

GROWTH CENTER

PLANNING MANUAL

for vermont communities



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PREFACE

ABOUT THIS MANUAL AND CHECKLIST

This manual and checklist were prepared to fulfill the program requirements included in Act 183 and to serve as a tool for communities planning for their growth centers. It includes an application for Growth Center designation and additional information that may serve as a guide for applicant communities. As such, the manual contains specific questions designed to elicit substantive responses to the requirements of the Act and to inform the Planning Coordination Group and the Expanded Downtown Board.

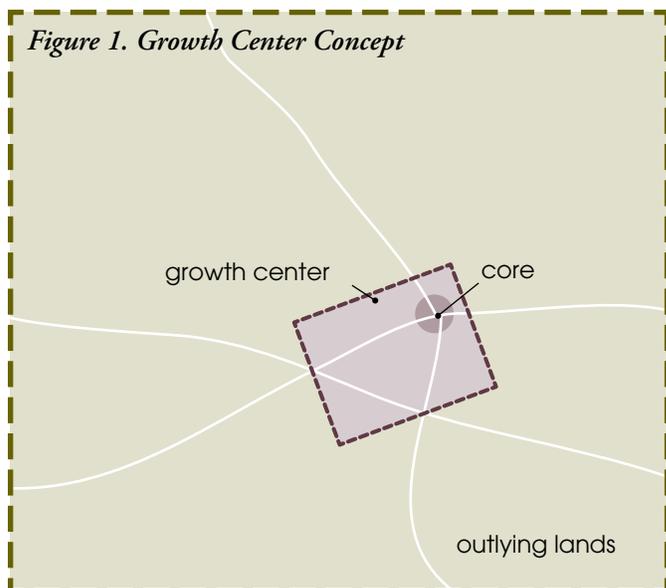
This manual also includes illustrations, sample maps, guidance, information and resources. These informational materials are easily distinguished from the required questions and application requirements listed on the checklist and they should be regarded as advisory in nature. None of the advisory and informational materials included in this document should be regarded as standards or minimum requirements for Growth Center designation. Every growth center will be unique and each application will include location specific materials. Communities are encouraged to be creative in the development of their applications, and to seek the advise and assistance of their regional planning commission and the Planning Coordination Group.

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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS A GROWTH CENTER?

A growth center is a compact area planned for concentrated, mixed-use development. Vermont state law enables the creation of growth centers and encourages use of smart growth planning principles to accommodate development in a manner that maintains Vermont's historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside. Any municipality may engage in growth center planning regardless of current development pressure or rate of anticipated future growth.

A growth center should have a core that is similar in form and function to a traditional downtown. Many Vermont municipalities will choose to establish a historic community center as the core of their growth center, while others

are or will be planning for a new town center (those municipalities without a traditional downtown or where an existing center either cannot accommodate infill and/or adjacent development).

The growth center will likely include lands outside the core. The existing and planned characteristics of this area will vary from municipality to municipality. Some communities may include mostly undeveloped land in the area outside the core, but most will have to work with existing development patterns and uses as shown in Figure 2. There will almost certainly be residential neighborhoods; there may be commercial or industrial areas. The goals of growth center planning will include integrating existing and future uses within the growth center and increasing connections between currently disconnected areas.

Communities have the option of seeking state recognition of their growth center. A municipality may apply to the Vermont Downtown Board to have its growth center designated through the Growth Center Program, thus making it eligible for benefits as described on page 7. A designated growth center must meet statutory criteria and be designed to accommodate a majority of anticipated growth over a 20-year planning period. The statutory requirements for a designated growth center are described in detail below.

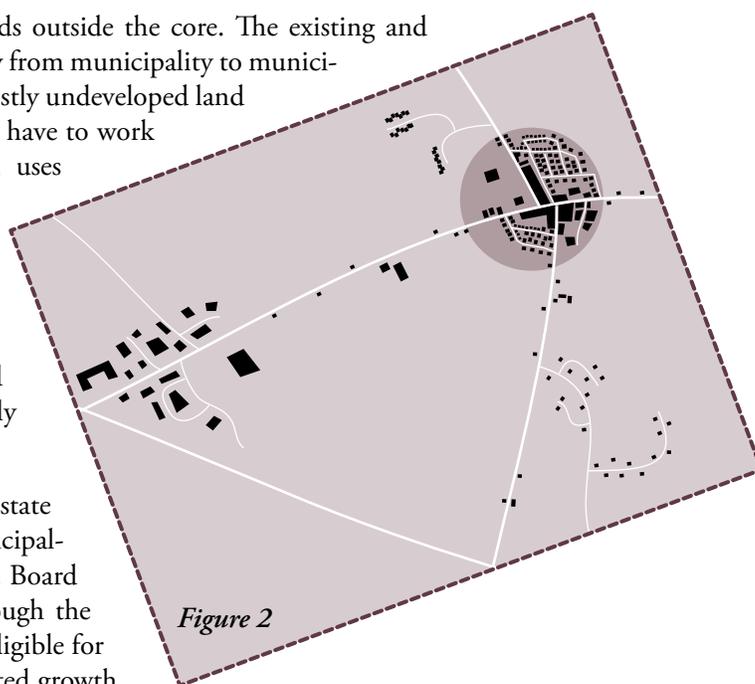


Figure 2 illustrates some existing land use patterns that municipalities may find within their proposed growth center. There may be a commercial area and/or industrial park at a major intersection outside and disconnected from the core. There may be low-density residential neighborhoods and clusters of isolated housing. Linear development may be occurring along main roads.

WHERE CAN A DESIGNATED GROWTH CENTER BE LOCATED?

24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(A) sets forth requirements regarding where a municipality can locate a growth center. It defines a growth center as:

- ◆ An area of land that is in or adjacent to a designated downtown, village center, or new town center.

Adjacent is defined as **contiguous** except in situations where contiguity is precluded by **natural** or **physical** constraints. Natural or physical constraints include important natural resources, bodies of water, steep or rough terrain, soils unsuitable for development, or utility or transportation corridors.

Where contiguity is precluded by natural or physical constraints, adjacent is defined as:

- ◆ Lands lying close to and not widely separated from the majority of the lands within the designated growth center.

The statute requires non-contiguous land included as part of a growth center to exhibit strong land use, economic, infrastructure, and transportation relationships to the designated downtown, village center, or new town center. Such lands must be planned to function as a single, integrated growth center. They must also be essential to accommodate a majority of growth anticipated by the municipality over a 20-year period.

The form and configuration of growth centers will vary from municipality to municipality based on local conditions, needs and preferences. The most obvious structure would be a growth center that includes and completely surrounds a designated downtown, village center or new town center where development would expand outward from the core, as illustrated in Diagram A to the left.

However, Vermont municipalities will likely be faced with more complex situations due to land form, physical or environmental constraints, an existing road network, pre-existing development, and land ownership or use patterns to which their growth center area will need to respond.

Diagram B illustrates a growth center wrapped around three sides of the designated downtown, village center or new town center. In Diagram C, a body of water and the presence of important natural resources necessitates a non-contiguous growth center. Diagram D illustrates a growth center that includes lands in two municipalities.

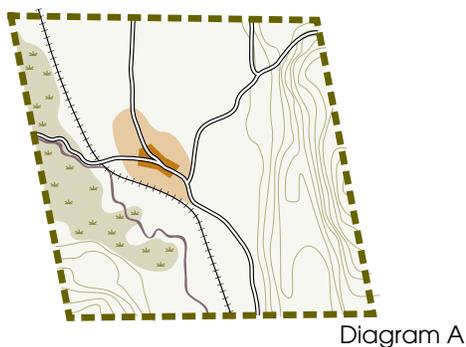


Diagram A

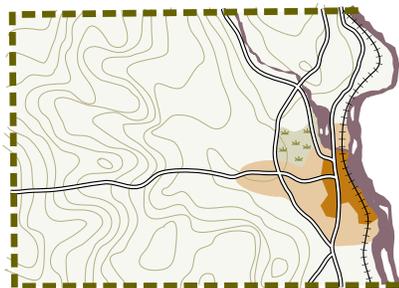


Diagram B

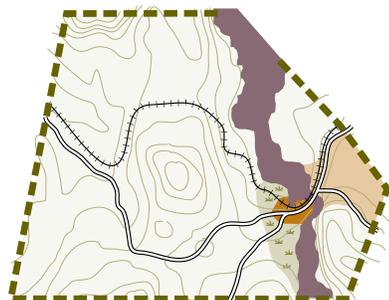


Diagram C

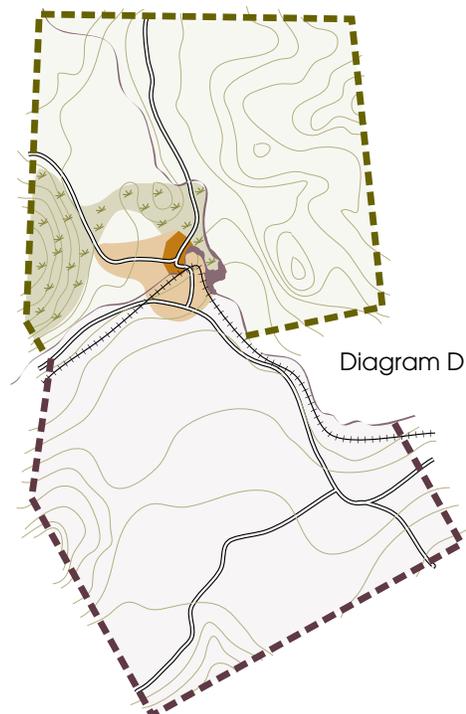


Diagram D

Figure 3. Potential Growth Center Configurations

HOW IS A DESIGNATED GROWTH CENTER DEFINED IN STATUTE?

The characteristics of growth centers specified in statute (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)) and smart growth principles outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 2791(13) largely parallel the characteristics of traditional Vermont downtowns and village centers.

24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B) defines a growth center as an area of land that contains substantially the following characteristics:

- ◆ It incorporates a mix of uses that typically include or have the potential to include the following: retail, office, services, and other commercial, civic, recreational, industrial, and residential uses, including affordable housing and new residential neighborhoods, within a densely developed, compact area.
- ◆ It incorporates existing or planned public spaces that promote social interaction, such as public parks, civic buildings (e.g., post office, municipal offices), community gardens, and other formal and informal places to gather.
- ◆ It is organized around one or more central places or focal points, such as prominent buildings of civic, cultural, or spiritual significance or a village green, common, or square.
- ◆ It promotes densities of land development that are significantly greater than existing and allowable densities in parts of the municipality that are outside a designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center, or, in the case of municipalities characterized predominately by areas of existing dense urban settlement, it encourages in-fill development and redevelopment of historically developed land.
- ◆ It is supported by existing or planned investments in infrastructure and encompasses a circulation system that is conducive to pedestrian and other non-vehicular traffic and that incorporates, accommodates, and supports the use of public transit systems.
- ◆ It results in compact concentrated areas of land development that are served by existing or planned infrastructure and are separated by rural countryside or working landscape.
- ◆ It is planned in accordance with the planning and development goals under section 4302 of this title, and to conform to smart growth principles.
- ◆ It is planned to reinforce the purposes of 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151.

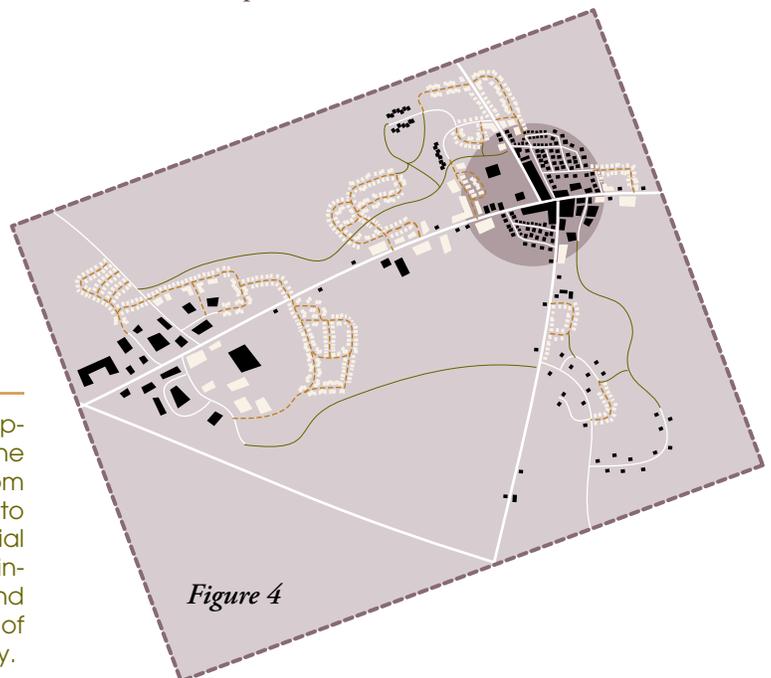


Figure 4 illustrates potential future development patterns within a Growth Center. The street grid may be extended outward from the core, housing may be built adjacent to employment centers, compact residential neighborhoods may be built or occur as in-fill near low-density development, trails and sidewalks may provide alternative modes of transportation and increased connectivity.

24 V.S.A. § 2791(13) defines the smart growth principles that are referenced in 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vii) as 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 choice 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 a diversity of social and income groups in each community.
- ◆ Reflects a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, 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 farm and forest land;
 - 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.

Figure 5. Smart Growth

Smart growth, while a relatively new term, is not a new concept. Planners in Vermont have been promoting the principles that form the basis of smart growth for decades. The state planning goals (24 V.S.A. § 4302) express many smart growth sentiments, most notably the primary goal of maintaining the historic development pattern of compact centers separated by rural countryside.

Land use patterns in many communities throughout Vermont largely reflect the desired characteristics of smart growth development. Some municipalities, recognizing a disconnect between the vision and goals of their plans and the development patterns resulting from their land use regulations, have changed course and incorporated smart growth principles into local regulations.

There are many variations on the definition of smart growth, but they share common themes. Smart growth is generally described as development that:

- ◆ Mixes land uses.
- ◆ Uses compact building design.
- ◆ Creates a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- ◆ Results in walkable neighborhoods.
- ◆ Fosters distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- ◆ Preserves open space, farmland, natural resources and environmental quality.
- ◆ Strengthens and directs development toward existing centers.
- ◆ Provides a variety of transportation choices.

COMPARISON OF PROGRAM PURPOSES AND BENEFITS

The new designated growth center program is integrated with existing programs for the designation of downtowns, village centers and new town centers. Designated downtowns, village centers or new town centers can serve as the core of future designated growth centers. The area of the growth center outside the designated downtown, village center or new town center will serve residential growth, as well as other uses not suitable for or able to be accommodated in the core. The outlying lands beyond the growth center boundary will be primarily rural countryside in most Vermont municipalities, and will have distinctly different development patterns and lower overall densities.

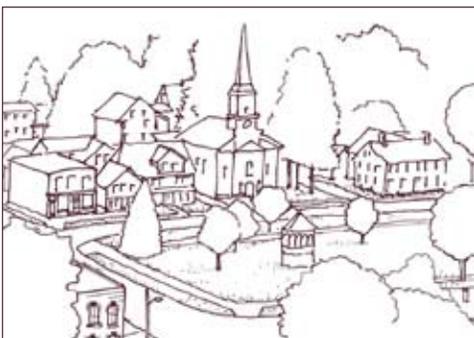
The Downtown Board is now responsible for administering the designation process for four distinct, but inter-related programs. Each was created for specific reasons as follows:



Designated Downtowns: A downtown is 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.

The designated downtown program was created in 1998 and focuses on traditional downtowns. It requires that the designated area have a National Register Historic District. Traditional downtowns are often characterized by multi-story, zero lot line, masonry and high-density areas. Residential neighborhoods and industrially-zoned areas are typically not included in a designated downtown. Following the model established by the National Main Street Center, downtown designation requires, among other things, a dedicated downtown organization along with municipal commitments for planning, capital budgeting and infrastructure.

A designated downtown typically plans for and is able to accommodate some growth – mainly through a combination of historic building rehabilitation and infill development on vacant or underutilized property – but it is not likely to absorb most of the development in a municipality that is growing rapidly. The primary goals are historic preservation and economic revitalization.



Designated Village Centers: A village center is 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. Industrial uses may be found within or immediately adjacent to these centers.

The legislature saw the successes of the designated downtown program, but recognized that the program really was not appropriate for the numerous smaller villages around the state. So, a much simpler process was created for designated village centers in 2002.

The size of these centers range from small hamlets – places with just a handful of commercial and civic uses along with a few homes – to larger villages with a variety of uses and residential neighborhoods. The Board has encouraged larger communities to seek downtown designation, but there is no clear statutory threshold separating downtowns from villages.

As with the designated downtown program, the policy goal is to support the preservation of historic buildings and the economic revitalization of the existing traditional mixed-use core area. The Board has typically decided not to include undeveloped areas within a village center boundary that might be targeted for future growth.



Designated New Town Centers: A new town center is an area planned for or developed as a community’s central business district, composed of compact, pedestrian-friendly, multi-story, 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.

The designated new town centers program was passed by the legislature in 2002 along with the village centers program, in support of community plans for new centers in municipalities that do not have a traditional downtown. Conceptually, this program is intended to support the development of new downtowns that are similar in form and function to traditional downtowns. This concept does overlap with growth centers in that both are intended to support substantial

new development within a limited area. However, a new town center implies a smaller geographic area built like a downtown, while growth centers suggest a broader geographic area, only part of which may resemble a downtown.



Designated Growth Centers: This most recent designation was created by the legislature in 2006, implementing one of the key planning goals in Act 200, which called for compact settlements separated by rural lands. The purpose of this program is to promote compact development over sprawl in municipalities that are facing development pressure. Conceptually, growth centers are intended for dense and mixed-use development. While they include an existing designated downtown, village center or new town center, they would likely cover a broader geographic area and feature a greater diversity of development patterns than typically found in a traditional downtown. A growth center would include a new or traditional downtown, but also may include areas planned for new largely residential neighborhoods, or commercial or industrial uses that are not appropriate for or cannot

be located in an existing downtown area. Some communities may plan growth centers that will be built largely on open land. Others may plan for the redevelopment of a developed area that could accommodate more density.

State legislation establishes a hierarchy among the four programs administered by the Downtown Board. The state’s highest priority is facilitating development and growth in downtowns and village centers. As such, designated downtowns and village centers will be given priority in state funding and programs over new town centers and growth centers as indicated on the following chart.

Figure 6. Program Purposes and Benefits Matrix

	Downtown	Village Center	New Town Center	Growth Center
Authority				
Statute Section (24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A)	2793	2793a	2793b	2793c
Date Established	1998	2002	2002	2006
Purpose				
Historic Preservation*	✓	✓		✓
Economic Revitalization*	✓	✓		✓
Smart Growth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic Development	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benefits				
10% State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit	✓	✓		
25% Façade Improvement Tax Credit	✓	✓		
50% Code Improvement Tax Credit	✓	✓		
Downtown Transportation Fund	✓			
Sprinkler System Rebate	✓			
Tax Increment Financing	✓			✓
Special Assessment District	✓	✓	✓	
Reallocation of Sales Tax on Construction Materials	✓			
Traffic Calming Options	✓			
Signage Options	✓			
Act 250 Threshold for Mixed-Income Housing & Mixed-Use Projects	✓			✓
Act 250 Master Plan Permit Application				✓
Act 250 Mitigation for Loss of Primary Agricultural Soils				✓
Priority Consideration**				
All State Agencies and Funding Programs	✓			
Specific State Agencies and Funding Programs:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Planning Grants	✓	✓		✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Enhancement Improvements	✓	✓		✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Property Assessment Fund (Contaminated Sites / Brownfields)	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Development Block Grants	✓	✓		✓
<input type="checkbox"/> ANR Wastewater funding	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> State affordable housing funds	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Locating State Buildings	✓	✓	✓	✓

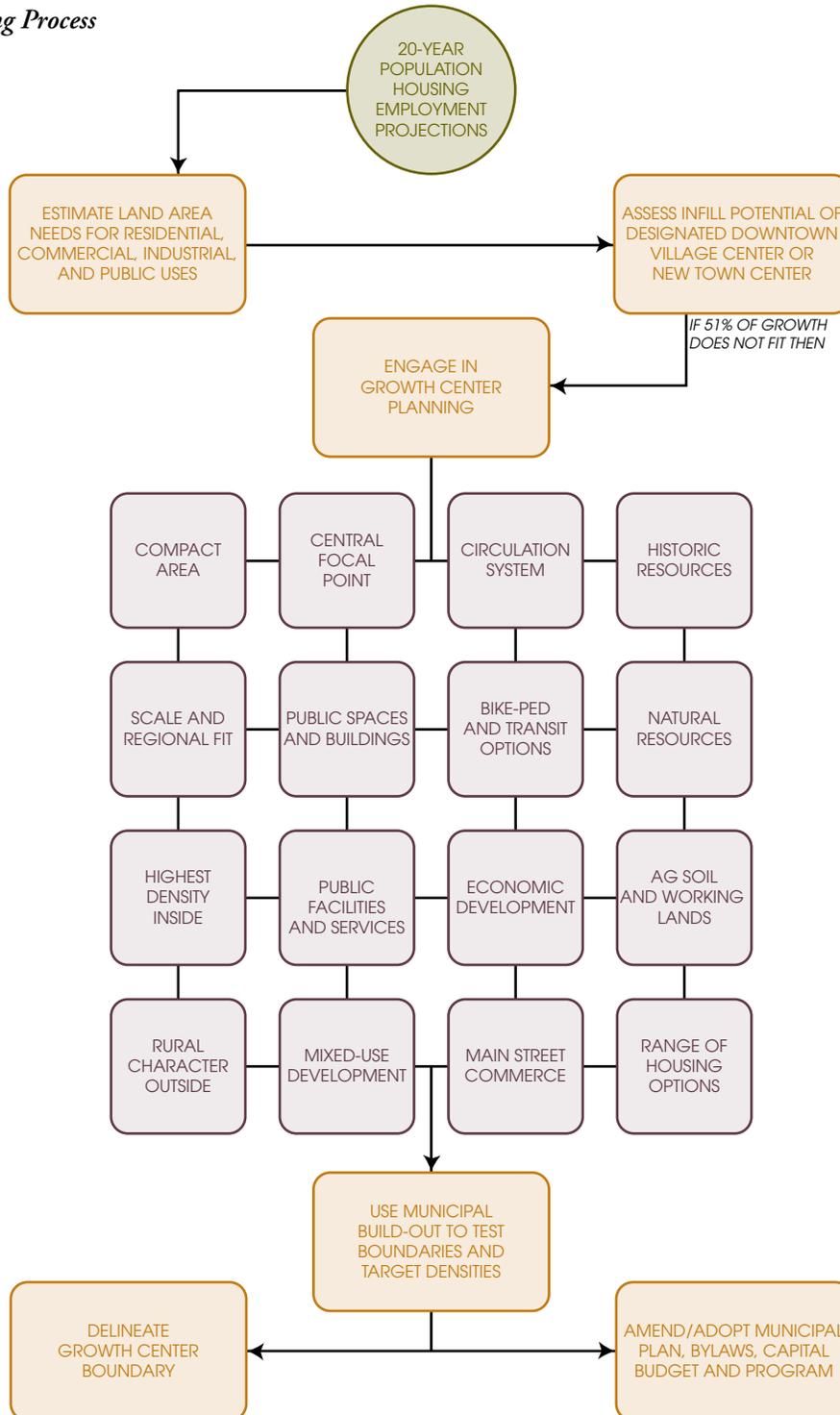
*May not apply to all growth centers.

** Statute establishes that designated downtowns and village centers should have greater priority for state funding and programs than new town centers and growth centers. (24 V.S.A. §2790(d) and 24 V.S.A. §2793c(i)(2)(A))

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for a designated growth center is illustrated in the flow chart below. Applicants can begin with 20-year projections for population, housing and employment. The land area needed to accommodate projected growth can then be calculated. Any designated downtown, village center or new town center in the municipality can be assessed to determine whether it can accommodate a majority of the projected growth. If existing centers lack the necessary infill capacity, then a municipality can begin to plan for a growth center.

Figure 7. Designated Growth Center Planning Process



Applicants will need to delineate a proposed growth center, amend their municipal plans, and draft policies and implementation measures that meet the requirements of the statute in a manner that is most appropriate for the municipality given its character, role in the region, physical constraints, existing development pattern and anticipated growth.

Vermont's growth center legislation does not include specific regulatory measures that municipalities must enact. Instead, applicants must engage in a planning process resulting in proposed growth centers that meet the statutory definition and implement those policies through municipal plans, bylaws, ordinances and/or other regulatory or non-regulatory measures. Applicants will need to demonstrate the following (see 24 V.S.A. 2793c(d)):

- ◆ The growth center proposal meets the definition of a growth center established in 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12).
- ◆ That important natural resources and historic resources within the proposed growth center, the anticipated impacts on those resources, and any proposed mitigation have been identified.
- ◆ The most recent guidelines developed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets have been used to identify areas proposed for agriculture.
- ◆ The growth center has been designed so as to avoid the conversion of primary agricultural soils, wherever possible.
- ◆ The applicant has a regionally confirmed planning process and an approved municipal plan, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4350.
- ◆ The approved plan contains provisions that are appropriate to implement the designated growth center proposal.
- ◆ The applicant has adopted bylaws in conformance with the municipal plan that implement the provisions in the plan that pertain to the designated growth center.
- ◆ The approved plan and the implementing bylaws further the goal of retaining a more rural character in the area surrounding the growth center, to the extent that a more rural character exists.
- ◆ The approved plan and the implementing bylaws provide reasonable protection for important natural resources and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center.
- ◆ Existing and planned infrastructure is adequate to implement the growth center as shown in the adopted Capital Budget and Program.
- ◆ The growth center is of an appropriate size sufficient to accommodate a majority of the projected population and development over a 20-year planning period in a manner that is consistent with the definition under 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12).
- ◆ The growth center does not encompass an excessive area of land that would involve the unnecessary extension of infrastructure to service low-density development, or result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development at the conclusion of the 20-year planning period.
- ◆ The growth center will support and reinforce any existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located in the municipality or adjacent municipality by accommodating concentrated residential neighborhoods and a mix and scale of commercial, civic, and industrial uses that is consistent with the anticipated demand for those uses within the municipality and region.
- ◆ The proposed growth center growth cannot reasonably be achieved within an existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located within the applicant municipality.

DESIGNATION PROCESS

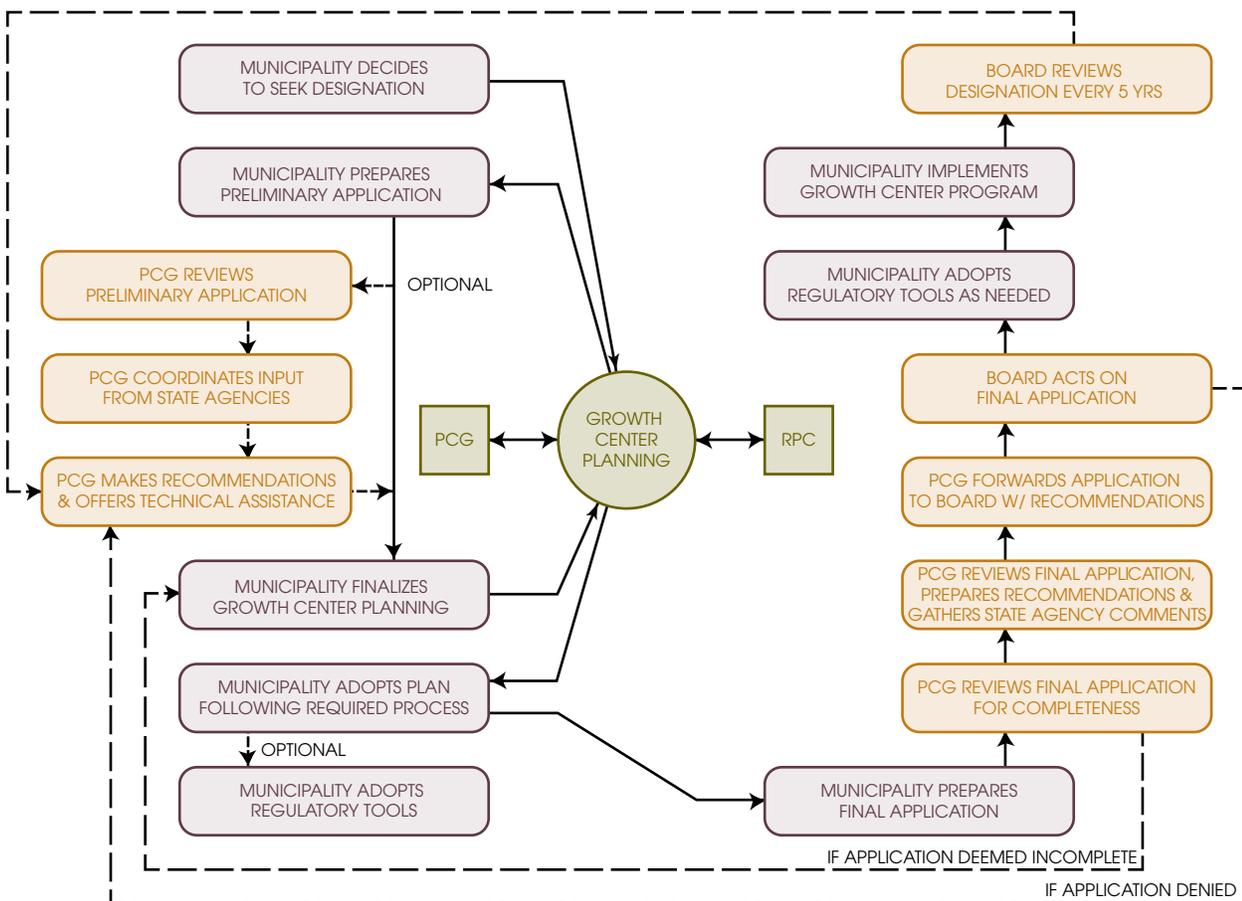
The designation process is illustrated in the flow chart below. The decision to apply must be endorsed by a vote of the municipal legislative body as specified in statute (24 V.S.A. §2793c(c)). The growth center planning process will require applicant municipalities to review, amend and re-adopt municipal plans and implementing bylaws (designation may be contingent upon adoption of revised regulatory tools). Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a preliminary application to the Planning Coordination Group (PCG), which will solicit comments and recommendations from all relevant state agencies to assist applicants in preparing a final application that meets program requirements.

Applicants may submit concurrent applications for a designated downtown, village center or new town center with their application for a designated growth center. Municipalities planning on submitting concurrent applications should contact the PCG to coordinate the program application requirements. Where a new town center is being proposed, applicants will need to carefully consider the new town center's relationship to any existing village centers within the municipality, especially those with significant community facilities or public spaces, to establish that a growth center will be in conformance with statutory goals.

Joint applications from two or more municipalities are encouraged where appropriate; the PCG can provide assistance with the requirements for a joint application as well. Joint applications may be appropriate:

- ◆ Where an existing downtown straddles or is located on a municipal border.
- ◆ In towns with an incorporated village.
- ◆ For regional centers with adjoining small or rural towns.

Figure 8. Growth Center Designation Process



Final applications will be reviewed by the PCG, which will review applications for completeness and prepare recommendations on the proposed growth center before forwarding the application to the Expanded Downtown Board. The Expanded Downtown Board consists of the Downtown Board members plus a member of the Vermont Planners Association, a representative of the Land Use Panel of the Natural Resources Board and a member of the Vermont Association of Regional Planning and Development Agencies.

Once it receives an application, the Expanded Downtown Board will warn and hold a hearing on the application. Applicants will be requested to attend the board meeting to respond to any board member questions. Within 90 days of receiving a complete application, the Expanded Downtown Board will issue a written decision based on the review criteria listed in statute (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)).

PRELIMINARY APPLICATION

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a preliminary application to the Planning Coordination Group while they are engaged in the growth center planning process so that recommendations may be considered prior to the final drafting and/or adoption of plans and implementation measures. The following materials should be included in a preliminary application:

- I. **Draft Growth Center Map.** A map of the proposed growth center designed to accommodate a majority of the community's growth needs for the next 20 years. The boundaries of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center should also be delineated. The map legend should indicate the total acreage within the proposed growth center as well as the acreage of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center.
- II. **Regional Map.** A regional map indicating the location of the proposed growth center in relation to the region and any designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers or growth centers located in the applicant municipality or adjacent municipalities.
- III. **Growth Projections.** Summary tables of the municipality's and region's 20-year population, housing and employment projections.
- IV. **Build-Out Analysis.** A build-out analysis for the potential growth center to show that the geographic area of a proposed growth center will accommodate a majority of projected growth over a 20-year period in a manner that is consistent with the definition of a growth center included in the Act. The application should include a summary table of development potential inside the proposed growth center area.
- V. **Resource Maps.** Map(s) showing the location of all important natural resources in the municipality. Important natural resources should at a minimum include the following as defined in statute (10 V.S.A. Chapter 151): headwaters, streams, shorelines, floodways, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, necessary wildlife habitat, wetlands, endangered species, productive forest lands, and primary agricultural soils. Map(s) showing the location of national and/or state register historic district(s) in the municipality. The proposed growth center and downtown/village center/new town center boundaries should be shown on all maps.
- VI. **Narrative.** Brief explanation of planning and implementation policies that the municipality anticipates enacting in order to guide development inside the growth center in a manner consistent with the purposes of 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B) and (13), and to maintain the rural character of the outlying area, to the extent that it exists.

FINAL APPLICATION AND GUIDANCE

The review criteria that the Board will use to evaluate applications are set forth in statute (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)). The statutory review criteria (in italics below) have been grouped into twelve topic areas. Applicants will need to provide narrative responses to the questions (numbered) under each topic area and attach the required submissions (lettered) to demonstrate their conformance with the goals of the growth center program. General guidance for preparing an application follows each set of questions and submission requirements. The Planning Principles, Implementation Tools and Resources sections offer more in-depth guidance for growth center planning and links to resources for further assistance.

In their responses, applicants should cite specific policies from the municipal plan, land use regulations, provisions from the capital plan and budget, and any other relevant municipal planning, policy or implementation documents. Applicants are urged to be concise. References can be made to previous answers, maps and other attachments, but the written responses to the questions below should summarize key information. Applicants should not simply respond with “See Appendix A” or “See Municipal Plan.” **All required maps should be prepared in a GIS format based on data developed to VCGI Standards and Guidelines.** Required and any additional submissions should be clearly identified and may be included either within the application narrative or attached as a series of appendices.

1. The proposed growth center growth cannot reasonably be achieved within an existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located within the applicant municipality (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(G)(ii)).

1.1 Discuss why a majority of the projected growth cannot reasonably occur within an existing designated downtown, village center or new town center within the municipality, specifically citing the municipality’s 20-year projections for population, housing and employment growth and the build-out potential of any designated downtown, village center, or new town center in the municipality.

- A. Growth Center Map.** A map of the proposed growth center designed to accommodate a majority of the community’s growth needs for the next 20 years. The map should use the municipal property tax map overlying an orthophoto as a base and must delineate the boundaries of the new growth center. The boundaries of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center should also be delineated. The map should clearly show which properties are to be included in the growth center. The map legend should indicate the total acreage within the proposed growth center and the acreage of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center.
- B. Growth Projections.** Summary tables of the municipality’s and region’s 20-year population, housing and employment projections, along with a brief narrative describing the projection methodology and how the municipal projections fit with those of the region.
- C. Build-Out Analysis.** A build-out analysis for the potential growth center to show that the geographic area of a proposed growth center will accommodate a majority of projected growth over a 20-year period in a manner that is consistent with the definition of a growth center included in the Act. The application should include a summary table of development potential inside the proposed growth center area.

QUESTION 1.1

To answer Question 1.1, applicants will need to first estimate the land area needed to accommodate 20 years worth of population growth and economic development, and then calculate infill potential based on a build-out analysis.

Preparing Growth Projections

Twenty-year projections of population, housing and economic growth within the municipality are the required starting point for growth center planning. Growth centers by statute must accommodate a majority of the municipality's projected 20-year growth. Applicants will need to use projections of population, housing and employment to prove that a proposed growth center can accommodate at least 51 percent of the municipality's anticipated growth for the 20-year planning period.

Applicants can begin by obtaining the projections available from their Regional Planning Commission and, if so desired, compare them to other available or internally developed projections. Additional sources of statewide or regional projections include:

- ◆ U.S. Census Bureau Population Projections to 2030
- ◆ MISER Population Projections for Vermont, 2000–2020 prepared for the Vermont Agency of Human Services

Applicants may also have access to population, housing or economic projections for their community that were completed as part of another project. *Estimating Land Area Needs for Growth Centers: A Technical Report and Handbook* available from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs provides a clear methodology for generating local projections based on existing county, regional or state projections.

Applicants who choose not to use projections prepared by their Regional Planning Commission will need to explain their reasons for doing so. Alternative projections chosen or prepared by applicants should be based on a model generally accepted by planners and demographers. Applicants will need to provide a clear summary of the data upon which the model is based, the methodology and the assumptions made if preparing their own projections.

Applicants looking for demographic or economic data specific to their municipality can begin with the profiles prepared by the Center for Rural Studies and available online at <http://maps.vcgi.org/indicators>. More detailed statistical data is available from the U.S. Census Bureau through their website, <http://www.census.gov>.

Conducting a Build-Out Analysis

Build-out analysis is a tool that applicants can use to:

- ◆ Produce the quantitative data that will be needed to justify the proposed boundary and target densities of development, and to prove that at least 51% of growth can be accommodated within the proposed growth center (required).
- ◆ Test alternatives as municipalities are considering how to draw the boundaries of a proposed growth center and set appropriate development densities, and compare multiple combinations of geographic boundaries and development densities.
- ◆ Help stakeholders and the public at large engage in the planning process and visualize the resulting development pattern in order to build support for a proposed growth center within the municipality.

Applicants will need to document the data and the series of assumptions upon which their build-out analysis is based. If applicants are submitting two build-out analyses, before and after growth center planning, the underlying set of assumptions should remain constant so that they are comparable to each other.

Build-out analyses are to be used as a planning tool by municipalities engaged in growth center planning. A baseline build-out of the entire municipality under current regulations will provide insight into questions such as:

- ◆ How much development potential is there in the municipality under current regulations?
- ◆ What development patterns are the current regulations promoting?
- ◆ How much potential for infill within existing downtowns or centers currently exists?

- ◆ To what degree is there excess, sufficient or inadequate capacity to accommodate expected growth?

Applicants may want to examine build-out analyses for the region or neighboring municipalities, if available, to place development potential and patterns in the applicant municipality into a regional context. Regional build-outs, if available, may be included in the application package.

Calculating Infill Potential

The growth center legislation requires that applicants show that the majority of the municipality’s 20-year growth cannot reasonably be accommodated in an existing designated downtown, village center or new town center within the municipality.

Applicants can use build-out analysis as a tool to calculate the infill potential that exists in the designated area(s). In setting up the build-out model, applicants will need to consider the assumptions being made, especially regarding infill or redevelopment of parcels of land that are developed but at lower intensities than allowed under regulations.

Depending upon the build-out software being used, applicants may need to supplement the computerized results with additional analysis. To fully capture infill potential, applicants can:

- ◆ Identify undeveloped land within the designated area(s) and calculate its development potential and/or summarize constraints to its development.
- ◆ Identify major parcels of underutilized land (such as parking lots, industrial facilities, large single-story commercial buildings, etc.) and calculate their redevelopment potential and/or summarize constraints to their redevelopment.
- ◆ Estimate the potential development that could occur if use of the upper stories of existing buildings was maximized.
- ◆ Consider the potential for infill development within established residential neighborhoods and assess the likelihood of densification on developed lots.

- ◆ Research the rate at which accessory units are being added or existing homes are being converted from single-family to multi-family dwellings within the designated area.
- ◆ Document any other constraints to increasing density within the existing designated area(s).
- ◆ Consider what percentage of supply in excess of demand is desirable or necessary for a functioning real estate market.

Estimating Land Area Needs

Applicants will need to calculate how much land will be needed to accommodate projected growth. *Estimating Land Area Needs for Growth Centers*, available from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs, provides a clear methodology for converting projected population and employment growth into the amount of land needed to accommodate residential, commercial/industrial and civic/infrastructure uses.

REFERENCES

Projections	65
Build-Out Analysis	67
Land Area Calculations	68
Infill	54

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2. *The proposed growth center is of an appropriate size sufficient to accommodate a majority of the projected population and development over a 20-year planning period. The proposed growth center does not encompass an excessive area of land that would involve the unnecessary extension of infrastructure to service low-density development or result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development at the conclusion of the 20-year period (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(F)).*

The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by 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 (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(iv)).

The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(v)).

- 2.1 Summarize the amount of land included within the proposed growth center and its build-out potential.
- 2.2 Explain how the municipality arrived at the proposed growth center boundary and determined how much land was needed to meet the requirement of accommodating a majority of projected growth over the 20-year planning period, specifically justifying how the proposed boundary achieves the program goal of a compact center that does not encompass an excessive area of land.
- 2.3 Identify the steps that the municipality is taking to manage any necessary extensions of infrastructure to parts of the municipality that are currently not served by water or wastewater in a manner that will discourage a scattered or low-density pattern of development.

QUESTION 2.1

The amount of land being included within the proposed growth center and its maximum build-out potential should not be significantly different than the need for additional housing units and non-residential square footage as calculated based on projected growth in population, housing and employment.

QUESTION 2.2

Applicants will need to describe the methodology and process used to determine how much land would be included in the proposed growth center.

Compact Development

Applicants will also need to demonstrate that their growth center area has been delineated based on rational planning decisions given the projected growth within the municipality over the 20-year planning period.

The enabling legislation requires that growth centers be compact and not encompass an excessive area of land. While there is no one-size-fits-all measurement for compactness, applicants may want to relate the size of their growth center to measures of walkability and the scale of traditional Vermont centers. To demonstrate that a proposed growth center is compact, applicants may:

- ◆ Compare the size and planned density of the growth center to traditional Vermont centers.
- ◆ Examine the densities of traditional Vermont centers as a starting point for specifying planned densities within the proposed growth center.
- ◆ Show how the proposed growth center will be composed of walkable neighborhoods that are interconnected and relate to the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center.
- ◆ Illustrate average walking times from various focal points (town green, school, post office, commercial area, etc.) on a map of the growth center.

Significant growth can be accommodated in an area measured in hundreds, as opposed to thousands, of acres. Municipalities should anticipate that the Board will implement the statutory policy favoring smaller

rather than larger areas, thus more effectively targeting program benefits. If a proposed growth area is too large or the projected growth rate is too high, the result could be a scattered development pattern at the end of the 20-year planning period. While municipalities are planning for a 20-year period, the growth center designation will be reviewed at five-year intervals, providing regular opportunities to adjust the boundary if warranted.

QUESTION 2.3

Applicants should have adopted policies related to infrastructure extension. Applicants may want to reference sewer allocation ordinances and/or other measures that will be used to prevent infrastructure from supporting or promoting scattered, sprawling, linear or land consumptive development both inside and outside the proposed growth center.

Provision or Extension of Infrastructure

Infrastructure extensions into previously unserved areas promote development. Provision of infrastructure is one of the most important tools available to municipalities to guide development in a manner consistent with its adopted municipal plan.

In municipalities where lands outside the proposed growth center are currently not served by infrastructure, extensions that are not necessitated for public health reasons will likely undermine growth center goals. In those municipalities where outlying lands are served by infrastructure or where the geographic location of the proposed growth center requires infrastructure extensions through lands outside the proposed growth center, applicants will need clear policies to allocate capacity in a manner that achieves growth center goals.

REFERENCES

Size	49
Density	50
Build-Out Analysis	67
Land Area Calculations	68
Sewer Allocation Ordinances	78

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3. *The proposed growth center will support and reinforce any existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located in the municipality or adjacent municipality by accommodating concentrated residential neighborhoods and a mix and scale of commercial, civic, and industrial uses consistent with the anticipated demand for those uses within the municipality and region (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(G)(i)).*

The proposed growth center is planned to develop compact mixed-use centers at a scale appropriate for the community and the region (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(B)).

- 3.1 Identify all designated downtowns, village centers and new town centers in the applicant municipality and adjacent municipalities.
 - 3.2 Identify all major retail areas (downtowns, shopping centers, malls, big-box stores, etc.) within the applicant municipality and adjacent municipalities, specifically noting which currently function primarily as community-serving retail areas and which serve primarily as destination retail areas.
 - 3.3 Describe the extent to which any downtowns, village centers or new town centers (designated or non-designated) that are located outside the proposed growth center currently serve as significant employment, retail, service or civic centers for residents in the applicant municipality.
 - 3.4 Describe the extent to which the applicant municipality currently serves as an employment and/or residential center in the region, presenting the best available statistics regarding place of work and residence for people living and working in the applicant municipality.
 - 3.5 Summarize the Regional Planning Commission's 20-year projections for population, housing, employment growth for the region and discuss what percentage of regional growth the municipality is planning to accommodate within its growth center by type – residential, commercial (retail and non-retail), and industrial, and how that compares to its current regional share, explaining any significant changes in regional share being planned for by the municipality.
- D. Regional Map.** A regional map indicating the location of the proposed growth center in relation to the region and any designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers or growth centers located in the applicant municipality or adjacent municipalities.

QUESTION 3.1

Applicants will need to identify all designated downtowns, village centers and new town centers in their municipality and all adjacent communities. In the context this and other questions under this group of review criteria, adjacent should be interpreted to mean not only those municipalities bordering the applicant municipality, but all those within a reasonable distance (such as a half-hour drive) and those that serve as major employment or service centers for residents in the applicant municipality.

A list of designated downtowns, village centers and new town centers is available from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation (<http://www.historicvermont.org> or (802) 828-3211).

QUESTION 3.2

A primary goal of the growth center program is to support the vitality of downtowns, village centers and new town centers. Questions that should be considered include:

- ◆ Does the growth center function as an organic extension of an existing downtown, village center or new town center? If not, what is the justification for its placement?
- ◆ Does the scale of the growth center take into consideration absorption of any current vacant space in existing downtowns, village centers and new town centers?
- ◆ Is there an integrated business development program that will encompass both existing commercial centers and new commercial development?
- ◆ Will new commercial and mixed-use buildings in the growth center support the urban design traditions and patterns established by existing downtowns in terms of urban form, scale, density, height, setback, and other urban design characteristics?

A proposed growth center should not deflect business activity away from the extant district(s) or strain its infrastructure and other resources. To demonstrate that a proposed growth center will support its associated designated downtown, village center or new town center, applicants can:

- ◆ Plan to achieve reasonably full occupancy of existing downtowns, village centers and new town centers before supporting new development.
- ◆ Show that their growth center will be integrated in terms of urban form and accessibility with existing districts to the extent possible, unless there are justifiable reasons for not doing so.
- ◆ Support efforts to manage business development and marketing of existing districts and new growth centers in an integrated manner.

QUESTIONS 3.3 AND 3.4

Regional Fit

It is not the intent of the growth centers program to establish new centers that have the potential to significantly undermine the viability of existing centers. Applicants will want to develop an understanding of the existing residential and economic dynamics of their municipality and of the region in order to plan for a growth center that is appropriate in scale and mix of uses. Questions that should be considered include:

- ◆ Is the applicant municipality an employment center for residents in surrounding communities?
- ◆ Is the applicant municipality a bedroom community for a regional center in a nearby community?
- ◆ What are the economic development goals of the applicant municipality as expressed in the municipal plan or other planning documents?
- ◆ How do municipal goals relate to regional economic development efforts?
- ◆ What are the regional growth projections and how do the municipality's projections fit into that regional context?
- ◆ Is the municipality planning for a commercial center that will rely on attracting residents from neighboring communities to be economically viable?

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate that their proposed growth center is appropriately scaled for the region. In order to do that effectively, applicants can:

- ◆ Show that their growth projections are reasonable when considered in a regional context.
- ◆ Plan to provide their regional share of housing, and to balance growth in jobs and housing.
- ◆ Plan for levels of commercial or industrial development that would not represent significant restructuring of existing or anticipated future regional economic conditions.
- ◆ Collaborate with nearby communities to estimate regional retail supply and demand for both community-serving and destination retail.

Joint applications for growth center designation are encouraged for those municipalities that serve as a regional center for one or more adjacent, rural communities.

QUESTION 3.5

Municipal growth projections will be reviewed in a regional context. Applicants must address how anticipated growth in the municipality fits with the growth projected for the region. If an applicant municipality is planning to provide a significantly different regional share of housing, retail, other commercial, or industrial uses than is supported by regional projections, existing conditions and/or historic trends, the applicant will need to explain the reasoning behind such a decision.

REFERENCES

Regional Fit	56
Economic Development	58
Housing	58
Projecting Commercial Demand	70
Inclusionary Zoning	79
Design Review	81
Standards for Large-Scale Uses	82

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4. *The proposed growth center promotes densities of land development that are significantly greater than existing and allowable densities in parts of the municipality that are outside a designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center, or, in the case of municipalities characterized predominately by areas of existing dense urban settlement, it encourages infill development and redevelopment of historically developed land (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(iv)).*

The proposed growth center results in compact concentrated areas of land development that are served by existing or planned infrastructure and are separated by rural countryside or working landscape (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vi)).

The proposed growth center is planned to maintain the historic development pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(A)).

The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by scattered development located outside of compact urban and village centers that is excessively land consumptive (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(i)).

The approved plan and the implementing bylaws further the goal of retaining a more rural character in the areas surrounding the growth center, to the extent that a more rural character exists (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)(iv)).

- 4.1 Discuss the character, land uses and density of development that currently exists and will be permitted on lands within the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center, specifically citing the steps the municipality is taking to encourage infill development, adaptive reuse and/or redevelopment of vacant or underutilized land within the designated downtown or village center, or to promote development with a 'downtown' character within a new town center.
- 4.2 Discuss the character, land uses and density of development that currently exists and will be permitted on lands within the proposed growth center but outside the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center, specifically citing the steps that the municipality is taking to encourage a the settlement pattern resulting from growth center designation that is not be characterized by scattered or excessively land consumptive development.
- 4.3 Discuss the character, land uses and density of development that currently exists and will be permitted on lands outside the proposed growth center, specifically citing the steps the municipality is taking to further the goal of retaining rural character outside the proposed growth center, to the extent that such a character exists.

E. Planning and Regulatory Maps. The land use map from the approved municipal plan and applicable zoning district map. Any additional planning or regulatory maps relevant to development within the growth center (master plan map, open space map, etc.).

QUESTIONS 4.1, 4.2 AND 4.3

This set of questions focuses on the character, land use pattern and density of development existing and planned for within and outside the proposed growth center.

Density within the Growth Center

The enabling legislation requires densities within the growth center to be significantly greater than allowed in those parts of the municipality outside the growth center. Over time, it is anticipated that the growth center boundary will become a distinguishing line that creates a distinct edge between compact center and rural countryside (to the extent that rural lands currently exist in the applicant municipality). As described in the introduction to this manual, applicants can think about three areas within their municipality when planning a growth center:

- ◆ The designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center;
- ◆ The lands within the growth center but outside the designated downtown, village center or new town center; and
- ◆ The lands outside the growth center.

Applicants will be asked to clearly describe the existing and planned density of development in each of these three areas, citing specific policies and regulations that will guide development in conformance with growth center goals.

Establishing appropriate densities can begin within an assessment of the existing (or planned in the case of a largely undeveloped new town center) density of development in the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center. Applicants can calculate the densities of historic neighborhoods (either within their municipality or elsewhere in Vermont) and use those figures as a reference point for setting target densities within the growth center.

For rapidly growing municipalities, the historic density of development may not accommodate projected growth in a reasonably compact area and it may be necessary to plan for greater density. It is important to recognize that simply enabling higher density development may not result in development proposals

that meet targets, so applicants may want to explore options available to either promote high-density projects such as incentives or bonuses, or to require minimum densities in certain areas or for particular types of projects.

Urban and Suburban Municipalities

For urban or suburban communities with limited rural lands, the area outside the growth center should still have different development patterns and densities than the area inside the growth center although the distinctions may not be as sharp as in more rural municipalities. These municipalities are asked to focus their growth center planning on infill of existing developed areas.

Some municipalities with limited rural lands inside their boundaries may have one or more rural municipalities as neighbors. Joint applications from such communities are encouraged.

Suburban patterns of development should not continue to be supported even in those municipalities where such development currently exists. Existing suburban development patterns may be found either inside or outside a proposed growth center and applicant municipalities can work to change such patterns over time by taking actions such as:

- ◆ Allowing mixed uses in areas previously zoned for a single use (e.g., allowing for neighborhood-scale retail stores in residential zones).
- ◆ Creating and enforcing guidelines for the height, scale, setback, roof profile, and proportions of new buildings within the growth center.
- ◆ Streamlining code approvals for proposed infill projects that meet these guidelines.
- ◆ Encouraging shared parking in order to minimize on-site parking needs.
- ◆ Creating zero-setback 'screens' (e.g., plantings or low walls) along street edges with lengthy gaps in order to minimize the visual impact of suburban-style setbacks in commercial districts and neighborhoods with a core of zero-setback buildings.
- ◆ Assisting with land assembly by maintaining current information on property ownership, liens, and environmental hazards on potential infill sites.

- ◆ Assisting with land assembly by creating land banks to hold property acquired through tax delinquency and through voluntary sales or contributions to the local government.
- ◆ Offering a conduit to programs and resources that help facilitate infill development (brownfields funds, for example).
- ◆ Establishing tax increment financing districts that overlay the area in which infill development is being encouraged to help fund infrastructure improvements.

Outlying Lands

It is important to understand that the designation of a growth center does not alter the regulatory regime outside the growth center. Some communities may establish multiple growth centers, although only one can be designated per municipality and enjoy the benefits of that designation. Industrial development and other land improvement projects may be pursued outside growth centers but are subject to local, regional and state review as is now the case.

Outside the growth center, most Vermont municipalities should be planning to retain rural character, open space and/or working lands. Municipalities can plan for low overall densities while promoting a development pattern that maintains the greatest amount of working land or open space feasible. Simply establishing a large minimum lot size will not achieve the goal of maintaining rural countryside. Applicants can implement rural planning techniques such as:

- ◆ Using building envelopes to site development in a manner that conserves open space or working lands.
- ◆ Enacting use and/or area allocation standards.
- ◆ Requiring or incentivizing clustered development through PUDs.
- ◆ Enacting fixed-area or sliding-scale zoning to maintain low overall densities and conserve open space and/or working lands.
- ◆ Using conservation subdivision design to preserve critical natural resources and/or working lands.
- ◆ Allowing transfer of development rights or multi-lot PUDs to relocate density from outlying rural to growth center lands.

- ◆ Promoting land conservation or sale of development rights to permanently protect critical natural resources and/or working lands.
- ◆ Identifying and developing policies in the municipal plan and enacting regulations to protect special resources such as ridgelines, critical habitat, floodways, viable farmland, and/or scenic views.

Not all the land outside the growth center must be uniformly low density. Village centers and hamlets may exist or continue to be developed at relatively high densities, but at a scale that is significantly smaller than that of the proposed growth center.

REFERENCES

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Mixed Use	52
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Tax Increment Financing	79
Form-Based Zoning	81
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Standards for Large-Scale Uses	82
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Fixed Area Zoning	87
Sliding Scale Zoning	87
Building Envelopes	88
Conservation Districts and Overlays	88
Flood Hazard Regulations	88

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5. *The proposed growth center incorporates a mix of uses that typically include or have the potential to include the following: retail, office, services, and other commercial, civic, recreational, industrial, and residential uses, including affordable housing and new residential neighborhoods, within a densely developed, compact area (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(i)).*

The proposed growth center is planned to support a diversity of viable businesses in downtowns and villages (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(G)).

The proposed growth center is planned to provide for housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each community (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(H)).

- 5.1 Summarize the desired mix of uses within the proposed growth center as envisioned in the municipal plan and allowed under the land use regulations, specifically identifying any steps the municipality is taking to encourage for mixed-use development within the proposed growth center.
- 5.2 Discuss the steps the municipality is taking to plan for and encourage residential development that meets the needs of a diverse population, including affordable housing, within the proposed growth center.
- 5.3 Discuss the steps the municipality is taking to plan for and encourage economic development within the proposed growth center, specifically describing how the growth center will support a healthy business climate in the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the growth center.
- 5.4 Describe the extent to which large-scale commercial, industrial or institutional, and automobile-oriented uses currently exist in the proposed growth center, and discuss the municipality's policies and regulations related to such uses, specifically identifying all locations within the municipality where such uses will be accommodated.

QUESTION 5.1

Mixed-Use Development

In a growth center, residents should have easy access to a variety of goods, services, social opportunities, schools and recreation within walking or biking distance of their home. Ideally, employment opportunities will also be within walking distance, a short drive or bus trip from home.

A growth center may be comprised of multiple zoning districts and some separation of incompatible uses, but a reasonable mix of uses should be allowed in most districts, especially within the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center.

QUESTION 5.2

Housing

Housing is an integral use in both the proposed growth center and its associated designated downtown, village center or new town center. Providing for a diversity of housing types, sizes and price ranges allows residents to find homes in the growth center and remain living in their community as their housing needs change throughout the cycles of their lives.

A diverse mix of housing will include homes that are affordable to families with a range of income levels and accessible to those with special needs such as seniors or people with disabilities. Specific provisions may be needed to encourage provision of an adequate supply of affordable housing, as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4303(1), within the proposed growth center.

Applicants can demonstrate how the municipality will enable creation of a diverse housing stock in the proposed growth center through action such as:

- ◆ Allowing for a variety of housing types and forms.
- ◆ Establishing small lot sizes for residential uses.
- ◆ Setting moderate to high densities for residential uses.
- ◆ Allowing duplex and multi-family dwelling units.
- ◆ Permitting the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family homes.
- ◆ Encouraging residential uses in the upper floors of commercial buildings.

- ◆ Allowing manufactured housing.
- ◆ Reducing barriers to creation of accessory dwellings.
- ◆ Allowing for group homes, residential care facilities, and other types of congregate care, rooming or boarding homes.
- ◆ Encouraging the “adaptive reuse” of historic structures to provide housing.
- ◆ Providing incentives for housing of various types within the municipality’s regulations.
- ◆ Adopting inclusionary zoning provisions.

QUESTION 5.3

Economic Development

A diverse and viable business mix will be enabled by a strategic economic planning process. Applicants that have initiated such a process or are part of a regional organization that engages in economic planning may present documentation of those efforts to the extent that they support their growth center plan.

The economic vitality of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center is an essential planning issue. Applicants can look to the Vermont Downtown Program and National Main Street Program for assistance and resources related to downtown revitalization.

Municipalities can establish policies and regulations to guide appropriate businesses first into the designated downtown, village center or new town center. *10 Reasons Why Vermont’s Homegrown Economy Matters* suggests a number of actions that municipalities can take to support the viability of downtowns and small, locally-owned businesses including:

- ◆ Limiting the amount of land zoned for retail use.
- ◆ Funneling new retail growth downtown.
- ◆ Limiting the size of retail stores.
- ◆ Establishing community-serving commercial zones.
- ◆ Establishing a small business revolving loan fund.
- ◆ Establishing a commercial land trust.
- ◆ Publishing a local business directory.

QUESTION 5.4

Large-Scale and Auto-Oriented Uses

Applicants need to plan for large-scale and auto-oriented uses, which may currently exist or be planned for areas within and/or outside the proposed growth center.

Large-scale commercial, industrial or institutional and automobile-oriented uses may be accommodated within the growth center, and even within the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center, if they adhere to certain smart growth principles and design guides.

Applicants can demonstrate adequate planning for and regulation of such uses through adoption of zoning regulation that provide design direction by specifying such criterion as:

- ◆ Maximum lot size
- ◆ Coverage requirements
- ◆ Maximum building square footage
- ◆ Building placement and setbacks
- ◆ Minimum building heights
- ◆ Floor area ratios
- ◆ Maximum parking regulations

REFERENCES

Mixed Use	52
Economic Development	58
Housing	58
Density Bonuses	78
Inclusionary Zoning	79
Adaptive Reuse Provisions	80
Standards for Large-Scale Uses	82

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6. *The applicant has adopted a capital budget and program in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4426 and the existing and planned infrastructure is adequate to implement the growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(E)).*

The proposed growth center is planned to balance growth with the availability of economic and efficient public utilities and services (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(F)).

- 6.1 Describe the capacity of existing community infrastructure, facilities and services (as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4382(4)), and summarize the municipality's plans to provide and finance the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to support projected growth and development within the proposed growth center over the 20-year planning period, citing specific provisions of the municipality's adopted capital budget and program.
- 6.2 Discuss the steps the municipality is taking to maintain a rate of growth that will not exceed the municipality's ability to provide or finance required community infrastructure, facilities and services over the 20-year planning period.

F. Capital Budget and Program. Adopted capital budget and program.

QUESTION 6.1

Applicants need to discuss existing and planned community infrastructure, facilities and services. Responses should not be limited to potable water and wastewater treatment infrastructure, but should include the full range of utilities, facilities and services covered in the municipal plan. This includes educational and recreational facilities, hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage and other similar community facilities and services.

The applicant municipality's adopted capital budget and program will be examined to determine if adequate consideration has been given to providing needed infrastructure, facilities and services within the proposed growth center.

Capital Budget and Program

To be eligible for growth center designation, a municipality must have an adopted capital budget and program, which consists of a capital budget for the current fiscal year and a projection of capital expenses over the next five fiscal years.

The growth center program is based on a 20-year planning period, therefore requiring applicants to plan for infrastructure needs beyond the time horizon of standard capital plans. It may not be feasible for municipalities to prepare a detailed, long-range capital improvement program for the entire planning period. Applicants can, however, anticipate significant infrastructure needs directly linked to projected growth such as wastewater treatment or school facilities. Since growth center designation will be reviewed every five years, municipalities will have the ability to show how their annually updated capital budgets and programs address evolving growth center needs.

Long-range capital planning can provide municipalities with the opportunity to acquire or identify lands needed for the expansion of existing or construction of new facilities (such as municipal offices, schools, or public safety buildings). Applicants will be asked to demonstrate that they have considered the public infrastructure and service needs resulting from projected growth and are actively planning to provide adequate levels of service as development proceeds.

Capital expenses that municipalities may be planning for include:

- ◆ Water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure
- ◆ Transportation (roads, transit, sidewalks, trails, municipal parking)
- ◆ Civic buildings and administration, schools
- ◆ Public spaces and recreation facilities (greens, parks, ball fields, streetscape)
- ◆ Public safety (police, fire, rescue)

An applicant's capital improvement budget and program can be re-examined during each five-year review to confirm that the municipality is on track to provide needed infrastructure and services.

The adopted capital budget and program should identify potential funding sources for planned projects. Applicants may also want to consider potential funding sources for long-range projects. Applicants may want to describe the status of any projects within the proposed growth center currently in line for funding such as improvements listed in the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Multi-Year Transportation Program (the STIP).

QUESTION 6.2

Applicant municipalities should have considered their ability to provide or finance the new, expanded or improved community infrastructure, facilities and services that will be needed to support development within growth centers. Municipalities may prepare a growth management plan or study to determine an appropriate level of growth that will not exceed their ability to provide infrastructure, facilities and services.

Rate of Growth

The main purpose of capital improvement planning is to ensure that needed infrastructure can be provided in a manner that is affordable to the municipality. Understanding the relationship between growth of various types, the resulting increase in demand for public services and the cost of providing those services is critical to the growth center planning process.

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate that they have considered the fiscal implications of anticipated growth and are financially preparing to provide the

requisite infrastructure and services. The municipality can explore options to manage the rate and/or costs of growth such as:

- ◆ Impact fees, which places the burden of paying for new or expanded infrastructure on the development that necessitates it.
- ◆ Phasing of development, which can be required when the rate of growth is out-pacing the municipality's ability to provide services.
- ◆ Allocation of wastewater capacity, which can be used to limit the rate of development, or to promote specific types of or locations for growth.
- ◆ Special assessment districts, which can be used to shift the tax burden of improvements to those property owners that benefit directly from them.
- ◆ TIFs (tax increment financing), which allows municipalities to borrow against future tax revenues of properties benefiting from public improvements.

REFERENCES

Capital Budget and Program	72
Facility Management Plans	77
Growth Management Plans	77
Sewer Allocation Ordinances	78
Phasing of Development	78
Impact Fees	78
Special Assessment Districts	78
Tax Increment Financing	79

7. *The proposed growth center incorporates existing or planned public spaces that promote social interaction, such as public parks, civic buildings (e.g., post office, municipal offices), community gardens, and other formal and informal places to gather (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(ii)).*

7.1 Identify all existing or planned public spaces located within the proposed growth center and summarize the steps the municipality is taking to plan for, provide and/or maintain public spaces, including open space and public recreation facilities, within the proposed growth center.

7.2 If existing public buildings/uses (post office, municipal office, school, library, etc.) are not included within the proposed growth center, explain the municipality's rationale in drawing its growth center boundary to exclude them.

G. Infrastructure and Facilities Maps. Map delineating the boundaries of any existing or planned sewer service area(s) within the municipality. Map showing the location of all existing or planned civic buildings in the municipality. Map indicating the location of all public spaces existing or planned within the growth center. Map of all existing and planned transportation facilities including pedestrian/non-vehicular and public transit facilities. The municipality's Official Map, if one has been adopted. (The growth center and downtown/village center/new town center boundaries should be shown on all maps. Multiple data layers may be presented on a single map as long as the map remains legible.)

QUESTION 7.1

Applicants should be considering existing and planned public spaces and civic uses when delineating and planning for their growth center. While this question may overlap with information covered in Question 6.1, the focus of applicant's response should be on the public spaces and uses that promote social interaction and a sense of community. Provision of open space and outdoor recreation facilities conveniently located to residential neighborhoods should be addressed.

Public Spaces and Civic Uses

Civic uses such as the municipal office, school, post office or library, which bring residents to the center of town on a regular basis, are important elements of a vital center. Public open spaces that frequently host community activities serve a similar function. When delineating a growth center, applicants should consider the location of existing public spaces and civic buildings within the municipality. Ideally, many of these will be incorporated into the proposed growth center.

Growth may necessitate creation of new public spaces. Preferably, these needs can be met with facilities and spaces that are located in a central, dense part of the growth center, easily accessible to most residents. New public spaces may also serve as a focal point for residential neighborhoods within the growth center.

Planning for greenways, open space and outdoor recreation facilities becomes increasingly important as settlement areas expand and/or become more densely developed. A common standard used by cities around the country for many years to guide provision of parks and recreation facilities was 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 population. More detailed standards have been developed by recreation organizations, professional and trade associations, and municipalities, which may be more useful to municipalities planning for growth centers. One such guideline is from the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council, which envisions a network of trails and greenways across the state that will originate within 15 minutes or closer to where most Vermonters live.

Applicants should plan for the areas and facilities that will meet the needs of future growth center residents for outdoor recreation, connections to the natural environment and alternative modes of transportation. Increasingly, connections are being made between

land use planning, community design, easy access to recreation facilities and health. A compact, pedestrian-oriented growth center can support a more active and healthy lifestyle for its residents.

Applicants can demonstrate adequate planning for public spaces and civic uses through actions such as:

- ◆ Estimating future need for expanded or new public spaces given the municipality's projected growth.
- ◆ Adopting an Official Map that identifies desired locations for future public uses.
- ◆ Adopting a capital budget and program that shows budgeted financial support for the acquisition and/or continuing maintenance of public buildings and open space.
- ◆ Preparing facility management plans for public spaces and uses.
- ◆ Requiring dedications of public open space for certain types or sizes of development.
- ◆ Planning, building and/or maintaining a network of trails or greenways within the proposed growth center.
- ◆ Initiating a streetscape improvement plan.
- ◆ Planning, building and/or maintaining public parks and recreation facilities near where people live.

QUESTION 7.2

To the greatest extent feasible, existing public functions like the post office, municipal office, school, or library should be located within the proposed growth center. A growth center that excludes existing public buildings and/or uses has the potential to adversely impact the viability of those public buildings and/or uses. Such a growth center may also be challenged to create a sense of community if it is not providing significant civic uses or spaces.

REFERENCES

Public Spaces	53
Capital Budget and Program	72
Official Map	72
Facility Management Plans	77
Dedication Requirements	78
Open Space Plans	77

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8. *The proposed growth center is organized around one or more central places or focal points, such as prominent buildings of civic, cultural, or spiritual significance or a village green, common, or square (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(iii)).*

The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(v)).

- 8.1 Identify the focal point(s) around which the proposed growth center will be organized.
- 8.2 If the growth center is associated with an existing downtown or village center whose form is linear, summarize the steps the municipality is taking to establish a new development pattern that creates depth as opposed to continuing the linear pattern and/or describe any constraints that limit creating greater depth.
- 8.3 Describe the extent to which the municipality is planning for and/or requiring development of an interconnected street network within the proposed growth center.

QUESTION 8.1

Central Focus

The lack of a central focus is a hallmark of suburban sprawl. One of the smart growth principles of the growth center program is to promote development that is organized around one or more central focal points. Applicants should be considering how to implement urban or community design principles to guide the form of future development in a manner that meets the intent of the growth center program.

Most Vermont municipalities already have an existing municipal center that serves as a focal point for the community, and many have the stereotypical historic town center with civic buildings located around a common or green. Preferably, these will become a central focus in proposed growth centers where new development will be an organic extension of existing development patterns.

For municipalities with no existing identifiable center, such as linear settlements or new town centers, new focal points can be planned. Planning a new town center may be appropriate for towns whose centers are incorporated cities or villages that long ago separated (although joint applications from such municipalities may be appropriate as well). Towns with multiple small centers or linear development patterns that have a weak center can strengthen their sense of place by creating a central focus.

The size of such spaces is not as significant as a central location, visibility from the public way, and ideally an association between public spaces and public buildings. As with an existing focal point, the proposed growth center should be built around or adjacent to one or more new focal points.

A series of related or multiple unrelated focal points may be appropriate, especially in larger growth centers. Focal points are critical organizing elements that create a sense of place and help people navigate.

Neighborhoods can also be planned around a central focal point such as a pocket park, public building or small commercial area. Streets can be designed to provide views of important community features and to terminate at given locations to frame a specific view.

Applicants can demonstrate that the proposed growth center will have one or more central focal points through action such as:

- ◆ Planning to maintain existing or build new civic uses in locations that reinforce the focal point(s).
- ◆ Preparing a master plan that sets forth a vision for how development should be guided around the focal point(s).
- ◆ Adopting an Official Map that designates the future location of a planned focal point(s).

QUESTION 8.2

Non-Linear Development Pattern

Linear development is another hallmark of suburban sprawl that the growth centers program actively discourages. Historic linear village centers are fairly common in Vermont, especially at the small scale. While some are constrained by their physical environment, most could increase their depth through development of an interconnected street network built off the spine of the existing highway.

Applicants can demonstrate that the proposed growth center will not promote linear development through action such as:

- ◆ Avoiding use of linear or strip zoning districts.
- ◆ Undertaking a master planning process to identify appropriate locations for extending or creating an interconnected street network.
- ◆ Adopting an Official Map that lays out an interconnected network of future streets.
- ◆ Building a parallel road along a main street in a commercial area.

QUESTION 8.3

Interconnected Street Network

A largely interconnected street system within the growth center is critical to achieving the purposes of the growth center program. An interconnected road network can also provide multiple travel routes and reduce congestion on main thoroughfares.

Applicants can promote development of interconnected streets through actions such as:

- ◆ Undertaking a master planning process to identify appropriate locations for extending or creating an interconnected street network.
- ◆ Adopting an Official Map that lays out an interconnected network of future streets.
- ◆ Discouraging or prohibiting construction cul-de-sac or dead-end streets except where necessitated by physical or environmental conditions.
- ◆ Limiting the length of cul-de-sac streets.
- ◆ Requiring rights-of-way be established or street stubs built that would allow for future road connections as adjacent lands are developed.

REFERENCES

Public Spaces	53
Transportation	61
Master Plans	76
Official Map	72

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9. *The proposed growth center is supported by existing or planned investments in infrastructure and encompasses a circulation system that is conducive to pedestrian and other non-vehicular traffic and that incorporates, accommodates and supports the use of public transit systems (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(v)).*

The proposed growth center is planned to enable choice in modes of transportation (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(C)).

The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by development that limits transportation options, especially for pedestrians (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(ii)).

- 9.1 Describe the facilities/provisions that exist and are planned for pedestrian and other non-vehicular traffic within the proposed growth center, specifically identifying the steps the municipality is taking to promote a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment within the growth center in general and specifically within the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center.
- 9.2 Describe the current level of public transit service/facilities serving the proposed growth center and the extent to which improvements in public transit service/facilities are planned for the proposed growth center, specifically citing any steps the municipality is taking to enable transportation alternatives within the growth center in general and within the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center.
- 9.3 Present the best available information on the current condition, current level of service, and current and projected traffic on routes that will serve the proposed growth center.
- 9.4 Address the capacity of the road network to accommodate increased traffic, specifically (a) identifying any infrastructure improvements that might be required by the state, municipality and/or private developers to accommodate increased traffic, and (b) discussing the steps the municipality is taking to plan for a transportation network that will be able to accommodate growth and development in a manner consistent with the goals of the growth center program.
- 9.5 If the municipality has adopted an Official Map, summarize the planned transportation infrastructure delineated on the map within the proposed growth center.

QUESTION 9.1

Pedestrian and Non-Vehicular Traffic

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are a necessity for a growth center that is conducive to non-vehicular transportation modes. Well-designed sidewalks and shared-use paths within the proposed growth center, especially within the associated downtown, village center or new town center, can ease the potential congestion associated with areas of dense development by encouraging people to park their cars and travel on foot or by bicycle. Sidewalks and paths can reduce vehicular traffic if they connect neighborhoods, commercial areas, employment centers, and public spaces or uses.

Applicants can demonstrate that the municipality is planning for pedestrian and non-vehicular access within the proposed growth center through actions such as:

- ◆ Preparing and implementing a multi-modal circulation master plan.
- ◆ Preparing and implementing a sidewalk master plan that shows existing and planned sidewalks serving the proposed growth center and planned phasing of future installations.
- ◆ Preparing and implementing a shared-use path master plan that shows existing and planned off-road paths that will serve the proposed growth center and a narrative indicating the planning process for implementing the plan.
- ◆ Adopting an Official Map that shows where a network of sidewalks and/or paths will be extended or established.
- ◆ Adopting public works specifications for roadway cross-sections within the proposed growth center that will include provisions for pedestrians and pedestrian amenities, parallel parking, and/or on-road bicycle use within the right-of-way.

QUESTION 9.2

Public Transit

Although fixed-route public transportation is limited or not available in many parts of Vermont, the land use pattern of growth centers could help promote any current and future public transportation by clustering development within easily served dense centers.

Applicants can demonstrate that the municipality is working with local transportation providers to plan for the future availability of or improvements to transit service through actions such as:

- ◆ Planning for transit service serving the proposed growth center, commercial and/or public, including identifying routes, locating transit stops and providing connectivity to the designated downtown, village center or new town center, and the sidewalk and path system.
- ◆ Planning for development at densities that can support transit service.
- ◆ Participating in the activities of regional transit providers, including development of short-range transit plans.
- ◆ Supporting the efforts of regional transit providers, including financial support.

QUESTION 9.3

Road Network Condition and Capacity

Applicants should be considering the capacity of the existing road network within and adjacent to the proposed growth center to support projected growth. Applicant municipalities may have completed transportation studies, which can be used to document conditions of the road network.

The traffic impacts of additional residents and businesses can be estimated and compared to the capacity of the existing transportation system. Existing deficiencies in the transportation network within the proposed growth center can also be identified.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) Policy and Planning Division (<http://www.aot.state.vt.us/planning/planning.htm> or (802) 828-3441) can provide applicants with highway and traffic research data including:

- ◆ Sufficiency ratings for state highways and town roads classified as major collectors.
- ◆ AADT (average annual daily traffic) volume for state highways and town roads classified as major collectors.
- ◆ Continuous traffic count data from specific sites around the state.

- ◆ Turning movement counts at major intersections.
- ◆ Crash statistics.

Demand Forecasting

VTrans also maintains a Statewide Travel Demand Forecasting (TDF) model, which is used to analyze existing and future travel patterns based on changing demographics as well as quantify the traffic impacts from major proposed developments.

TDF modeling is a support tool for VTrans Planning and Program Development projects, and upon request, to regional and community transportation and development planning. Assistance may also be available from the regional planning commission and/or metropolitan planning organization. VTrans recommends that applicants use a regional TDF model if one is available. Applicants considering use of the statewide model should make a request early in their planning process.

Applicants may also prepare local projections of traffic impacts resulting from anticipated development within the proposed growth center.

QUESTION 9.4

Transportation Infrastructure Improvements

A designated growth center that will absorb a majority of 20 years worth of projected growth will likely require improvement to and/or expansion of the existing transportation infrastructure to accommodate new growth and to create a balance of facilities for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and other travelers. Applicants should be identifying and prioritizing needed improvements, as well as exploring funding options.

Applicants are encouraged to work with VTrans and their regional planning commissions or metropolitan planning organization, which provide VTrans with a prioritized list of projects as part of the state's capital planning process each year. Active participation in the region's Transportation Advisory Committee will be beneficial for municipalities planning growth centers.

Applicants can demonstrate the municipality's plans and financial capability to provide a transportation system that achieves the purposes of the growth center program through actions such as:

- ◆ Adopting an Official Map that shows existing and (where applicable) new networks of interconnected roadways that will serve the growth center. Prioritization or phasing may be included.
- ◆ Incorporating Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies into plans, bylaws and municipal policies.
- ◆ Incorporating access management strategies into plans, bylaws and other municipal policies.
- ◆ Adopting public works specifications to guide the construction of, or improvements to, existing transportation infrastructure for vehicular as well as other modes of travel, and to create a pleasant, safe environment for pedestrians and other non-vehicular travelers within the growth center.
- ◆ Adopting zoning regulations that establish specific parking requirements (including maximums or shared parking provisions) and other standards for the siting of parking lots within the proposed growth center.
- ◆ Adopting a capital budget and program, facility management documents, and other documents that show budgeted financial support for new or improved roads, sidewalks, municipal parking lots and shared use paths and ongoing maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure within the proposed growth center.
- ◆ Enacting regulations that require applicants to prepare traffic impact analyzes for projects within the growth center based on their scale, type and/or location.

Parking

The management of parking is also essential in order to provide enough efficiently planned spaces for those driving to and within the growth center, and to prevent excessive and poorly located parking that undermines the smart growth principles of the growth center program. Parking requirements are directly related to the goal of creating growth centers that are characterized by compact, dense development.

QUESTION 9.5

Applicants with an adopted Official Map should summarize any transportation infrastructure within the proposed growth center shown on the map that has not been referenced in response to other questions.

REFERENCES

Transportation	61
Transportation Demand Forecasting	69
Traffic Impact Analysis	69
Capital Budget and Program	72
Official Map	72
Public Works Specifications	72
Master Plans	76
Multi-Modal Transportation Plans	76
Parking Standards	83

10. The applicant has identified important natural resources and historic resources within the proposed growth center, anticipated impacts on those resources and has proposed mitigation (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(B)).

The approved plan and the implementing bylaws provide reasonable protection for important natural resources and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)(iv)).

The proposed growth center is planned to protect the state's important environmental, natural and historic features, including natural areas, water quality, scenic resources, and historic sites and districts (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(D)).

- 10.1 Identify the important natural resources (headwaters, streams, shorelines, floodways, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, necessary wildlife habitat, wetlands, endangered species, productive forest lands, and primary agricultural soils) located within the proposed growth center, assess potential impacts on those resources and describe the proposed mitigation.
- 10.2 Identify the historic resources located within the proposed growth center, assess potential impacts on those resources and describe the proposed mitigation, including any steps the municipality is taking to promote the preservation, restoration and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures within the proposed growth center.
- 10.3 Explain the municipality's choices in locating the proposed growth center in relation to its potential impacts on important natural and historic resources.
- 10.4 Summarize the provisions of the approved municipal plan and implementing bylaws that provide reasonable protection for important natural and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center.

H. Resource Maps. Map showing the location of all important natural resources in the municipality. Important natural resources should at a minimum include the following as defined in statute (10 V.S.A. Chapter 151): headwaters, streams, shorelines, floodways, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, necessary wildlife habitat, wetlands, endangered species, productive forest lands, and primary agricultural soils. Map showing the location of national and/or state register historic district(s) in the municipality. Map identifying all historic resources inside the proposed growth center. Historic resources including all contributing structures within any national and/or state register historic district(s), any other state or nationally listed historic site or structure, and identified archaeological resources. (The growth center and downtown/village center/new town center boundaries should be shown on all maps. Multiple data layers may be presented on a single map as long as the map remains legible.)

QUESTION 10.1

Important Natural Resources

Applicants can utilize available GIS data to identify the location of important natural resources both inside and outside the proposed growth center. Important natural resources are defined as headwaters, streams, shorelines, floodways, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, necessary wildlife habitat, wetlands, endangered species, productive forest lands and primary agricultural soils in 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151 (Act 250):

- ◆ Headwaters - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(A) as watersheds:
 - Characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils;
 - With drainage areas of 20 square miles or less;
 - That are above 1,500 feet in elevation;
 - Of public water supplies designated by the Agency of Natural Resources Water Supply Division [(802) 241-3400]; or
 - That are areas supplying significant amounts of recharge waters to aquifers.
- ◆ Streams - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(18) as a current of water which is above an elevation of 1,500 feet above sea level or which flows at any time at a rate of less than 1.5 cubic feet per second.
- ◆ Shorelines - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(17) as the land adjacent to the waters of lakes, ponds, reservoirs and rivers. Shorelines shall include the land between the mean high water mark and the mean low water mark of such surface waters.
- ◆ Floodways - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(6) as the channel of a watercourse which is expected to flood on an average of at least once every 100 years and the adjacent land areas which are required to carry and discharge the flood of the watercourse, as determined by the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources with full consideration given to upstream impoundments and flood control projects.
 - Questions relating to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) maps should be addressed to the ANR Water Quality Division at (802) 241-3770. For more guidance on determining floodway limits, please review ANR's *Procedure on ANR Floodway Determinations in Act 250 Proceedings* and the accompanying *Technical Guidance for Determining Floodway Limits Pursuant to Act 250 Criterion 1(D)*.
- ◆ Rare and irreplaceable natural areas - a list of mapped and potential areas is maintained by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- ◆ Necessary wildlife habitat - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(12) as concentrated habitat which is identifiable and is demonstrated as being decisive to the survival of a species of wildlife at any period in its life including breeding and migratory periods.
- ◆ Wetlands - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(G) as significant wetlands, Class I and II, pursuant to the Rules of the Water Resources Panel of the Natural Resources Board.
- ◆ Endangered species - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(5) as those species the taking of which is prohibited under rules adopted under 10 V.S.A. Chapter 123.
- ◆ Productive forest lands - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(8) as those soils which are not primary agricultural soils but which have a reasonable potential for commercial forestry and which have not been developed. In order to qualify as productive forest soils, the land containing such soils shall be of a size and location, relative to adjoining land uses, natural condition, and ownership patterns so that those soils will be capable of supporting or contributing to a commercial forestry operation. Land use on those soils may include commercial timber harvesting and specialized forest uses, such as maple sugar or Christmas tree production.
- ◆ Primary agricultural soils - defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001(15) as soil map units with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics that have a potential for growing food, feed, and forage crops, have sufficient moisture and drainage, plant nutrients or responsiveness to fertilizers, few limitations for cultivation or limitations which may be easily overcome, and an average slope

that does not exceed 15 percent. Present uses may be cropland, pasture, regenerating forests, forestland, or other agricultural or silvicultural uses. However, the soils must be of a size and location, relative to adjoining land uses, so that those soils will be capable, following removal of any identified limitations, of supporting or contributing to an economic or commercial agricultural operation. Unless contradicted by the qualifications stated in this subdivision, primary agricultural soils shall include important farmland soils map units with a rating of prime, statewide, or local importance as defined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the United States Department of Agriculture.

- For information about the classification and identification of primary agricultural soils, see the NRCS publication, *Farmland Classification Systems for Vermont Soils*.

Natural Resource Mitigation

A well-planned growth center should be located so as to minimize its impacts on important natural resources. Applicants should contact Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) staff early in their planning process to identify potential natural resource issues.

Mitigation procedures are in place for primary agricultural soils, productive forest lands and wetlands. Mitigation for other important natural resources will be handled on a case-by-case basis, following Act 250 procedures and precedents. For a compilation of current Act 250 case precedent on the protection of important natural resources, please refer to the *E-Note Index*, which can be found on the Natural Resources Board website (<http://www.nrb.state.vt.us>).

Applicants are encouraged to accurately delineate important natural resources within their proposed growth centers to the greatest extent feasible to facilitate permitting of future projects. Working with ANR, municipalities may identify potential concerns on developable lands within the proposed growth center that might not otherwise arise until project permitting commences.

Planning for Natural Resources

Where important natural resources cannot reasonably be excluded from a proposed growth center, applicant municipalities can limit potential adverse impacts

through their planning efforts. Municipalities can demonstrate adequate planning for important natural resources through actions such as:

- ◆ Identifying important natural resources and accurately delineating their boundaries, which may include conducting additional field inventories.
- ◆ Forming and/or supporting the efforts of a municipal conservation commission.
- ◆ Cooperating with and supporting the efforts of area conservation organizations.
- ◆ Preparing a master plan that recognizes important natural resources and structures growth in a manner that preserves their natural function and makes them into community resources.
- ◆ Considering topography and important natural resources when planning for new roads and establishing vegetated buffers between roads and resources such as wetlands or streams.
- ◆ Establishing overlay or conservation districts to prevent development from adversely impacting important natural resources.
- ◆ Establishing setbacks and/or buffers to prevent development from encroaching on important natural resources.
- ◆ Enacting flood hazard regulations to limit or prohibit development in floodways.
- ◆ Requiring erosion control and stormwater management plans for new development, both during and after construction.
- ◆ Implementing parking standards that limit the amount of impervious surface and/or encouraging parking lots that are designed to allow for infiltration.
- ◆ Requiring snow removal and storage management plans.
- ◆ Adopting an open space plan and/or creating a fund to allow permanent conservation of important natural resources.
- ◆ Budgeting for and/or establishing an impact fee program to fund the acquisition, management and/or maintenance of public open space that may include important natural resources.

QUESTION 10.2

Historic Resources

Older buildings, districts and historic and archeological sites on or eligible for nomination to the Vermont or National Register of Historic Places may be located within or outside the proposed growth center. These historic resources can be critical elements in maintaining or enhancing community character. It is the intent of the growth center program that new development supports historic community centers.

Municipalities can demonstrate adequate planning for historic resources through actions such as:

- ◆ Establishing a local historic district or basing an overlay zoning district on an existing state or federal historic district.
- ◆ Encouraging or requiring projects involving historic buildings to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (36 CFR Part 67).
- ◆ Establishing a design review district.
- ◆ Forming a design review or advisory board to provide expertise and technical assistance to the planning commission and other review boards.
- ◆ Forming or supporting the efforts of a local historical society.
- ◆ Allowing for adaptive reuse of historic buildings within zoning regulations.
- ◆ Discouraging and/or requiring conditional use review for the demolition of historic structures within zoning regulations.
- ◆ Working with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to update the municipality's survey of historic sites.

QUESTION 10.3

Applicants are not expected to delineate a proposed growth center to completely exclude all important natural resources. Many of Vermont's traditional downtowns or village centers formed around rivers or streams. If properly protected and planned for, the presence of important natural resources can enhance the growth center, create character, and provide passive and active recreation opportunities. However, to the greatest extent feasible, applicants should strive to

locate proposed growth centers where there is the least potential for impacting important natural resources.

QUESTION 10.4

Planning for the lands outside the growth center is essential to meeting the goals of the growth center program. It is likely that most of a municipality's important natural resources will be located outside the proposed growth center.

REFERENCES

Open Space Plans	77
Impact Fees	78
Design Review	81
Historic Districts	81
Historic Building Rehabilitation Standards	81
Conservation Subdivision Design	85
Setbacks and Buffers	88
Building Envelopes	88
Conservation Districts and Overlays	88
Flood Hazard Regulations	88
Stormwater Management & Erosion Control	89

11. *The most recently adopted guidelines of the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets have been used to identify areas proposed for agriculture and the proposed growth center has been designed to avoid the conversion of primary agricultural soils, wherever possible (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(C)).*

The proposed growth center serves to strengthen agricultural and forest industries and is planned to minimize conflicts of development with these industries (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(E)).

The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by the fragmentation of farm and forest land (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(iii)).

- 11.1 Justify the municipality's choices in locating the proposed growth center in relation to the conversion of primary agricultural soils and the fragmentation of farm or forest land.
- 11.2 Identify any ways in which the proposed growth center will serve to strengthen agricultural and forest industries (to the extent that they exist) and discuss the steps the municipality is taking to minimize conflicts between development and agricultural and forest industries (to the extent that they exist).
- 11.3 Describe the provisions of the approved municipal plan and implementing bylaws that limit or discourage the fragmentation of farm and forest land.

QUESTION 11.1

Agricultural Soils

Most of Vermont's traditional downtowns and village centers were located in areas with high-quality soils, so expanding these settlements is likely to impact primary agricultural soils. This loss of productive soils within the growth center can be balanced with policies that will limit further fragmentation of large blocks of working lands and further conversion of primary agricultural soils outside the center.

When delineating the proposed growth center boundary, applicants should review soils maps and data identifying primary agricultural soils in combination with assessing whether large blocks of working or potentially viable productive lands are located in the municipality. In delineating the boundary of a proposed growth center, applicants should consider the impact on primary agricultural soils and strive to minimize the loss of high quality soils on property that, due to its size, location and/or current use, remains economically viable for farming or forestry.

Soil Maps

The Natural Resource Conservation Survey Web Soil Survey is an on-line soil mapping tool (for most areas of the state) that displays a soils map for any parcel of land defined by the user and then calculates the number of acres of each soil type. The tool will also calculate the number of acres of primary agricultural soils for any parcel. The Web Soil Survey and specific instructions on the use of this tool to determine soil types and acreages are available from the Vermont Natural Resources Board website (<http://www.nrb.state.vt.us>).

For most areas of the state, soil maps are available in GIS format. Applicants can visit the Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI) website (<http://www.vcgi.org>) or contact their regional planning commission to determine whether this information is available in electronic format.

Agricultural Soil Mitigation

For projects located within designated growth centers, suitable mitigation will take the form of an off-site mitigation fee paid to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), based on the number of acres of primary agricultural soils impacted by a project.

For projects located outside designated growth centers, applicants, in most instances, will be required to provide on-site mitigation through site design and planning, resulting in compact development patterns that will preserve primary agricultural soils on the project tract for present and future agricultural use. The remaining soils must be capable of supporting or contributing to an economic or commercial agricultural operation.

See 10 V.S.A. § 6093 for a more complete description of mitigation requirements for primary agricultural soils.

QUESTION 11.2

Planning for growth centers and planning to maintain viable working farm and forest lands are inextricably linked. In addition to consuming productive land, development on rural land can result in increased conflicts between farms or forestry operations and their neighbors. In planning for a growth center, municipalities can consider options for limiting the potential for conflicts such as requiring buffers between developed and working lands.

QUESTION 11.3

High-density compact development within a growth center should reduce development pressure on outlying rural lands, but it will not eliminate it all together. For a discussion of actions that municipalities can take to protect working lands and open space, see discussion of Outlying Area on page 22.

REFERENCES

PUDs and Cluster Development	84
Conservation Subdivision Design	85
Transfer of Development Rights	86
Setbacks and Buffers	88

12. The applicant has a regionally confirmed planning process and an approved municipal plan. The approved plan contains provisions that are appropriate to implement the designated growth center proposal. The applicant has adopted by-laws in conformance with the municipal plan that implement the provisions in the plan that pertain to the designated growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)).

The proposed growth center is planned to reinforce the purposes of 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151. The proposed growth center is planned in accordance with the planning and development goals under 24 V.S.A. § 4302 (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vii) and (viii)).

12.1 List the dates of the most recent plan adoption, bylaw amendment(s), and municipal plan approval and confirmation of the municipality’s planning process by the regional planning commission.

12.2 Highlight any additional steps the municipality is taking to implement the purposes of the growth center program that have not been discussed in previous responses, specifically those that relate to the purposes of 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151 or the goals of 24 V.S.A. § 4302.

I. Administrative. A signed municipal resolution showing that the municipality has authorized the application. Evidence that the regional planning commission and regional development corporation for that region have been notified of the municipality’s intent to apply. A letter from the municipality’s regional planning commission must be included in the application, stating that the municipal planning process has been confirmed under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4350.

Figure 9. Administrative Process

Applicants will need to have completed the following administrative steps before submitting a final application:

- ◆ Adopted a municipal plan that contains provisions that are appropriate to implement the designated growth center proposal.
- ◆ Adopted a capital budget and program.
- ◆ Notified the regional planning commission and regional development corporation of their intent to apply.
- ◆ Received regional approval of the adopted municipal plan from the regional planning commission.

- ◆ Have their municipal planning process confirmed by the regional planning commission.
- ◆ Authorized the decision to apply by a vote of the legislative body, following the process of 24 V.S.A. § 1972 and 1973 (adoption of ordinances and rules).

Applicants may submit draft bylaws, ordinances and other regulatory tools with final growth center designation contingent upon their adoption.

Any non-regulatory measures referenced in the application must be in place before submitting a final application.

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

FINAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- _____ 1.1 Discuss why a majority of the projected growth cannot reasonably occur within an existing designated downtown, village center or new town center within the municipality, specifically citing the municipality's 20-year projections for population, housing and employment growth and the build-out potential of any designated downtown, village center, or new town center in the municipality.

- _____ 2.1 Summarize the amount of land included within the proposed growth center and its build-out potential.

- _____ 2.2 Explain how the municipality arrived at the proposed growth center boundary and determined how much land was needed to meet the requirement of accommodating a majority of projected growth over the 20-year planning period, specifically justifying how the proposed boundary achieves the program goal of a compact center that does not encompass an excessive area of land.

- _____ 2.3 Identify the steps that the municipality is taking to manage any necessary extensions of infrastructure to parts of the municipality that are currently not served by water or wastewater in a manner that will discourage a scattered or low-density pattern of development.

- _____ 3.1 Identify all designated downtowns, village centers and new town centers in the applicant municipality and adjacent municipalities.

- _____ 3.2 Identify all major retail areas (downtowns, shopping centers, malls, big-box stores, etc.) within the applicant municipality and adjacent municipalities, specifically noting which currently function primarily as community-serving retail areas and which serve primarily as destination retail areas.

- _____ 3.3 Describe the extent to which any downtowns, village centers or new town centers (designated or non-designated) that are located outside the proposed growth center currently serve as significant employment, retail, service or civic centers for residents in the applicant municipality.

- _____ 3.4 Describe the extent to which the applicant municipality currently serves as an employment and/or residential center in the region, presenting the best available statistics regarding place of work and residence for people living and working in the applicant municipality.

- _____ 3.5 Summarize the regional planning commission's 20-year projections for population, housing, employment growth for the region and discuss what percentage of regional growth the municipality is planning to accommodate within its growth center by type – residential, commercial (retail and non-retail), and industrial, and how that compares to its current regional share, explaining any significant changes in regional share being planned for by the municipality.

- _____ 4.1 Discuss the character, land uses and density of development that currently exists and will be permitted on lands within the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center, specifically citing the steps the municipality is taking to encourage infill development, adaptive reuse and/or redevelopment of vacant or underutilized land within the designated downtown or village center, or to promote development with a 'downtown' character within a new town center.

- _____ 4.2 Discuss the character, land uses and density of development that currently exists and will be permitted on lands within the proposed growth center but outside the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center, specifically citing the steps that the municipality is taking to encourage a the settlement pattern resulting from growth center designation that is not be characterized by scattered or excessively land consumptive development.

- _____ 4.3 Discuss the character, land uses and density of development that currently exists and will be permitted on lands outside the proposed growth center, specifically citing the steps the municipality is taking to further the goal of retaining rural character outside the proposed growth center, to the extent that such a character exists.

- _____ 5.1 Summarize the desired mix of uses within the proposed growth center as envisioned in the municipal plan and allowed under the land use regulations, specifically identifying any steps the municipality is taking to encourage mixed-use development within the proposed growth center.
- _____ 5.2 Discuss the steps the municipality is taking to plan for and encourage residential development that meets the needs of a diverse population, including affordable housing, within the proposed growth center.
- _____ 5.3 Discuss the steps the municipality is taking to plan for and encourage economic development within the proposed growth center, specifically describing how the growth center will support a healthy business climate in the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the growth center.
- _____ 5.4 Describe the extent to which large-scale commercial, industrial or institutional, and automobile-oriented uses currently exist in the proposed growth center, and discuss the municipality's policies and regulations related to such uses, specifically identifying all locations within the municipality where such uses will be accommodated.

- _____ 6.1 Describe the capacity of existing community infrastructure, facilities and services (as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4382(4)), and summarize the municipality's plans to provide and finance the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to support projected growth and development within the proposed growth center over the 20-year planning period, citing specific provisions of the municipality's adopted capital budget and program.
- _____ 6.2 Discuss the steps the municipality is taking to maintain a rate of growth that will not exceed the municipality's ability to provide or finance required community infrastructure, facilities and services over the 20-year planning period.

- _____ 7.1 Identify all existing or planned public spaces located within the proposed growth center and summarize the steps the municipality is taking to plan for, provide and/or maintain public spaces, including open space and public recreation facilities, within the proposed growth center.
- _____ 7.2 If existing public buildings/uses (post office, municipal office, school, library, etc.) are not included within the proposed growth center, explain the municipality's rationale in drawing its growth center boundary to exclude them.

- _____ 8.1 Identify the focal point(s) around which the proposed growth center will be organized.
- _____ 8.2 If the growth center is associated with an existing downtown or village center whose form is linear, summarize the steps the municipality is taking to establish a new development pattern that creates depth as opposed to continuing the linear pattern and/or describe any constraints that limit creating greater depth.
- _____ 8.3 Describe the extent to which the municipality is planning for and/or requiring development of an interconnected street network within the proposed growth center.

- _____ 9.1 Describe the facilities/provisions that exist and are planned for pedestrian and other non-vehicular traffic within the proposed growth center, specifically identifying the steps the municipality is taking to promote a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment within the growth center in general and specifically within the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center.

- _____ 9.2 Describe the current level of public transit service/facilities serving the proposed growth center and the extent to which improvements in public transit service/facilities are planned for the proposed growth center, specifically citing any steps the municipality is taking to enable transportation alternatives within the growth center in general and within the associated designated downtown, village center or new town center.
- _____ 9.3 Present the best available information on the current condition, current level of service, and current and projected traffic on routes that will serve the proposed growth center.
- _____ 9.4 Address the capacity of the road network to accommodate increased traffic, specifically (a) identifying any infrastructure improvements that might be required by the state, municipality and/or private developers to accommodate increased traffic, and (b) discussing the steps the municipality is taking to plan for a transportation network that will be able to accommodate growth and development in a manner consistent with the goals of the growth center program.
- _____ 9.5 If the municipality has adopted an Official Map, summarize the planned transportation infrastructure delineated on the map within the proposed growth center.
- _____ 10.1 Identify the important natural resources (headwaters, streams, shorelines, floodways, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, necessary wildlife habitat, wetlands, endangered species, productive forest lands, and primary agricultural soils) located within the proposed growth center, assess potential impacts on those resources and describe the proposed mitigation.
- _____ 10.2 Identify the historic resources located within the proposed growth center, assess potential impacts on those resources and describe the proposed mitigation, including any steps the municipality is taking to promote the preservation, restoration and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures within the proposed growth center.
- _____ 10.3 Explain the municipality's choices in locating the proposed growth center in relation to its potential impacts on important natural and historic resources.
- _____ 10.4 Summarize the provisions of the approved municipal plan and implementing bylaws that provide reasonable protection for important natural and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center.
- _____ 11.1 Justify the municipality's choices in locating the proposed growth center in relation to the conversion of primary agricultural soils and the fragmentation of farm or forest land.
- _____ 11.2 Identify any ways in which the proposed growth center will serve to strengthen agricultural and forest industries (to the extent that they exist) and discuss the steps the municipality is taking to minimize conflicts between development and agricultural and forest industries (to the extent that they exist).
- _____ 11.3 Describe the provisions of the approved municipal plan and implementing bylaws that limit or discourage the fragmentation of farm and forest land.
- _____ 12.1 List the dates of most recent plan adoption, bylaw amendment(s), and municipal plan approval and confirmation of the municipality's planning process by the regional planning commission.
- _____ 12.2 Highlight any additional steps the municipality is taking to implement the purposes of the growth center program that have not been discussed in previous responses, specifically those that relate to the purposes of 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151 or the goals of 24 V.S.A. § 4302.

REQUIRED SUBMISSIONS

- _____ A. Growth Center Map. A map of the proposed growth center designed to accommodate a majority of the community's growth needs for the next 20 years. The map should use the municipal property tax map overlying an orthophoto as a base and must delineate the boundaries of the new growth center. The boundaries of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center should also be delineated. The map should clearly show which properties are to be included in the growth center. The map legend should indicate the total acreage within the proposed growth center and the acreage of the designated downtown, village center or new town center associated with the proposed growth center.
- _____ B. Growth Projections. Summary tables of the municipality's and region's 20-year population, housing and employment projections, along with a brief narrative describing the projection methodology and how the municipal projections fit with those of the region.
- _____ C. Build-Out Analysis. A build-out analysis for the potential growth center to show that the geographic area of a proposed growth center will accommodate a majority of projected growth over a 20-year period in a manner that is consistent with the definition of a growth center included in the Act. The application should include a summary table of development potential inside the proposed growth center area.
- _____ D. Regional Map. A regional map indicating the location of the proposed growth center in relation to the region and any designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers or growth centers located in the applicant municipality or adjacent municipalities.
- _____ E. Planning and Regulatory Maps. The land use map from the approved municipal plan and applicable zoning district map. Any additional planning or regulatory maps relevant to development within the growth center (master plan map, open space map, etc.).
- _____ F. Capital Budget and Program. Adopted capital budget and program.
- _____ G. Infrastructure and Facilities Maps. Map delineating the boundaries of any existing or planned sewer service area(s) within the municipality. Map showing the location of all existing or planned civic buildings in the municipality. Map indicating the location of all public spaces existing or planned within the growth center. Map of all existing and planned transportation facilities including pedestrian/non-vehicular and public transit facilities. The municipality's Official Map, if one has been adopted. (The growth center and downtown/village center/new town center boundaries should be shown on all maps. Multiple data layers may be presented on a single map as long as the map remains legible.)
- _____ H. Resource Maps. Map showing the location of all important natural resources in the municipality. Important natural resources should at a minimum include the following as defined in statute (10 V.S.A. Chapter 151): headwaters, streams, shorelines, floodways, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, necessary wildlife habitat, wetlands, endangered species, productive forest lands, and primary agricultural soils. Map showing the location of national and/or state register historic district(s) in the municipality. Map identifying all historic resources inside the proposed growth center. Historic resources include all contributing structures within any national and/or state register historic district(s), any other state or nationally listed historic site or structure, and identified archaeological resources. (The growth center and downtown/village center/new town center boundaries should be shown on all maps. Multiple data layers may be presented on a single map as long as map remains legible.)
- _____ I. Administrative. A signed municipal resolution showing that the municipality has authorized the application. Evidence that the regional planning commission and regional development corporation for that region have been notified of the municipality's intent to apply. A letter from the municipality's regional planning commission must be included in the application, stating that the municipal planning process has been confirmed under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 4350.