

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Plan Adoption

The draft 2020 Norwich Town Plan is consistent with the 14 state planning goals established in 24 VSA §4302 as demonstrated on pages 2-3 of the plan. It includes a new future land use map on page 19 (the prior plan used the zoning map as the future land use map) and defines land use planning areas, as below:

THE VILLAGE PLANNING AREA encompasses Norwich's historic village with a settlement pattern and architecture typical of 19th century Vermont. It is characterized by a mix of residential, commercial and civic land uses at higher densities. Buildings are set close to the street with pedestrian access and circulation. There is a concentration of commercial activity in the core surrounded by predominately residential land uses. Potential future growth is limited by physical constraints, commitment to the traditional village scale and form, and absence of wastewater infrastructure (the village is served by municipal water). The intent of the Village Planning Area is to maintain the historic village settlement pattern, architectural character and mix of uses.

THE MIXED USE PLANNING AREA includes land in two areas of Norwich. The area in Lewiston reflects the remnants of an earlier industrial development pattern focused around the railroad depot and river. The railroad continues to own a portion of the property (exempt from local regulation). No significant changes in its use are anticipated during the life of this plan. The other area is on the east side of Route 5 South. This area has evolved and developed in response to the transportation corridor it is bounded by (Route 5, and I-91). It is currently developed with a mix of commercial, institutional and residential land uses. While most of the land is developed, the current land use pattern is low density. The intent of the Mixed Use Planning Area is to reflect the existing development pattern and recognize that there may be opportunity for some mixed use infill with small businesses and housing over time, if constraints posed by the lack of infrastructure and institutional ownership of these lands are addressed.

THE RESIDENTIAL PLANNING AREA is composed of lands already developed into residential lots at moderate densities or suitable for such development due to their proximity to the village, access to transportation, and relatively few natural resource constraints. It is the intent of the Residential Planning Area to accommodate future residential development at densities similar or somewhat higher than currently exist in the area — as feasible — given the availability of infrastructure to support it.

THE RURAL PLANNING AREA includes lands outside the village that retain their rural character, although largely subdivided into residential lots. The settlement pattern is irregular in response to natural features and terrain. Much of the roadscape remains dominated by views of open meadows and wooded hillsides. The intent of the Rural Planning Area is to protect the rural character and maintain a low overall density of development in these areas which are further from the village and major transportation corridors.

THE RESOURCE PROTECTION PLANNING AREA is composed of lands with resource constraints or hazards that significantly limit their potential for future development, and lands not available for future development due to public ownership or private conservation easements. Despite the constraints, most of this land is part of a residential lot, albeit at extremely low densities. The intent of the Resource Protection Planning Area is to recognize

the constraints and limitations that exist on a large portion of the land in Norwich. Little change in the use or development of these lands is anticipated and this plan discourages further disturbance or fragmentation of the remaining undeveloped portions of these lands through incremental, large-lot residential development. The high and medium priority forest blocks have been mapped and can form a basis for future decision-making.

The proposed changes to the Norwich Plan are refinements of long-standing community goals and stated policies. The 2020 plan responds to recent legislative action including forest block and habitat connector goals. After due consideration Norwich is declining to seek an Act 174 determination, but continues with a strong local energy planning program. Any potential impacts due to development will be addressed through a complete revision of the land use regulations, a major action item of this plan.