

Compatibility

Introduction

As required by 24 V.S.A. § 4348a (8), this chapter of the Plan explains how it aligns with development trends and community needs expressed within the plans of neighboring municipalities and region. Since Act 181 required all regional planning commissions to use consistent language to describe similar land uses, this task will become significantly easier upon the adoption of each Region’s new plan. However, at this point in time, the new Future Land Use Plans for each region have been drafted, but none have been adopted. To address this, ACRPC compares both the existing and proposed Future Land Use plans with those of its neighboring regions. By comparing ACRPC’s plan with those of adjacent communities, we can recognize opportunities for collaboration and identify areas where plans may conflict. This review coordinates growth and sustainable land use across town and regional boundaries.

The Addison County Region shares borders with four Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs):

- ✦ Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to the north
- ✦ Two Rivers–Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) to the east
- ✦ Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) to the south

ACRPC also borders a number of municipalities outside our Region, (see Figure 1).

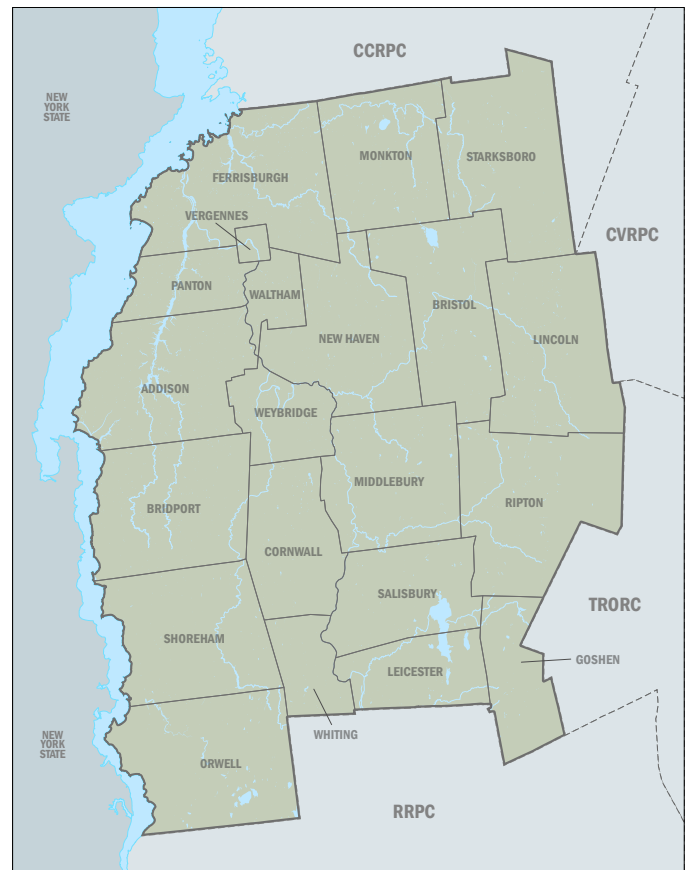
- ✦ North: Charlotte, Hinesburg, Huntington, and Buels Gore
- ✦ East: Fayston, Warren, Granville, Hancock, and Rochester
- ✦ South: Chittenden, Brandon, Sudbury, and Benson

The analysis below summarizes how the Addison County Regional Plan aligns with the plans of these adjacent municipalities and regions. It highlights areas of compatibility and cooperation and potential points of divergence that may require further coordination.

OUR NORTHERN BOUNDARY: CCRPC AND MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES

Overall, the CCRPC and ACRPC current and future regional plans are compatible with one another. In their current plan from 2018, CCRPC designated the majority of lands on the southern border that they share with the ACRPC as “Rural” with the exception of one “Enterprise” area in Hinesburg and a “Village” designation in Huntington. ACRPC’s current Regional Plan, adopted in 2018 and amended in 2022, designates the lands on its northern border with CCRPC primarily as “Rural and Agriculture” and “Forestland and Conservation/Floodplain” with the exception of a relatively small “Residential” designation in northern Monkton. In their proposed Future Land Use maps, both Regions have retained similar land uses and have primarily designated the areas along their

Figure 1: ACRPC Region and Towns



shared border as a mix of Rural General, Rural Agriculture or Forestry, or Rural Conservation. These designations emphasize the protection of rural character, support for agricultural viability, and long-term land conservation. There is one notable difference in future land use between the two regions—the designation of an Enterprise area in the Town of Hinesburg—but the different land uses are not inherently incompatible with one another. Monitoring of traffic and ecosystem impacts on nearby, rurally designated lands in the Town of Starksboro should be sufficient for maintaining cohesive and orderly development. The two regions also share several key transportation and environmental planning priorities—particularly along U.S. Route 7, within the Lewis Creek watershed, and across the mountain headwaters of the LaPlatte and Huntington Rivers. Finally, inter-regional traffic patterns are also likely to change somewhat as housing growth in the Addison Region attracts workers from the Chittenden Region. This will likely be the case for all regions that border the Chittenden Region. As such, housing growth in the Addison Region communities and the commuter habits that they influence should be studied further, but that growth is unlikely to create unique or new problems for the Region.

Charlotte

The Town of Charlotte borders the Towns of Ferrisburgh and Monkton to the north. All communities share a strong commitment to preserving their rural character and working landscapes. In its current Municipal



Plan, Charlotte classifies all of its abutting land area as a “Rural Planning Area,” indicative of their commitment to preserve traditional land use in the area. On the ACRPC side of the border, the future land use sections of Ferrisburgh and Monkton support land conservation, active agriculture, and clustered residential development except on the Route 7 corridor in Ferrisburgh. Ferrisburgh permits limited mixed-use development along U.S. Route 7, classified as “North Industrial” and “North Business” in its plan, and has a nearby “Historic District.” The designation of nearby lands in the Monkton Town Plan as a “Rural Residential Planning Region” is likewise compatible with nearby land uses. Ongoing collaboration—such as corridor planning through VTrans and watershed initiatives led by the Lewis Creek Association support shared goals and foster mutual benefits between the two towns.

Hinesburg

The Town of Hinesburg shares a border with the Towns of Monkton and Starksboro, and all three towns have embraced planning strategies that support compact village centers surrounded by rural and forested landscapes. On its border with Monkton, Hinesburg’s Town Plan designates its nearby lands as “Rural Agricultural,” which is generally compatible with Monkton’s “Rural Residential Planning Region” across the border. To the east of Monkton, Hinesburg abuts the Town of Starksboro. Starksboro’s “Lewis Creek Valley Planning Area,” “Rural Planning Area,” and, importantly, its “Upland Forest Planning” area border Hinesburg, and its “Rural Agricultural” and “Rural Forest” land uses are generally similar to Starksboro’s. There is one notable difference in this area. Hinesburg’s current Future Land Use plan notes an “Industrial” area, located on its southern boundary. Proposed to be designated as an Enterprise Land Use area by CCRPC, this difference in land use near forest and watershed designated areas in Starksboro highlights the need for ongoing coordination to ensure land use remains compatible. As development continues, particularly new housing in Monkton and Hinesburg, both regions will need to monitor that development and manage transportation impacts along their shared corridor as needed.

Huntington and Buels Gore

Huntington and Buels Gore border the mountainous eastern portions of Starksboro. These areas are defined by high elevations, limited access, and extensive forest resources. All towns in the area call for future land uses that restrict the types of development that can occur in these upland areas, prioritizing conservation, sustainable forestry, and habitat connectivity. Classified as “Rural Residential” areas in Huntington’s Plan and “Forestry/Conservation One,” “Forestry/Conservation Two,” and a small, rural aesthetic “Design District” in Buels Gore’s Plan, these nearby land uses are compatible with Starksboro’s own “Upland Forest Planning Area.” There are no known plan conflicts in these areas, and there are strong opportunities for cross-boundary coordination on forest management, wildlife corridors, and climate resilience planning.

OUR EASTERN BOUNDARY: CVRPC AND TRORC AND MEMBER COMMUNITIES

CVRPC

CVRPC and ACRPC define lands on their border similarly to one another. Their current Future Land Use plans designate their border areas as “Resource” lands (CVRPC) and as “Rural and Agricultural” and “Forestland and Conservation / Floodplain,” (ACRPC) respectively. CVRPC’s current plan defines “Resource” lands as “lands requiring special protection or consideration due to their uniqueness, irreplaceable or fragile nature, or important ecological function.” ACRPC’s proposed Future Land Use Plan designates its border lands, in the Town of Lincoln, almost exclusively as Rural Conservation land. This is done to discourage development on steep slopes and heavily forested areas. CVRPC’s proposed Future Land Use plan designates its border lands similarly, classifying most as “Rural Conservation” and the remainder as “Resource-based Recreation.” Limited rural residential use is allowable in these areas, but new commercial, roads, and utilities development is discouraged without demonstration that such development is vital and cannot take place elsewhere. CVRPC and ACRPC plans are compatible and mutually reinforce conservation and low-impact land use goals in their shared border region. The regions’ physical geography limits development conflicts due to its characteristics.

It’s characteristics also suggest a joint responsibility: stewardship of shared, trans-boundary ecosystems.

Fayston and Warren

The Towns of Fayston and Warren border Lincoln along the northeastern edge of Addison County. The area is predominantly mountainous and forested, has little development pressure, with the exception of the Sugarbush ski area within the Green Mountain National Forest. The Town of Lincoln designates the land that borders Fayston and Warren as a “Special Protection” area that encompasses its share of the Green Mountain National Forest in its current plan. This is comparable to Fayston’s designation, “Forest, Headwater, and Fragmentation Protection,” and Warren’s “Forest and Conservation” designation for their abutting lands in their current plans. Given the geographic isolation and steep terrain, cross-boundary impacts are minimal. The principal opportunities for cooperation involve forest management, watershed protection, and climate adaptation planning.

TRORC

TRORC currently designates the lands in their region that border ACRPC almost exclusively as “Forest Based Resource” lands. They have also designated a small “Rural” land area nearby in the Town of Hancock. These nearby designations are compatible with ACRPC’s own current land use designations in the area: “Rural and Agricultural” and “Forestland and Conservation / Floodplain.” TRORC and ACRPC’s proposed Future Land Use maps are also compatible: both RPCs designate the area along their shared border primarily as “Rural Conservation” lands. A relatively smaller portion of land that abuts ACRPC in this area is classified as “Rural General”; however, these are similar land uses to those in neighboring Towns in the Region. This is primarily due to the biotic and abiotic characteristics of the shared border: forested, steep mountain slopes. There is one slight, but notable proposed land use change in the TRORC plan: a Resource-based Recreation area that partially abuts the border with Ripton. Serving the “Snow Bowl” and owned by Middlebury College, this designation is not a new development and better represents an area of inter-regional cooperation than an area of poten-

tial conflict. There are no significant conflicts between TRORC and ACRPC along their shared boundary. Both regions prioritize conservation and compatible recreation, and both support the long-term preservation of forest blocks and wildlife corridors in the area. Coordination between the regions occurs primarily through basin planning and recreation initiatives such as trail network management within the Green Mountain National Forest.

Granville, Hancock, and Rochester

The eastern boundary of Addison County follows the crest of the Green Mountains, separating the towns of Granville and Hancock (Addison County) from Rochester (Windsor County). All three towns share steep terrain, limited road access, and substantial forest cover. Both the ACRPC and TRORC plans recognize these upland areas as critical for habitat connectivity, headwater protection, and recreation. Development potential is limited by slope, elevation, and ecological sensitivity. The Town Plan designations of these lands follow this pattern. Granville, which borders Lincoln and Ripton, designates their bordering lands as “Public Lands,” indicating the shared importance of the Green Mountain National Forest to the area. The Town of Hancock, which borders Ripton and Goshen, has designated their shared border areas similarly as a “Contiguous Forest Overlay Area” in their current plan. Open for recreation, conservation, and forestry, Hancock describes its share of the Green Mountain National Forest as having “international significance.” Finally, Rochester, which borders the Town of Goshen, has designated its bordering area simply as Conservation. These all align with Lincoln, Ripton, and Goshen’s nearby lands designations in their plans: a “Special Protection Area,” a “Conservation District,” and a “Conservation District,” respectively.

OUR SOUTHERN BOUNDARY: RRPC

RRPC and ACRPC maintain highly compatible land-use and natural-resource objectives. Shared planning priorities include watershed protection, agricultural land conservation, low-density, clustered development, and forestland connectivity. The Otter Creek Basin Plan provides an ongoing vehicle for inter-regional coordination on land use planning. To that end, ACRPC’s current Future Land Use plans designated the areas

on its southern border as predominantly “Rural and Agricultural” and “Forestland and Conservation / Floodplain,” lands, but it also lists several border-area lands as “Residential” and “Village Residential and Commerce.” RRPC’s current plan designates its northern border lands similarly: the vast majority of lands are either “Development Constrained” conservation or “Low Density Development” areas. A few nearby “Medium Density Development” and one somewhat close “High Density Development” area are worth noting but are not unknown to ACRPC. Generally compatible land use designations are also present in RRPC and ACRPC’s proposed Future Land Use plans. Both designate their shared border lands as “Rural General,” “Rural Agriculture or Forestry,” or “Rural Conservation.” The greatest deviations from that trend in the proposed plans are in the Leicester/Brandon border area, with a small border abutting “Enterprise” land area and a nearby “Planned Growth” area respectively. Future development in these areas will be worth monitoring to ensure that unreasonable, transboundary impacts do not emerge; however, these different uses—due to their size, location, and similar historical uses—are not viewed to be a conflict at this time.

Chittenden and Brandon

These Rutland County towns border Goshen and Leicester, respectively. The mountainous terrain of Chittenden and Goshen supports predominantly forest and conservation uses. Goshen’s two designated, forest-oriented “Conservation Districts” are well aligned with Chittenden’s “Conservation/Protected” areas. Its nearby “Rural Residential” area is also generally compatible with the areas’ designated land uses. On the other hand, Leicester and Brandon maintain strong agricultural and rural land use patterns in their borderlands. Much of Leicester’s “Residential Agricultural District” and its “Conservation Districts” align with Brandon’s “Rural Residential District” and its “Aquifer Protection Area.” Further, Leicester’s designated “Residential, Agricultural, Commercial District” along Route 7 are similar to Brandon’s “High Density, Mixed Use” district along the same route. As mentioned in the previous section, Leicester does have an “Industrial District” on its border with Brandon; however, it is comparatively small, self-contained former quarry area and disconnected, for example, from

Brandon’s “Aquifer Protection Area.” All four of these Towns maintain shared rural land values and concentrated development practices, which create opportunities for collaboration on area growth and conservation.

Sudbury and Benson

The final two towns that border the Addison Region are Sudbury and Benson, which border the Towns of Whiting and Orwell. These four municipalities have designated their bordering land—and significant shares of their land area more broadly—as rural for development purposes. While the Town of Sudbury did not designate specific land uses in their town plan, their zoning districts make clear that the preferred land uses along its border with Whiting and Orwell are “Rural Residential,” “Conservation,” and “Agricultural Conservation.” These land uses are compatible with Whiting’s “Conservation” and “Low Density Residential” districts to the north and Orwell’s “Rural” and “Conservation” planning areas to the West. One notable difference in designation is the Town of Whiting’s “Medium Density Residential” district on its border with Sudbury. While somewhat different from the “Rural Residential” land use to its south, the Region does not view these two uses as inherently incompatible with one another. It proposes monitoring the conditions along, in particular, RT 30 to ensure that this remains the case. The Towns of Whiting and Benson have near mirror image land use designations in their current town plans: “Rural” and “Agricultural and Rural Residential,” respectively, in the majority of areas; lake shore designations around Sunrise Lake and Lake



Champlain. As is evident, collaboration on watershed management is a key role for inter-regional cooperation in this area, as is transportation planning on RT. 22A and 30.

INTER-REGIONAL COMPATIBILITY STATEMENT

Across all four regional boundaries, the Addison County Regional Plan is broadly compatible with the development trends, community needs, and policy goals of neighboring municipalities and regions. The most significant opportunities for inter-regional collaboration include:

- ✦ Watershed management partnerships, particularly the Otter Creek and Lake Champlain basins
- ✦ Transportation coordination along U.S. Route 7, Vermont Route 30, Vermont Route 22A, and the Route 116 corridor
- ✦ Shared climate resilience and forest conservation initiatives across the Green Mountain spine
- ✦ Agricultural land protection efforts that sustain rural character and support regional economies

While potential areas of tension are limited, one area of focus is managing growth at the margins of the Burlington metropolitan area—especially in Ferrisburgh, Monkton, and Starksboro. These communities may face increasing residential development pressure from Chittenden County, which could strain infrastructure and alter long-standing economic, social, and ecological relationships. Continued collaboration between ACRPC, CCRPC, and affected municipalities will be essential to balancing growth with long-term land-use and sustainability goals.

CONCLUSION

The Addison County Regional Plan is generally well-aligned with the plans of neighboring regions. It supports a coordinated, cross-boundary approach to land use, natural resource management, and sustainable development across west-central Vermont. Through ongoing partnerships and shared planning efforts, ACRPC remains committed to the cohesive and effective implementation of this vision.

