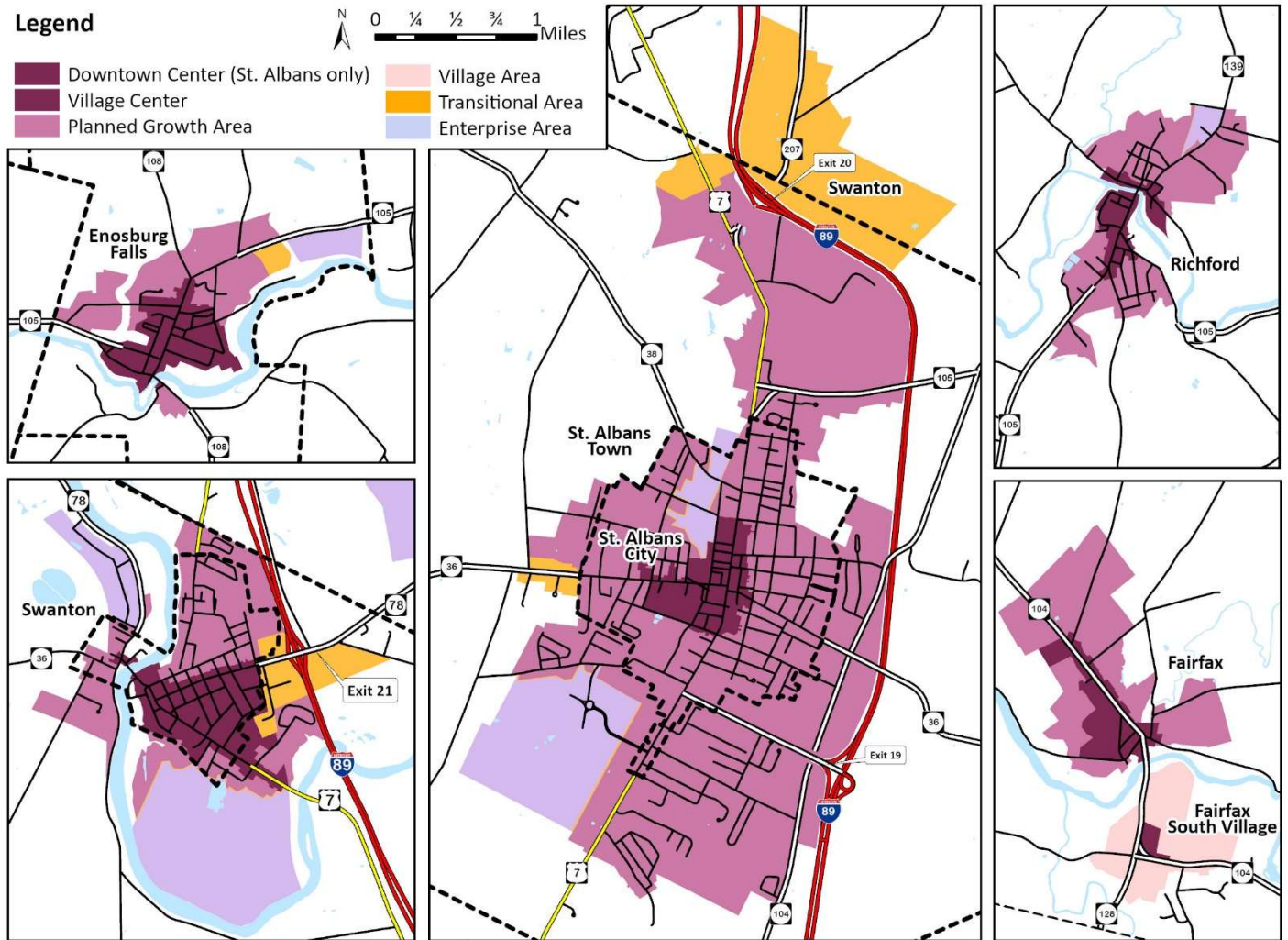
**Full definitions are included under section (a)(12) in state statute: [24 V.S.A. § 4348a](#)*

Rural Future Land Use Areas: Most of the region consists of Rural Future Land Use Planning Areas (FLUs), which are broken into Rural – Agriculture and Forestry, Rural – Conservation and Rural – General and are shown on Map 13.



Rural - Agriculture and Forestry: The Agriculture and Forestry Future Land Use Planning Area (FLU) includes blocks of forest or farmland that sustain resource industries, provide critical wildlife habitat and movement, outdoor recreation, flood storage, aquifer recharge, and scenic beauty, and contribute to economic well-being and quality of life. Development in these areas shall be carefully managed to promote the working landscape and rural economy, while protecting the agricultural and forest resource value.

MAP 14: Northwest Region Centers and Village Areas [updated map]

MAP 15: Northwest Region Centers and Planned Growth Areas [updated map]

Nearly 64% of the region is included in this category, reflecting the significant acreage of working agricultural and forestry lands, the large number of farms in the region and the importance of agriculture in the region's economy. Strategies that support the long-term protection of these lands from conversion to non- agricultural use are supported by NRPC. Where development does occur, it shall be located to minimize impact to existing agricultural operations and primary agricultural soils.



Rural - Conservation: The Conservation Future Land Use Planning Area (FLU) is host to significant natural resources that require special consideration for water quality and wetland protection, maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors and for other conservation purposes. The mapping of these areas and accompanying policies are intended to help meet requirements of 10 V.S.A. chapter 89. This FLU is not associated with any increase in Act 250 jurisdiction.¹

¹Natural resource areas with increased jurisdiction (Tier 3) are being determined via the Land Use Review Board's rulemaking process. For more information of Act 250 jurisdictional tiers, see: <https://act250.vermont.gov/current-land-use-review-board-agenda>

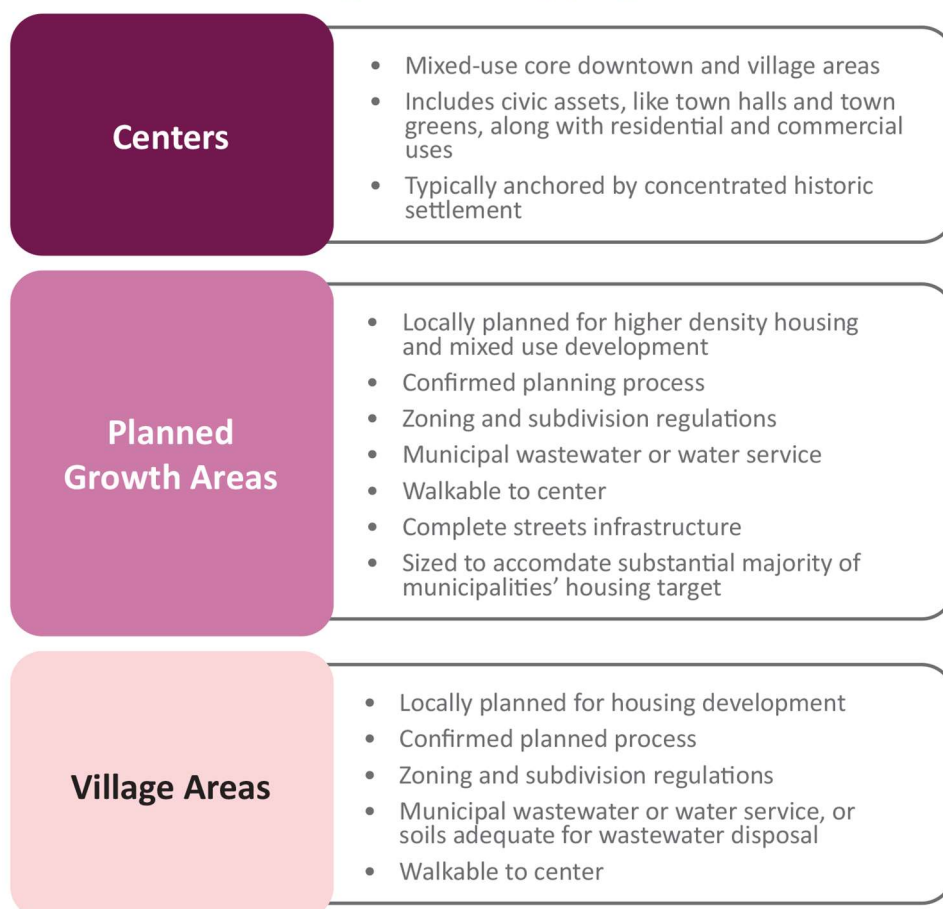
Land in this category usually should not be developed in order to protect the ecological and/or forest resource value of the lands. Development that does occur shall be limited due to natural resource constraints, such as wetlands and river corridors~~floodplains~~, wildlife and scenic values in the case of uplands, or an overall low suitability for development based on soils, distance from roads and other factors.

Ridgelines and hilltops contribute significantly to the beauty of the region.

Development in these areas can damage characteristic and picturesque viewsheds that contribute to the region's beauty. The use of these lands shall be limited to a mix of forest and conservation purposes

including maple syrup production, logging, appropriate agricultural operations, wildlife habitat and recreation. These lands shall be protected from fragmentation and conversion.

FIGURE 4: Center, Planned Growth Area and Village Area Mapping Criteria



Rural - General: The Rural – General Future Land Use Planning Area (FLU) includes areas that promote the continuation of Vermont's traditional working landscape and natural area features. They allow for low-density residential and some limited commercial development that is compatible with productive lands and natural areas. A relatively small amount of the region's growth is anticipated in the Rural – General FLU Planning Areas, which occupy 8% of the region. Conservation subdivision, separation of lot size from density, and other types of subdivision and development design that cluster development, reduce overall density and conserve open space, common land and/or farmland for its intended purpose are encouraged in these areas. Methods of creating useful open space, common land or farmland include but are not limited to ensuring the land is appropriate and of value for the intended use, locating it adjacent to other open spaces in similar use, and requiring a management plan. Based upon historical development trends NRPC expects that much of the growth in rural areas will involve single-family homes. Areas included in this category require particularly careful planning to ensure that strip development and sprawl are minimized and the goals for the other land use areas are promoted.

Other Planning Areas

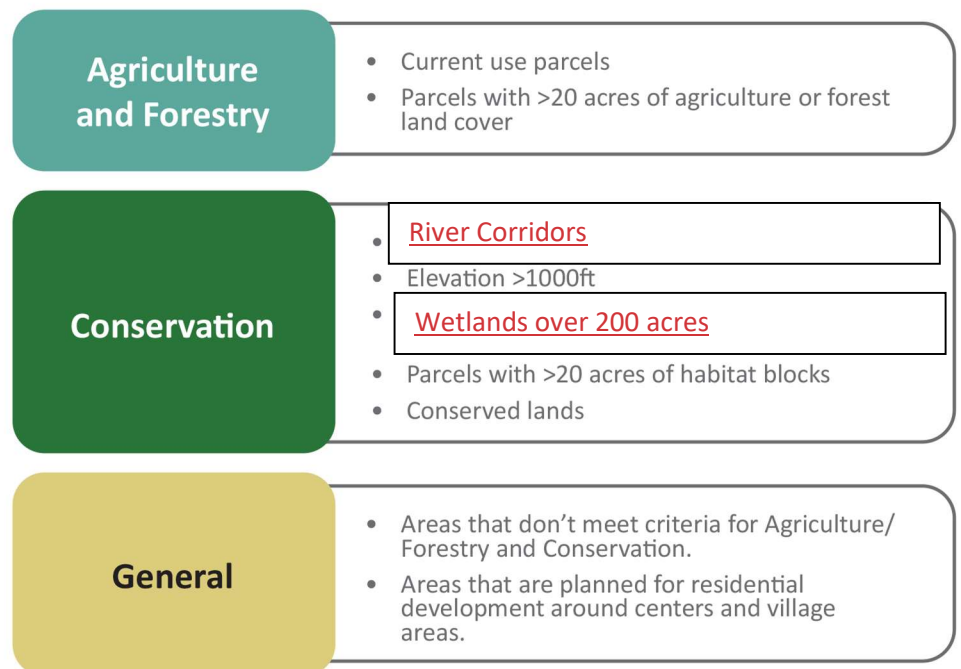
Transitional Areas: Transitional Future Land Use Planning Areas (FLU) may include areas of existing or planned commercial, office, mixed-use development, or residential uses either adjacent to a planned growth or village area or new stand-alone areas and served by, or planned for, public water or wastewater, or both.

Transitional FLU Planning Areas have been identified north of the St. Albans Town Planned Growth Area in Swanton, west of St. Albans City on Lake Road in St. Albans Town, east of the Swanton Planned Growth Area on VT78 and east of the Enosburg Falls Planned Growth Area on VT105. The intent of this land use category is to transform these areas into higher density, mixed-use settlements, or residential neighborhoods through infill and redevelopment or new development. New commercial linear strip development is not allowed as to prevent it from negatively impacting the economic vitality of commercial areas in the adjacent or nearby planned growth or village area.

To ensure well-planned and well-financed infrastructure and foster smart growth principles, it is of utmost importance for municipalities to plan for development in advance, rather than planning around established development after the fact. The NRPC will help municipalities with planning for these areas with a goal of creating the conditions needed to be classified as Planned Growth Areas.

Enterprise Areas: Enterprise Future Land Use Planning Areas (FLU) include locations of high economic activity and employment. These may include industrial parks, areas of natural resource extraction, or other commercial uses that involve larger land areas. Enterprise areas typically have ready access to water supply, sewage disposal, electricity, and freight transportation networks.

FIGURE 5: Rural Future Land Use (FLU) Planning Area Mapping Criteria



Enterprise Future Land Use Planning Areas

- **St. Albans Town** - Industrial Park off Route 7 South
- **St Albans City** - industrial area west of Federal Street
- **Swanton Town** - south of village on and around Jewett Street
- **Swanton Town** - north on of the village on and around Jonergin Drive
- **Highgate** - at and around the Franklin County State Airport
- **Georgia** - Industrial Park off and around Skunk Hill Road
- **Grand Isle** - Industrial Park off US2 near VT314
- **Sheldon Springs** - around Rock-Tenn paper mill
- **Enosburg Falls** - Industrial Park off VT105 east of village

- **Richford** - Blue Seal Feeds plant on VT139 (new bullet)

The NRPC supports Enterprise FLU Planning Areas that encourage economic expansion and high-wage businesses to locate in the region without adversely affecting neighboring land uses. Enterprise areas should be carefully planned to ensure access and connectivity. This can be achieved through public transportation service and walkability - both within the district in addition to making connections from the district to adjacent pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Thoughtful site planning can both ensure that off-site impacts, such as noise, are mitigated through buffers, landscaping and other design considerations while at the same time ensuring good quality of life and integration with the local community.

Resource Based Recreation Areas: Resource Based Recreation FLU Planning Areas may include state parks and other resource-based recreational areas concentrated along lakeshores that may provide infrastructure, jobs, or housing to support recreational activities. These areas have been identified along Lake Champlain in the Islands, in Swanton and on Lake Carmi.



*Shopfronts in St. Albans City
The heart of the Downtown Center*

DESIGNATED AREAS

Vermont has established a Designation Program that offers incentives and resources to support the development of strong and vibrant concentrated settlements separated by rural countryside. These programs provide a variety of financial incentives, priority for state grants and technical support to the municipality and property owners in the designated area. The benefits leverage private and public investment and placemaking to revitalize and strengthen downtowns, village centers and adjacent neighborhoods and growth areas (Table 6). Act 181 of 2024 made changes to the State's designation program, reducing the number of designation types from 5 legacy designations to 2: Centers and Neighborhoods.

TABLE 6: State Designations

FUTURE LAND USE AREA	DESIGNATION	INTENT/INCENTIVES
Downtown Centers & Village Centers	CENTER	The Center designation supports revitalization efforts of downtown and village centers with financial incentives, training and technical assistance needed to build community connections and economic resilience.
	Step 1	Beginner Center (small village)
	Step 2	Intermediate Center (growing village/town center)
	Step 3	Advanced Center (downtown, Main Street America Program member)
Planned Growth Areas & Village Areas	NEIGHBORHOOD	The Neighborhood designation supports the creation of new housing by providing tax, regulatory, and funding incentives for housing projects in Planning Growth Areas and Village Areas connected to Centers.

The Future Land Use Map identifies the areas that are eligible to be Designated as Centers and Neighborhoods, which become effective when the Regional Plan and Future Land Use Map are approved by the Land Use Review Board. Downtown and Village Centers receive a Center designation while Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas receive a Neighborhood Designation (Table 6). Within the Center Designation, municipalities may apply to the Vermont Community Investment Board to advance up steps to achieve greater benefits and resources.

Coordination With State Act 250 Permitting

The Regional Future Land Use Map plays an important role in determining if Act 250 jurisdiction applies to a project. To support the state's housing goals, areas planned for growth on the Future Land Use Map are eligible for exemptions to Act 250 permitting, specifically:

- **Tier 1A:** A total exemption to Act 250 for commercial and residential properties. Available in Centers & Planned Growth Areas identified in the Regional Future Land Use Map (Maps 13-15). Municipalities must meet requirements for smart growth planning (described on the second page of this chapter), local regulations, and municipal capacity. Municipalities who wish to obtain Tier 1A jurisdiction will apply separately to the Land Use Review Board.
- **Tier 1B:** Act 250 exemptions for up to 50 units of housing on 10 acres of land or less. Eligible areas are Centers, Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas identified in the Regional Future Land Use Map (Maps 13-15). Municipalities must also have zoning & subdivision regulations and adequate municipal capacity.

Municipalities have the choice to opt-in to Tier 1B via a vote from the legislative body. A full list of municipalities opting in for Tier 1B jurisdiction is submitted to the Vermont Land Use Review Board (LURB) by the Regional Planning Commission with a request for approval of the regional plan. Tier 1B status is official once a regional plan is approved by the LURB. Municipalities eligible for Tier 1A will be able to apply directly to the LURB after the regional plan is adopted and approved.

Conformance with local and regional plans is one of the approval criteria in Act 250. Where Act 250 jurisdiction applies, NRPC utilizes its long-standing project review process to determine a project's conformance with the goals and policies of the Regional Plan, including considering whether the development conforms to the future land use map. More information on NRPC's development review standards can be found in Chapter 1: Introduction.

GOALS AND POLICIES

- 1. Preserve and enhance the region's historic settlement pattern of compact centers, neighborhoods and growth areas separated by rural countryside and the working landscape.**
 - a. Support infill and redevelopment of downtown and village centers, planned growth areas, village areas, transitional areas and existing strip development areas over new commercial strip development.
 - b. Locate intensive residential development primarily in downtown and village centers, planned growth areas and village areas, and support redevelopment and infill opportunities.

- c. Outside of downtown and village centers, planned growth areas and village areas, residential development will be clustered or otherwise designed to work with the landscape in terms of energy efficiency, protection of ecologically sensitive areas and conservation of farmland and agricultural soils.
- d. Prioritize public investments—including public facilities and the construction or expansion of infrastructure—that will promote expansion in downtown and village centers, planned growth areas and village areas in this plan and will not encourage the development and/or fragmentation of farmlands or other resource areas.
- e. Ensure that the scale, siting, design and management of new development respect the existing landscape and the character of the area’s built environment.
- f. Incorporate best management practices for stormwater and erosion control in the Resource-Based Recreation Areas to help protect water quality.

2. Maintain healthy and diverse forest and conservation areas as well as a strong working landscape, including agriculture and forestry.

- a. Development shall respect the physical limitations of the site and avoid negative impacts on the natural and cultural features of the landscape.
- b. Development in rural, agriculture, forestry and conservation areas will not diminish the viability of agricultural or woodland operations, or fragment high-priority forest and connectivity blocks and other large contiguous tracts of woodland or wildlife habitat/ corridors.
- c. Limit the loss of prime and primary agricultural soils and active farmland to the greatest degree possible, and mitigate it whenever the loss cannot be prevented.
- d. Maintain all right-to-farm protections for agricultural operations that have acceptable agricultural practices.
- e. Ensure that development in the rural conservation future land use planning area will be small scale and will not diminish the ecological value of the lands. Only allow development farther than 1,000’ from road centerlines in rural conservation areas if it advances conservation goals.
- f. Encourage the development of local businesses that add value to agricultural and forest products grown in Vermont and site them in locations that minimize conflicts with neighboring land uses.
- g. Support agricultural, forest and conservation land protection strategies including but not limited to transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, fee-simple purchase of agricultural lands and use of value tax assessment; these protection strategies can allow for compatible uses that support other key policy goals.
- h. Support initiatives that assist agricultural businesses with adapting to the impacts of climate change.

3. Target future economic growth primarily in the region’s downtown and village centers, village areas, planned growth areas, and enterprise areas.

- a. Locate industrial development first in enterprise future land use areas or other locally identified industrial areas.
- b. Industrial growth outside of enterprise areas shall be located on property with sufficient infrastructure and sited to minimize conflicts with neighboring land uses.
- c. Ensure that mixed-use development occurs at significantly higher densities and on a larger scale in downtown and village centers and planned growth areas than in the surrounding region.

- d. Scale retail and commercial developments to primarily serve the market of the downtown and village center, planned growth area or village area.