

Burlington Planning Commission

Tuesday, August 19, 2025, 4:00 PM

Remote & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

In person option available:

Queen City Room, 3rd Floor of City Hall, 149 Church St.

To Join the Meeting on a Computer

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/97941883790?pwd=bGZBNzNyV1liL3p5NkhIL2dqUFIzd09>

Passcode: 658929

To Join the Meeting on a Phone

Number: +1 646 931 3860 US Meeting ID: 979 4188 3790

1. Agenda

2. Public Forum

3. Chair's Report

4. Long Range Planning Committee Scope

5. Election of LRPC Vice-Chair

6. Discussion on Act 181 and Future Land Use Map

Subject	6.1. Discuss Act 181 Future Land Use Map and materials provided by CCRPC
Meeting	August 19, 2025 - Long Range Planning Committee - Tuesday, August 19, 2025, 4:00 PM, Burlington Planning Commission
Category	6. Discussion on Act 181 and Future Land Use Map
Department	Planning
Type	
Recommended Action	

Subject	6.2. Review memo drafted by Office of City Planning staff describing the Planning Commission's perspective on the map.
Meeting	August 19, 2025 - Long Range Planning Committee - Tuesday, August 19, 2025, 4:00 PM, Burlington Planning Commission
Category	6. Discussion on Act 181 and Future Land Use Map
Department	Planning

Type

Recommended Action

7. Communications

8. Adjournment

MEMORANDUM

To: Burlington City Council
Copy: Charles Dillard, Director of City Planning
From: Kate McCarthy, CCRPC Senior Planner, and Taylor Newton, Planning Program Director
Date: August 18, 2025
Re: Act 181 – Regional Future Land Use Map, Housing Targets, and Act 250 Tier 1B feedback

There are three connected topics contained within this agenda item. Each is addressed below. Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) staff will be present to answer questions.

Background

Acts 47 and 181 laid out new requirements for regional planning commissions (RPCs) that connect to local planning. One change is that the State has set a new, common format for regional Future Land Use Maps, which now tie to optional Act 250 exemptions and to State investments through the Community Investment Board (the former Downtown Board). Act 47 also assigned housing targets to each regional planning commission and tasked RPCs with allocating these to the municipal level.

CCRPC staff attended a Burlington Planning Commission meeting in February to present the first draft of the Future Land Use Map using the [eleven statewide categories](#) and their [associated statutory criteria](#), and share an outreach plan. CCRPC and City staff also worked together to seek feedback at numerous events, through a survey, and with City departments. Please see “Attachment A: Engagement Activities” for a full summary. In addition, since February of 2025, CCRPC has held engagement events throughout the region including attending events and hosting focus groups, publicizing CCRPC’s online input tool through Front Porch Forum, a survey of mobile home park residents, language-specific focus groups with translation, and posting flyers. CCRPC is refining the new Future Land Use map based on this community input.

Each of CCRPC’s member municipalities will receive regional summaries of public comments and comments specific to the municipality in question.

Regional Future Land Use Map

In addition to reviewing a draft map at the PC and City Council meetings, CCRPC released the public-facing draft map and housing targets in late March. Burlington had an additional public comment period from May through July 2025, collecting input via an online map and survey on the City’s Act 181 website. Once finalized and adopted by CCRPC’s Board, the map will be submitted to the State’s new Land Use Review Board for review and eventual approval.

The Regional Future Land Use Map is relevant to local planning in a few ways:

- As before, municipal plans need to be consistent with the Regional Plan.

- Certain land use categories on the Regional Future Land Use Map will be eligible for the updated Community Investment Program.
 - Downtowns and Village Centers are eligible for multiple levels of the “Center” designation, with different “Steps” reflecting the level of change and investment the community desires.
 - Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas are eligible for the “Neighborhood” designation, which focuses on enabling residential development to support the associated Center.
- Downtown Centers and Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, and Village Areas are eligible for Act 250 Tier 1B and Tier 1A exemption status; it is the town’s choice whether to “opt in.”

Based on outreach and public feedback, CCRPC has made several changes in response to feedback received. These include:

- Removing the previously proposed “Village Center” around the Champlain Elementary School.
- Ensuring that all areas within the river corridor were in the “Rural Conservation” category.
- Categorizing larger conserved public lands and parks as “Rural Conservation,” rather than “Planned Growth Area.”
- Adding the South End Innovation district as a Downtown Center.

A key point we want to highlight is that the map represents high-level, regional planning, and is not a zoning map. The Regional Future Use Map does not have the same level of specificity as the municipal plan or the municipal zoning map. Planned Growth Areas, for example, may include locally identified and regulated parks and habitat blocks, or may include both residential and commercial zoning districts of different kinds. **What happens on each individual parcel will ultimately be determined by landowner preference and choice, and local zoning. Furthermore, the map will continue to be reviewed in the coming months by CCRPC’s Board, the Land Use Review Board and state agencies, and through the RPC’s public hearings. There may be additional changes resulting from these processes.**

City Council action:

No action required. City Councilors are invited to ask questions about the draft map.

Act 250 Tier 1B Opt-In

Under Act 181, the Regional Planning Commission identified areas eligible for Act 250 Tier 1B status in the Future Land Use Map. The local legislative body decides whether to opt-in for Tier 1B status before the RPC submits a request to the Land Use Review Board.

Implications

Tier 1B status extends the present [Interim Act 250 exemptions in Act 181](#) and aligns their geographic boundaries to the Regional Future Land Use Map. If a municipality requests Tier 1B status for an area, new housing development projects in those areas consisting of 50 or fewer dwelling units on 10 acres

or less are exempt from Act 250.

Interim exemptions have been in place for the past year. Without Tier 1B status, the interim exemptions will expire upon LURB approval of the Regional Plan and all areas subject to the interim exemptions will revert to prior Act 250 thresholds [projects with 10 or more homes, including any other projects from the same developer within 5 miles within 5 years prior.

Tier 1B status does not override local zoning. Burlington's zoning bylaws still reflect and implement local priorities on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

City Council Action:

The City Council may consider opting in to Tier 1B. This is not required. If the City Council decides to opt-in to the Act 250 Tier 1B Exemption, a sample resolution document is attached.

Act 47 & 181 Housing Targets

As established under Act 47, this winter the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development released a State [Housing Needs Assessment](#) and [Housing Targets for each region](#) for 2030 and 2050. Under the Act, Regional Planning Commissions must allocate the regional housing target to the municipal level, and municipalities must incorporate the targets into municipal plans. Enclosed with your packet are the municipal housing targets and a summary of the methodology. The focus has been on the 2050 "middle" target, which represent a meaningful planning target for the region and municipalities. City staff discussed these targets with the City Council at previous meetings in the context of other planning and development projects.

Methodology

The region's cities and towns were divided into three categories, with separate methodologies for each. The approaches for the region's cities, the mixed urban/rural towns, and the rural towns reflects their different infrastructure capacities and land use patterns. The methodology allocates housing in a way that builds our resilience as a region and within each community - environmental, fiscal, economic, and social. It also lays out a roadmap for thoughtful infrastructure investment over the next 25 years. Importantly, the targets do not assume that every municipality has the capacity for the entire target today. The targets are a 25-year plan for a strategic approach to investment.

Urban Communities

The Region's four cities (Burlington, South Burlington, Essex Junction, and Winooski) are presently home to 47% of all housing in our region. The draft housing targets allocate 60% of new housing to these areas, 35% to mixed urban and rural communities, and 5% to rural communities.

These targets, while ambitious, align closely with the City's existing land use policies and planning efforts. The municipal plan must include actions to reach the targets. Taking advantage of the benefits of the Community Investment Program and requesting Tier 1B exemption are two examples of actions that would advance this goal and potentially others in the municipal plan. You may identify other or

additional actions in your upcoming municipal plan update.

City Council Action

No action required. The City Council is welcome to ask questions regarding the methodology and next steps.

Attachment A: Engagement Activities

Below is a brief overview of the public engagement activities conducted or coordinated by CCRPC, including dates, formats (e.g., public meetings, surveys, workshops), and the number of participants.

Date	Activity	Attendees	Engagement Methods	Staff
9/23/2024	City Council meeting	30	Municipal Selectboard	Charlie Baker
12/19/24	Initial meeting with municipal staff		Municipal Staff	Kate McCarthy, Maya Balassa
2/11/2025	Planning Commission meeting	19	Municipal Planning Commission	Kate McCarthy, Taylor Newton
5/14/2025 - 4:30-6:30pm	Open Space Plan Open House	20	Community Meeting or Event (Municipal)	Kate McCarthy
6/24/2025	Mapping Workshop	5	Municipal Planning Commission	Kate McCarthy
7/12/2025	Tabling at the Burlington Farmers Market	40	Other	City planning staff
7/14/2025	City Council Work Session	29	Municipal Selectboard	Kate McCarthy, Charlie Baker
8/25/2025	Burlington City Council	TBD	Municipal Selectboard	Kate McCarthy, Charlie Baker

City Outreach

Date	Communication Type	# of recipients/ views
6/2/25	City Website: The Office of City Planning has hosted a webpage devoted to Act 181 and the draft Future Land Use Map. The webpage includes links to CCRPC resources, a static map, and online survey.	Information Unavailable
6/18/25	Front Porch Forum + City Calendar: Office of City Planning added the Community Mapping Workshop Event to the Front Porch Forum and City calendars.	Information Unavailable
6/24/25	E-Newsletter: Office of City Planning sent out an email blast dedicated to Act 181 and the Community Mapping Workshop.	1,312
6/26/25	Online Survey: Office of City Planning created and launched an interactive online mapping tool that allows participants to submit comments.	9 responses
7/2/25	Social Media: Office of City Planning created and posted a graphic about Act 181 and feedback opportunities on their Instagram page, which was then re-shared by other departments, organizations, and City Councilors.	406 views
7/8/25	E-Newsletter: Office of City Planning included information about Act 181 and the online survey in the department's newsletter blast.	1,399

7/14/25	Front Porch Forum: Announcement posted by Office of City Planning notifying residents about Act 181 and the online survey.	Information Unavailable
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Other public engagement included:

- *Collaboration between City departments:* The Office of City Planning facilitated multiple meetings with the Departments of Permitting and Inspections (DPI) and Public Works (DPW), in addition to briefing and collecting feedback from the Mayor's Office.
 - City Planning staff engaged DPI primarily to understand the ramifications of Tier 1A designation, specifically the Department's position on and capacity in Burlington assuming responsibility for existing Act 250 conditions.
 - Planning staff engaged the leadership of DPW, including its Director and the Director of DPW's Water Resources Division, to collect feedback, including any concerns, regarding the draft future land use map and the City's long-term capacity to serve growth with water/sewer and transportation infrastructure.
 - The Mayor's office was engaged, primarily to contextualize the future land use map within the larger policy framework in place to address Burlington's severe housing shortage and to understand the Administration's position on areas designated as eligible for Tiers 1A/B and those designated as conservation areas.
- *Presentations at Neighborhood Planning Assemblies:* The Office of City Planning did not engage with all Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, instead prioritizing a more broad-based effort that acknowledges the inconsistent, and in some cases, limited, reach of the NPAs. However, City Planning staff did engage with select NPAs on Acts 181 and 47 while engaging on related planning initiatives.

CHITTENDEN COUNTY DRAFT FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is working with cities and towns to create a regional Future Land Use Map. This map, once adopted, will generally guide how land in the region will be used in the future. The land use categories on the map are defined in state law and CCRPC is tasked with determining how the land use categories apply in the region.

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT ME?

Through planning, your town or city prioritizes how land is used and shared. Land use maps and planning impact where houses and other development are built, as well as where natural resources are protected.

LEARN MORE AND SHARE YOUR IDEAS!

You can participate in community discussions and decisions that shape your town or city. Before commenting on the map, please review the 5-minute video or brief handout available at ccrpcvt.org/ecos-engagement. Then, provide comments on this proposed future land use for Burlington by emailing Sarah Morgan at smorgan@burlingtonvt.gov.

Note: You may notice areas such as parks, cemeteries, schools, and golf courses, categorized as Planned Growth Areas, since these land uses are part of the overall neighborhood fabric. This doesn't require development in these areas; local zoning and the property owner's preferences guide what happens on a given parcel.

Legend

Special Flood
Hazard Area or River Corridor
Municipal Boundary
Property Boundary
River or Stream
Lake or Pond
Future Land Use Area
Downtown Center

Village Center
Planned Growth Area
Village Area
Enterprise Area
Transition / Infill Area
Resource-Based Recreation Area

Rural General
Rural Ag and Forestry
Rural Conservation
Hamlet
Airport & Camp
Johnson & Ethan Allen Firing Range

CHITTENDEN COUNTY RPC
Communities Planning Together

00.512

Miles

N

W

E

S

Burlington

DRAFT map for planning - not a zoning map

Downtown Burlington

South End

00.250.5

Miles

Earthstar Geographics, Maxar, See dataset specific metadata.

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