

Municipal Plan Review Tool

Town of Georgia – Final Review

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

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

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

TOWN PLAN REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Title 24 Chapter 117: Municipal and Regional Planning and Development

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

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

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

Met

Pages: 75-98

Comments: Goals and policies are located in Part IV of the plan. Goals are organized by topics which include Natural Resources, Infrastructure & Town Services, Future Land Use, and Economic Development, Growth & Taxes. Relevant policies are listed under each goal. Responsible parties and a timeline of action are included for each policy.

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

(A) Indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture (using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8), residence, commerce, industry, public and semi-public uses and open spaces, areas reserved for flood plain, and areas identified by the State, the regional planning commission, or the municipality that require special consideration for aquifer protection; for wetland protection, for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors; or for other conservation purposes.

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

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

(D) Indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests.

Met

Pages: 30-53, 67-68, 77, 100-101

MAPS

Present Land Use Plan ✓

Prospective Land Use Plan ☒

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Comments: Points A and D are addressed in Part II of the plan. Maps are shown of floodplains, river corridors, watershed protection areas, wetlands, agricultural soils, forestry soils, rare species, and wildlife habitat blocks. The text elaborates on each specific resource and measures to protect them.

Regarding Point B, there is a future land use map on page 77, with detailed vision statements for each proposed land use district.

Point C is addressed in Part III, which proposes Georgia's South Village as an area for a village center or new town center designation. The plan states how a designation would qualify the village for grant funding programs to establish water and sewer, which is necessary to attract and enable a more walkable downtown village. A future land use policy in Part IV is to apply for Village Center or New Town Center designation in the South Village and Georgia Center (and/or to work with NRPC through the revised Act 181 process to receive state designations for these areas) to promote more compact and efficient growth.

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

Met

Pages: 8-10, 12-14, 71-72, 92-93

MAP

Transportation ☒

Comments: Existing road and highway maintenance is discussed in Part II. Part II also discusses the existing public transportation services serving Georgia, and nearby train services and airports. The freight railway that runs through Georgia is also discussed. Walking trails are discussed under the Outdoor Recreation heading. The potential for the development of a bike and pedestrian trails feasibility study is discussed in Part III, and listed as a policy in part IV. Consider showing walking trails

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

Met

Pages: 7-19, 55-73, 94-99

MAP

Utility and Facility ☒

Comments: Current utilities and facilities are discussed in Part II, with subheadings for the town office, highway department, public safety, fire & emergency, solid waste, water & sewer, electricity & natural gas, telecommunications, recreation, schools, childcare, and postal service. Issues and opportunities related to town facilities and utilities are discussed in Part III. Goals and policies related to infrastructure, town services and energy are listed in part IV.

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

Met

Pages: 36-54, 83-87

Comments: Part II contains subheadings discussing Fragile, Unique and Sensitive Ecology, Scenic Resources, and Historic and Cultural Resources in Georgia. Maps of landscape priorities and threatened, endangered and uncommon species are also included in the section. Goals and policies related to Historic & Cultural Resources and Scenic & Natural Resources are listed in Part IV.

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

Met

Pages: 13, 16-17

MAP

Educational Facility ☒

Comments: Information on schools is located in Part II. Georgia is served by the Georgia Elementary and Middle School for Pre K-8, and students attend high schools outside of the community. Current and projected uses for the school are discussed in the plan. There is no specific map of educational facilities, but the Georgia Elementary and Middle School building is shown on the Facilities and Utilities map on page 13.

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

Met

Pages: 75-105

Comments: Part IV of the plan contains policies that serve as implementation actions for each goal of the plan. Responsible parties and a timeline of action are included for each policy. Priority recommendations are also listed at the start of the section.

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

Met

Pages: 78-80

Comments: The Future Land Use section of Part IV discusses land use districts in adjacent communities and how they align with the Georgia plan. There is also a discussion on how the Georgia plan supports and helps implement goals and policies in the NRPC Regional Plan.

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

Met

Pages: 14-15, 69-70, 79, 100-101

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Comments: Existing energy infrastructure is discussed in Part II. The Energy, Sustainability and Resilience section of Part III outlines ways for the town to take a more active role in leading or supporting sustainable energy solutions, including renewable energy resources. The Energy section of Part IV contains implementation actions related to energy efficiency and support for sustainable energy, including conducting periodic energy audits of Town buildings and vehicles. A statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy is located in the Future Energy Goals subsection of Part IV on page 79.

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

Met

Pages: 23-27, 66, 91-93

Comments: Analysis on current housing stock and affordability is located in Part II, which includes data on year-round and seasonal dwellings. This section has good integration with the town's demographic information. Actions to promote housing affordability are discussed in Part III. This discussion includes providing more variety in the types of housing which are allowed, including apartments, senior apartments, senior living and cottage courts. Implementation actions related to housing are located in Part IV.

Pg. 91 contains a policy to maintain the existing building permit cap of 35 new residences per year and raise the cap on number of units per builder. The plan would benefit from more discussion regarding the justification for maintaining this permit cap and how this cap aligns with the community's housing goals. Building 35 units per year would likely allow Georgia to reach its housing target, but it is unclear what the cap on number of units per builder is and how this is affecting the supply of housing in Georgia. The permit cap is only referenced in the list of goals and policies at the end of the plan. Referencing this policy and the justification for keeping it in other appropriate sections of the plan would make the housing element stronger.

(11) An economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.

Met

Pages: 27-29, 64-65, 67-68, 90-91

Comments: Present economic conditions are discussed in Part II. Desired economic development is discussed in Part III, including to diversify and densify the nonresidential land uses in Georgia, particularly in the southern end of town where commercial and industrial operations are focused. The South Village is identified as a location to create a special destination that could be an attractive place to work, shop and live, and identified as a desired location to focus economic growth. Barriers

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include lack of municipal water and sewer. Policies to implement desired economic development are located in Part IV.

(12)(A) A flood resilience plan that:

(i) identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas, based on river corridor maps provided by the Secretary of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1428(a) or maps recommended by the Secretary, and designates those areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property; and

(ii) recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated under subdivision (12)(A)(i) of this subsection and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

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

Met

Pages: 39, 52-53, 69-70,
86-89, 104-105

Comments: The Flood Resiliency section in Part II discusses flood hazard and fluvial erosion vulnerabilities in Georgia. River corridors, floodplains and wetlands are shown on the Flood, Water and Wetland Resources map on page 39. Potential policies to protect these areas are discussed, including adopting River Corridor regulations in the Georgia Development Bylaws. Further discussion on flood resilience is located in Part III under Energy, Sustainability and Resilience, including the importance of continually updating the local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Preparedness Plan. Implementation actions related to flood resilience are located in Part IV under Scenic & Natural Resources and Other Implementation.

GOALS AND STANDARDS OF REVIEW

24 VSA § 4302

(a) General purposes . . .

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

- (1) To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies.
- (2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.
- (3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state, as well as the community in which it takes place.
- (4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.

(c) In addition, this chapter shall be used to further the following specific goals:

Goal 1: To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

Consistent

Pages: 67-68, 75-77

(A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to downtown centers, village centers, planned growth areas, and village areas as described in section 4348a of this title, and strip development along highways should be avoided. These areas should be planned so as to accommodate a substantial majority of housing needed to reach the housing targets developed for each region pursuant to subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title.

(B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally and regionally designated growth areas, or employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.

(C) Public investments, including construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the planned growth patterns of the area.

(D) Development should be undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles as defined in subdivision 2791(13) of this title.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The plan discusses the importance of developing the South Village as a mixed-use village center to prevent further sprawling strip development. The South Village is described as a targeted area to concentrate economic growth. Potential public investments include establishing municipal water and sewer to make denser development feasible.

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The Future Land Use map proposes changes to existing land use districts, the most substantial of which is the addition of a new Hamlet Business district in Georgia Center. The vision statement for this district makes it clear that development shall be appropriately scaled and patterned to match the older historic hamlet. The vision statement references pedestrian connections, reduced setbacks, and avoiding auto-centric uses such as shopping plazas and drive-thrus as components of the district. This land use district shows an intention to enhance the existing hamlet as a compact village center and make substantial progress toward achieving this planning goal. Future bylaw updates that provide more detail and build out the purpose statement of this district can bring Georgia's zoning in further alignment with smart growth principles.

The Future Land Use map also proposes extending the Business district southward along Route 7 to Conger Road and extending the Residential Hamlet district along Polly Hubbard Road and Route 7. While language in vision statements for both districts states that strip development shall be avoided in these areas, both districts extend linearly along Route 7. Future zoning updates should include clear standards for these districts that elaborate on how strip development will be avoided.

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

Goal 2: To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

Consistent
Pages: 90-91

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Goals and policies related to Economic Development are located in Part IV, and include a policy to promote a diversified and stable economy and a policy to provide infrastructure to accommodate more intensive land uses in designated areas.

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

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

Consistent
Pages: 103

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The plan has a goal to broaden access to educational and vocational training, and a policy to revise land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to the siting and availability of local trade school and vocational training opportunities.

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

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Goal 4: To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

Consistent

Pages: 94-95

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

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The plan contains transportation goals which include working toward the diversification of the local transportation network to include multi-modal options. Implementation actions include considering to pursue funding for a Bicycle and Pedestrian plan.

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

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

Consistent

Pages: 17, 36-53, 56-58, 85-91

(A) significant natural and fragile areas;

(B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands;

(C) significant scenic roads, waterways and views;

(D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Current natural features are identified in the Existing Physical Setting section of Part II, and cultural and historic features are identified in the Historic & Cultural Resources section. The priority implementation actions in Part III include Protection of Local Character & Natural Resources, and Protection of Historic & Cultural Resources. Additional goals and policies are listed in Part IV, including to maintain a list of historic sites and structures, to encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse, and many policies related to preserving natural features.

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

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

Consistent

Pages: 36-53, 56-57, 85-89

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Existing wildlife habitat, forest blocks, and air and water resources are discussed in the Existing Physical Setting section of Part II. Protection of natural resources is a priority implementation action in Part III. Part IV contains additional goals and policies relating to natural resources, including opportunities to better incorporate natural resources into the planning and development review process.

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

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

Consistent

Pages: 69-70, 79, 100-101

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Energy, Sustainability and Resilience is a priority implementation action listed in Part III. The Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan is mentioned under Future Energy Goals in Part IV, and specific implementation actions related to energy are listed as well. These include considering alternative energy systems when upgrading municipal systems, equipment or vehicles, and to work to reduce administrative barriers to sustainable energy adoption.

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

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

Consistent

Pages: 14, 71-72, 97-98

(A) Growth should not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.

(B) Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, should be identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Current recreation lands and facilities in Georgia are discussed in Part II, including the town beach, town forest and Silver Lake Woods. Recreation & Quality of Life is a priority implementation action in Part III, based on support among residents during the planning process for additional walking and biking trails, improved facilities at the town beach, and more activities for local youth. Specific implementation actions in Part IV include to consider the development of a Trails Master Plan and to coordinate with adjacent municipalities to plan for shared recreational amenities.

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

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

Consistent

Pages: 31-35, 64-65, 75-77, 102-103

(A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low overall density.

(B) The manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.

(C) The use of locally-grown food products should be encouraged.

(D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be encouraged.

(E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.

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How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Strengthening and supporting local agricultural industries is a component of the Economically Strong Tax Base priority implementation action in Part III. Specific policies include revising the land use regulations to reduce obstacles to the growth of agricultural industries such as value-added products and locally grown food products. The Land Use sections of the plan make it clear that preserving agricultural space is a priority for the town's local culture and economy, and much of the town is in the Agricultural Residential future land use district.

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

Goal 10: To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

Consistent

Pages: 53, 89

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Natural and Earth Resources in Georgia are discussed in Part II. The plan contains a goal to protect local earth resources until needed for future use for the benefit of the community and to minimize the impacts of extraction on the environment. Policies include ensuring that proposed earth extractions have a plan for reclamation of the site.

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

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

Consistent

Pages: 66, 92-93

(A) Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income, and consistent with housing targets provided for in subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title. -

(B) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.

(C) Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.

(D) Accessory dwelling units within or attached to single family residences that provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons should be allowed.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Housing goals include to allow for a more balanced and diverse mix of housing types that meets the needs of Georgia's population at every stage of life, and to utilize the development potential of the South Village area to accommodate denser housing options where infrastructure is able to support it. Additional detail is provided in the Housing priority implementation action in Part III, and specific policies are listed in Part IV.

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

Goal 12: To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

(A) Public facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal.

(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.

Consistent

Pages: 7-19, 64-65, 96-99

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Existing facilities and services are discussed in Part II, including the town office, highway department, public safety, fire & emergency, water & sewer, solid waste, schools, health services, and the library. The Economically Strong Tax Base priority implementation action in Part III details goals to ensure that development and growth in Georgia occurs at a rate which can be accommodated by regional expansion and improvement of municipal facilities and services. Specific policies are listed in the Town Services & Infrastructure section of Part IV.

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

Goal 13: To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.

Consistent

Pages: 19, 64-65, 67-68, 103

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: Current childcare services in Georgia are discussed in Part II, including how they are not currently sufficient to meet the needs of residents. Ensuring that land development regulations do not negatively impact the availability of safe and affordable childcare is an economic development goal in Part III, and childcare is listed as a potential service that the town could attract to locate in the South Village. Reviewing and revising land use regulations to reduce potential obstacles to childcare is a policy listed in Part IV.

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

Goal 14: To encourage flood resilient communities.

(A) New development in identified flood hazard and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.

(B) The protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion should be encouraged.

Consistent

Pages: 39, 52-53, 87, 104

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(C) Flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be encouraged.

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: The plan has a policy in Part IV to review current Flood Hazard District standards in the town's development regulations for compliance with NFIP standards, and to consider adopting higher standards. The plan also supports protecting and restoring floodplains and river corridors, and the implementation of high priority projects as identified in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Floodplains and river corridors are identified on the Flood, Water and Wetland Resources map and the Flood Resiliency section in Part II

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

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

Consistent
Pages: 69-70

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal: A plan goal is to ensure public utilities and services are enhanced in ways that improve economic development opportunities and quality of life and do not jeopardize public health or the environment.

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

Regional Plan and Adjacent Community Plan Compatibility

Regional Plan

Does the municipal plan propose any changes to future land use districts when compared with the existing zoning map?

Yes

The Future Land Use map proposes changes to existing land use districts, the most substantial of which is the addition of a new Hamlet Business district in Georgia Center. The vision statement for this district makes it clear that development shall be appropriately scaled and patterned to match the older historic hamlet. The vision statement references pedestrian connections, reduced setbacks, and avoiding auto-centric uses such as shopping plazas and drive-thrus as components of the district. This land use district shows an intention to enhance the existing hamlet as a compact village center. Future bylaw updates that provide more detail and build out the purpose statement of this district can bring Georgia's zoning in further alignment with smart growth principles and NRPC's regional goals.

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The Future Land Use map also proposes extending the Business district southward along Route 7 to Conger Road and extending the Residential Hamlet district along Polly Hubbard Road and Route 7. While language in vision statements for both districts states that strip development shall be avoided in these areas, both districts extend linearly along Route 7. Future zoning updates should include clear standards for these districts that elaborate on how strip development will be avoided.

Is the municipal plan compatible with its regional plan?

Yes

Comments: The Assessment of Future Land Use section of Part IV describes how the town plan relates to the NRPC Regional Plan. Common themes in Economic Development, Housing, Recreation, Natural Resources, and Land Use are discussed. The town plan supports and implements many of the goals and policies in the Regional Plan.

Adjacent Municipalities

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

Yes

Comments: The Assessment of Future Land Use section of Part IV describes how Georgia's land use districts relate to adjacent communities, and common themes between town plans. Adjacent communities are St. Albans, Fairfax, and Milton. All adjacent land use districts are compatible across municipal boundaries.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

24 V.S.A. § 4302(f)

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

(2) As used in this chapter, for one plan to be "compatible with" another, the plan in question, as implemented, will not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan.

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If a plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan, the plan may be considered compatible if it includes the following:

- (A) a statement that identifies the ways that it will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other plan;
- (B) an explanation of why any incompatible portion of the plan in question is essential to the desired effect of the plan as a whole;
- (C) an explanation of why, with respect to any incompatible portion of the plan in question, there is no reasonable alternative way to achieve the desired effect of the plan, and
- (D) an explanation of how any incompatible portion of the plan in question has been structured to mitigate its detrimental effects on the implementation of the other plan.

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

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

- (1) is engaged in a continuing planning process that, within a reasonable time, will result in a plan which is consistent with the goals contained in section 4302 of this title; and
- (2) is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes.

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

- (A) is consistent with the goals established in section 4302 of this title;
- (B) is compatible with its regional plan;

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

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

Review and Approval Process

The following procedures shall be used for Regional Planning Commission review of municipal plans. The first procedure pertains to review of municipal plan adoptions and re-adoptions. The second is a procedure for review of municipal plan amendments.

Town Plan Review & Approval Process – Adoptions and Re-adoptions

1. The regional planning commission (RPC) receives a request for municipal plan approval. Staff will encourage municipalities to submit requests for approval at the time of noticing the Planning Commission public hearing.
2. **Preliminary Review.** Staff will complete a Preliminary Staff Review of the draft plan when requests for regional approval are received for a municipal plan that is still under review by the local Planning Commission. Staff may convene a Municipal Plan Review Committee meeting to review the draft plan, and the Preliminary Staff Review, and to make any recommendations to the Planning Commission. Staff will provide comments from the preliminary staff review to the local Planning Commission, including notification of any content or lack thereof that could preclude RPC approval.
3. **Final Review.** Staff will complete a Final Staff Review for municipal plans that have recently been adopted or where the final Selectboard hearing has been or will soon be warned. If the staff review reveals a flaw that would preclude RPC approval, the municipality will be notified. It is the municipality's option as to whether they want a final decision on the plan or if the plan should be withdrawn from the approval process.
4. The Final Staff Review, including draft findings and recommendations, will be provided to the Municipal Plan Review Committee. The Municipal Plan Review Committee shall meet at least once to review the Town Plan, Final Staff Review and prepare findings and recommendations to the Board of Regional Commissioners.
5. The RPC will hold a duly warned public hearing before the RPC makes its final decision on regional approval of the plan and confirmation of the municipalities planning process.
6. The Municipal Plan Review Committee will provide findings and recommendations to the Board of Regional Commissioners on regional approval of the municipal plan and confirmation of the planning process.
7. In all cases the RPC will take final action on the plan approval request within 60 days of its receipt.

Town Plan Amendment Review Process

1. The regional planning commission (RPC) receives a request to review an amendment to the municipal plan.

Town of Georgia Final Plan Review

2. Staff will complete a Final Staff Review, including draft findings, and a recommendation on whether or not the amendment may be approved within the context of the current regional approval of the municipal plan, or if the amendment constitutes a material change to the plan that is beyond the scope of the current regional approval. At the discretion of staff, the staff review and findings will be provided to the Municipal Plan Review committee for review and approval.
3. The Final Staff Review, including findings and recommendations, shall be provided to the municipality. If the amendment constitutes a material change to the plan that is beyond the scope of the current regional approval, the municipality will have the option of submitting the amended plan for regional approval.

Final Staff Review shall consist of the following items:

1. Staff review checklist contained in Municipal Plan Review Tool.
2. Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans – Determination Checklist (if requested/relevant)
3. Municipal Plan Implementation Assessment (for confirmation of planning program)

Municipal Plan Review Committee

The Chair of NRPC will appoint a five-member Municipal Plan Review Committee following the annual meeting each year. The Municipal Plan Review Committee is responsible for reviewing all plans submitted for approval during that year. Board members representing the municipality whose plan or amendment is under review must temporarily recuse themselves as a member of the Committee. They may, however, act on behalf of the municipality during the review process, and provide testimony at the public hearing.

The Committee, at its first meeting in each fiscal year, will elect a Chair to run meetings, the public hearing(s), and to present the Panel's recommendations to the Board and a Vice-Chair to assume the duties of the Chair as needed.

It is the responsibility of the Committee to consider staff recommendations and any comments from the municipality, neighboring municipalities, and other interested parties; and to make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners in the form of written findings and conclusions. If requested, the Committee may provide preliminary comments on a draft plan prior to the final review and findings.

NRPC staff shall organize and warn the required public hearing and any Municipal Plan Review Committee meetings. Committee members shall attend the public hearing or review the record of the hearing. The Committee will prepare written findings and recommendations. The Committee's findings and recommendations will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for action.

Staff Responsibilities

After submission of a request for regional approval by the local legislative body, one or more staff members, appointed by the Executive Director, will conduct a review of a proposed plan or plan amendment. Staff will encourage municipalities to submit requests for regional approval at the time of noticing the planning commission public hearing. When requests are received at this time or at a minimum prior to noticing the first legislative body hearing, staff will conduct a preliminary review of the plan prior to the final review. Staff will review plans using the checklist provided in the Municipal Plan Review Tool. Under direction of the Committee, staff will complete all required public notifications, prepare written findings and otherwise assist the Committee.