

Future Land Use

AT THIS SPOT ON CHIPMAN HILL ...

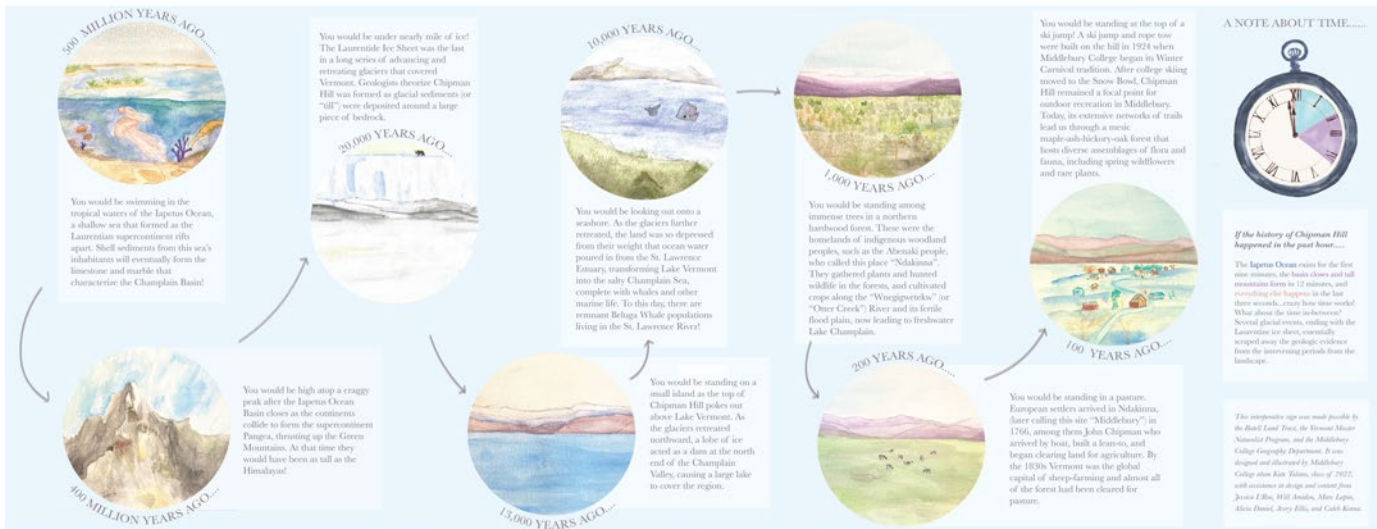


Figure 1: "At This Spot on Chipman Hill" by Kate Talano

A Brief History of the Addison Region

At the summit of Chipman Hill in Middlebury, along the Trail Around Middlebury, stands an educational signboard erected by the Battell Trust. Positioned at the former launch site of an old ski jump, it offers a panoramic view westward over the Champlain Valley and presents the evolution of the surrounding landscape across eight distinct historical periods.

The first panel begins 500 million years ago, when the area was submerged beneath the Iapetus Ocean. By 400 million years ago, the region had risen to form part of a towering mountain range. Approximately 20,000 years ago, it lay beneath a glacier nearly a mile thick. As the ice sheets retreated, glacial meltwater formed Lake Vermont, followed by the incursion of the Champlain Sea through the Saint Lawrence River. These geological transformations shaped the region's limestone formations, now quarried, and the clay plains that transitioned from forest to farmland.

Human presence in the region dates back roughly 12,000 years. At that time, Paleo-Indian ancestors of Native American tribes began to inhabit the valley, drawn by its broad waterways and abundant resources. Over millennia, Native American communities established settlements and alliances. Due to the perishable na-

ture of the materials they used—wood, hide, cloth, and stone—only stone artifacts remain in significant numbers. Farmers in Addison County frequently uncover arrowheads, a testament to the area's long history of human habitation. The most recent Indigenous group in this lineage is the Abenaki, who refer to themselves as the "Alnobak."

The Abenaki were once a large confederation of tribes spread across what is now Vermont, Quebec, and New England. The explorer Samuel de Champlain, for whom Lake Champlain is named, did not encounter the Abenaki directly. Unfortunately their civilization was already in decline by the time of his 1609 expedition—primarily due to the devastating impact of European diseases such as smallpox. The exact pre-contact population of Native Americans in North America remains debated. In Vermont, Abenaki populations are estimated to have been between 4,000 and 4,200.

What is clear is that European diseases decimated Native American populations at catastrophic rates. Early settlers, including the Pilgrims of Plymouth, documented the toll these illnesses took on the Abenaki of the "Dawnland"—coastal New England. These diseases likely spread inland to Vermont even before direct European contact occurred.

Weakened by disease and seeking protection from hostile tribes such as the Mohawk, the Abenaki allied with the French shortly after their arrival. They continued that alliance during the French and Indian War. As the conflict engulfed Vermont, many Indigenous and European inhabitants fled. Following the British and colonial victory, many Abenaki relocated to Quebec alongside their French allies. Today, the Odanak and Wôlinak First Nations—descendants of these communities—reside in the Trois-Rivières region of Quebec.

The State of Vermont acknowledges that smaller bands of Abenaki either remained in or returned to the region. In 2011 and 2012, Vermont formally recognized four Abenaki tribes: the Elnu Abenaki Tribe, the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation, the Koasek Abenaki Nation, and the Abenaki Nation at Missisquoi.

This Plan recognizes the deep historical presence of Native American civilizations in the region. It supports the ability of the Abenaki to preserve and practice their traditions and encourages mutual learning and respect for how we care for this land.

See Chapter 4, Community Infrastructure, pages 17-18 regarding archeological and historic sites.

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Although some European settlement occurred in the Addison Region prior to the French and Indian War, significant colonization began after the war's conclusion. Many towns in the Region were founded during the 1760s. The current layout of towns largely reflects the era's original land grants and settlement planning.

Town boundaries were influenced by the transportation limitations of the time—primarily horse and buggy. Many settlers arrived as farmers, seeking fertile land as arable plots became scarce in southern New England. Forests were cleared for lumber and potash, and the land was converted to farmland. Each town typically developed a central village with a church, school, and store, surrounded by satellite farms. Towns such as Bridport, Shoreham, Orwell, and Addison exemplify this early planning model.

Figure 2: Salisbury Welcome Sign

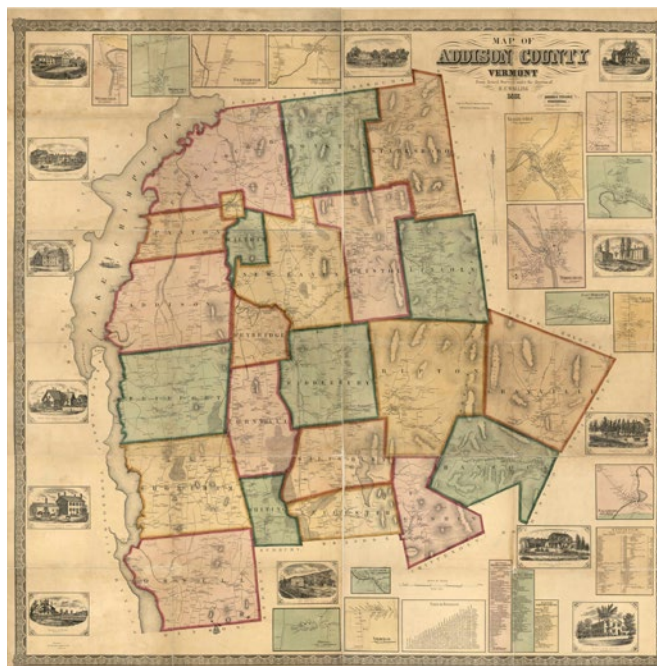


Towns like Middlebury and Vergennes developed around waterfalls on Otter Creek, which powered mills processing wool, grain, timber, and marble. At the foot of the Green Mountains, the town of Pockock (now Bristol) emerged as a manufacturing hub, particularly for lumber and wood products.

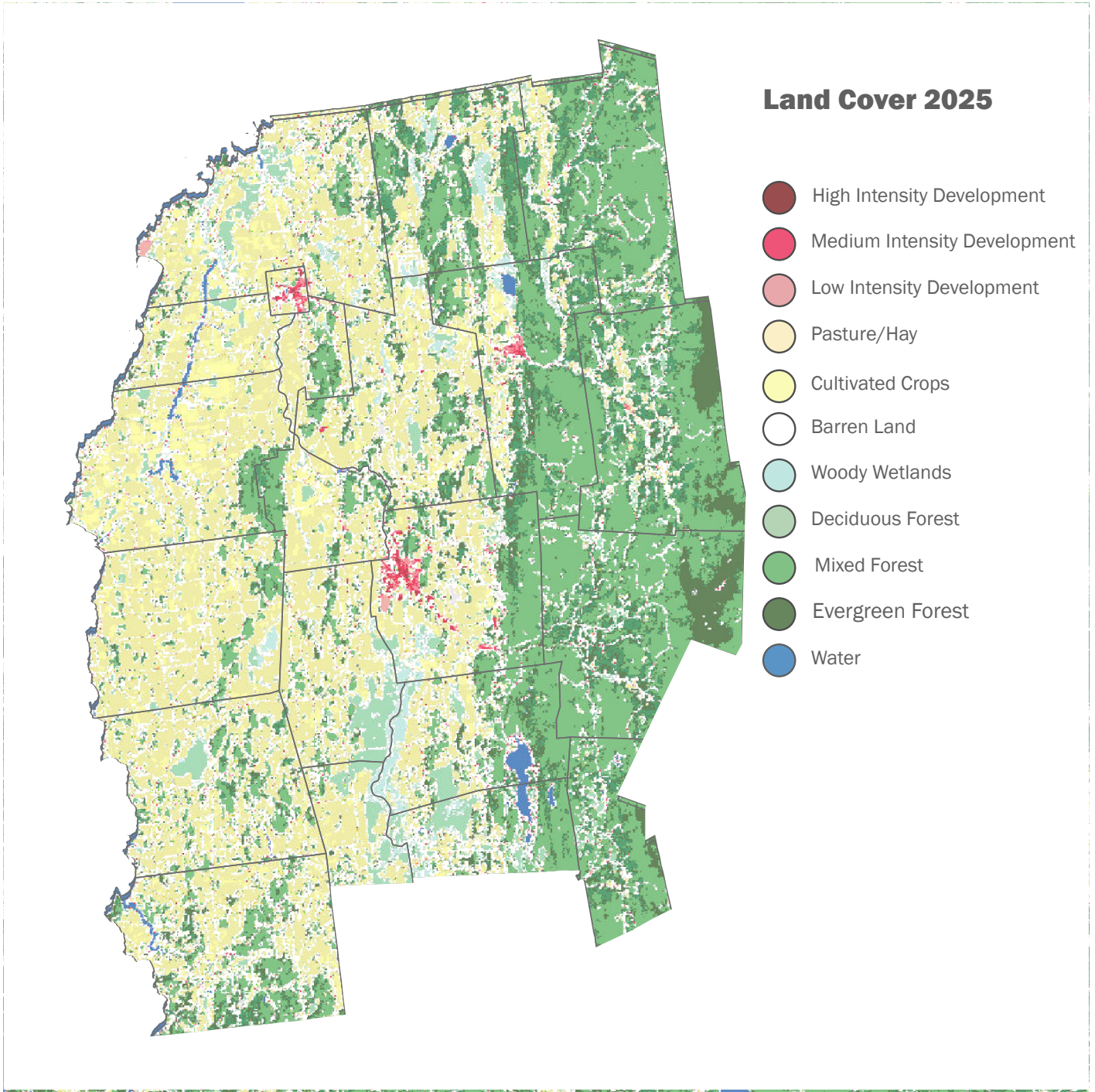
For a detailed account of settlement history and population trends from European colonization through the present day, see Chapter 5, Population and Housing.

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MIGRATION

Figure 3: Map of Addison County, Vermont, 1857



Map 1: Addison Region Land Cover, 2025



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The Civil War marked a turning point for Vermont. While Vermonters served the Union across the country, many were exposed to the vast, fertile lands of the American Midwest. After the war, railroads that once transported Vermont's goods to market also facilitated migration westward. Vermont's population declined as residents sought new opportunities. Those who remained continued to farm—shifting from sheep to cattle and dairy—or worked in industries that refined local resources.

Although the Addison Region industrialized after the Civil War, it did so at a slower pace. Industrial centers in Middlebury, Bristol, and Vergennes expanded and diversified.

Smaller, agriculture-based villages continued to support surrounding farms.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

The “back-to-the-land” movement of the 1970s through the 1990s spurred housing growth, particularly in northern towns that became bedroom communities for Chittenden County. However, after 2000, housing development slowed significantly—mirroring trends across Vermont. This slowdown, combined with decreasing household sizes, has led to a persistent and severe housing shortage.

This housing crisis forms the backdrop for the present Plan.

Figure 4: Vergennes Industrial Facility



Figure 5: Holley Hall, Bristol



Weybridge Fields



PRESENT CONDITIONS

The early settlement patterns noted above still guide our structure and settlement goals today. Planning for villages surrounded by rural countryside constitutes the first of the State of Vermont’s planning goals outlined in statute. 24 V.S.A. §4302(1). A modern political map of the Region resembles the 1840s era map noted above.

The Addison Region remains a predominately rural place. The Land Use/Land Cover map (**Map 1**) depicted on page 3 shows that only a very small portion, 4.53% of the Region currently falls into one of three “developed” categories. ACRPC’s proposed Future Land Use map includes approximately 3.3% of the Areas land within its proposed growth areas, in line with its current development patterns. Forests predominate in the mountains of the east of the Region, having returned after many of the small sheep farms closed and bolstered especially by the federal government’s purchase of the first 32,000 acres to form the Green Mountain National Forest in 1932.¹ That early conservation project in the State aimed to reforest the land to prevent erosion caused by logging and farming steep slopes. To the west, farm fields still predominate. Farms and acreage farmed have fluctuated, but stayed relatively steady for the past 20 years. Agriculture still constitutes the primary use of the land, especially on the flat fertile clay plains in the Region’s western area.

See the Chapter 1, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Forestry subsections



FUTURE LAND USE AREAS

Downtown Center

Village Center

Planned Growth Area

Village Area

Transition or Infill Areas

Resources-based Recreation

Enterprise

Rural Agriculture & Forestry

Rural Conservation

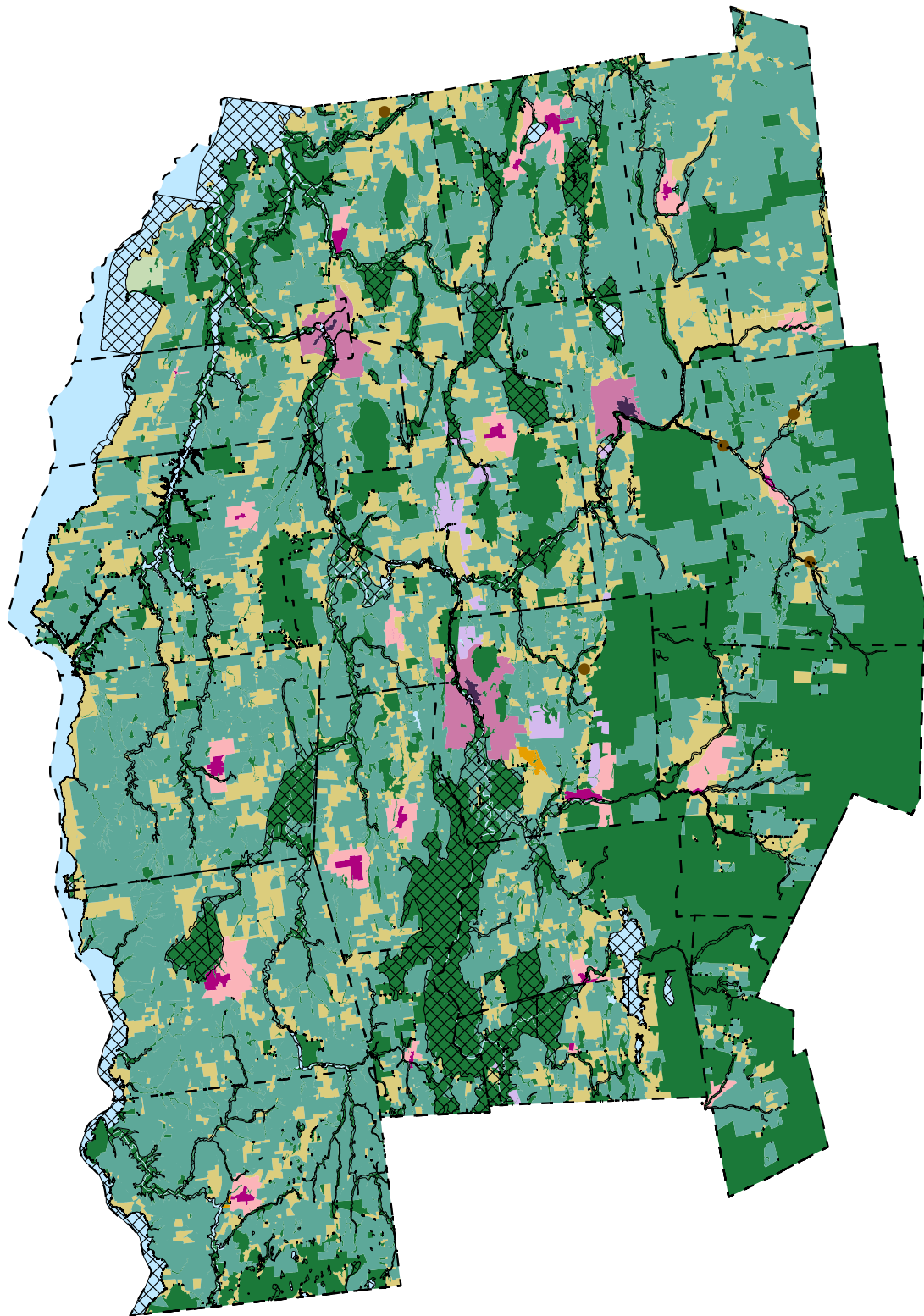
Rural General

The small villages first established by the European settlers also remain. A significant portion of the municipal buildings that mark their core stem from the mid-nineteenth century. Most are surrounded by other civic buildings, small businesses, and clusters of housing.

Lastly, the Region’s three commercial centers—Middlebury, Bristol, and Vergennes—continue to evolve. While the manufacturing that created them still constitutes an important economic sector, they also host numerous service and retail businesses along their main streets, surrounded by established housing development. This Plan seeks to build on and reinforce those portions of our current settlement patterns ACRPC described above and provide goals and actions to transition away from less desirable development patterns.

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Map 2: Future Land Use, 2026



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From left to right: Middlebury, Bristol, Vergennes

The Future Land Use Plan

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) created a **Future Land Use map** depicting the types of land use areas described in the Addison County Regional Plan and recently adopted by all Vermont’s regional planning commissions under Act 181 of 2024 to provide consistency in definitions of types of planning areas. All regions mapped ten types of future land use areas and are listed on **Map 2**. ACRPC’s Future Land Use Chapter and Map are presented to be compatible with the Region’s municipal plans and to work in concert with the municipal plans to guide growth and development in accordance with smart growth principles and into appropriate places within the Region.

For a full list of smart growth principles, please see the [Chapter 8 Appendix](#).

TIERS OF JURISDICTION FOR ACT 250

Act 181 also created tiers of jurisdiction for Act 250. In fact, the greatest benefit to developing housing stems from exemption from Act 250 for housing in Tier 1 areas. **All of the ten different types of future land use areas fall into one of three Act 250 Tiers:** Tier 1(A and B), Tier 2, and Tier 3.

- ✦ **Tier 1** constitutes existing and potential growth areas including 60% of Housing Targets
- ✦ **Tier 3** identifies critical and sensitive natural resources, and
- ✦ **Tier 2** is everything in between.

Table 1: Village Center Designations and Changes

	Previous Designations	Centers with Act 181 Changes
Addison	Village Center	Village Center
Bridport		Village Center
Bristol	Downtown	Downtown, Planned Growth Area
Cornwall	Village Center	Village Center
Ferrisburgh	Village Center	Village Center, Planned Growth Area
Goshen		Village Center
Lincoln		Village Center
Leicester		Village Center
New Haven	Village Center	Village Center
Middlebury	Downtown, Neighborhood Development Area	Downtown, Planned Growth Area, Village Center
Monkton	Village Center	Village Center
Orwell	Village Center	Village Center
Ripton		Village Center
Panton		Village Center
Salisbury	Village Center	Village Center
Shoreham	Village Center	Village Center
Starksboro	2 Village Centers	2 Village Centers
Vergennes	Downtown; Neighborhood Development Area	Downtown, Planned Growth Area
Waltham		Planned Growth Area
Weybridge		Village Center, Planned Growth Area
Whiting	Village Center	Village Center

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In the Addison Region, nearly all towns will have the option to accept the regional map and opt-in for Tier 1B status, exempting residential projects (under 50 units/ 10 acres) from Act 250 review in their Village or Downtown Center, Planned Growth Area, and/or Village Area. While it is possible that Middlebury or Vergennes could choose to apply for Tier 1A jurisdiction, which would ex-

empt all development within its designated downtown and Planned Growth Areas from Act 250 jurisdiction, this plan anticipates those municipalities opting-in to Tier 1B, at least at the start of this process. The Department of Housing and Community Development has created a “step program” to transition existing benefits to the new areas defined by Act 181.

OVERVIEW OF LEGACY VILLAGE DESIGNATION TRANSITION TO ACT 181 DESIGNATION PROGRAMS

For nearly 30 years, the State of Vermont’s “designation” programs – Downtowns, Villages, Growth Centers, New Town Centers, and Neighborhood Development Areas – have supported economic revitalization, community vitality, and smart growth. These programs work together to provide incentives, align policies, and give communities the technical assistance needed to encourage new development and redevelopment in our vibrant and compact designated areas. The program’s incentives are for both the public and private sector within the designated area, including tax credits for historic building rehabilitations and code improvements, permitting benefits for new housing, funding for transportation-related public improvements, and priority consideration for other State grant programs. One major element of Act 181 is that it shifts the designation process to a new regional plan approval process, which expands access to the designation programs and transfers all legacy designations into the new framework.

The New Designations for Community Investment

The new designation framework simplifies the State’s five legacy designations, including designated villages, into two categories: Centers surrounded by Neighborhoods. The Center designation will continue to recognize the legacy Downtown, New Town, and Village Center designations throughout the state, and the Neighborhood designation will continue to recognize the legacy Neighborhood Development Area and Growth Center designations.

The two new designations (Centers and Neighborhoods) are designed to support coordinated investments in compact places planned for efficient growth. Legacy Village designations will become designated as new designated Centers upon approval of the Regional Plan Future Land Use Map.

Centers are organized into three “steps” based on the characteristics of the community, local capacity, planning initiatives within the community, and their legacy designation. Through these three steps, Centers will gain access to varying levels of incentives, similar to the legacy designation structure. Communities will have the ability to advance move up “steps” and access greater levels of incentives and support through an application process that asks communities to demonstrate their alignment with goals of the designation program. The transition of Legacy Villages to Step 2 Centers Legacy Villages will be mapped in the regional planning commissions’ Regional Plan Future Land Use (FLU) Map as downtown and village centers for approval by the State’s new Land Use Review Board (LURB). Legacy Villages will enter the new program as Step 2 Centers upon approval of the regional plan by the LURB. All legacy designated Downtowns have a direct path to recognition in the new regional plan maps and future designation categories, and they will lose no benefits upon transition. Municipalities with legacy Village designations will remain designated until the regional maps are adopted. Municipalities may apply directly to Department staff to “step up” to Step 3. Applications and guidelines will be made available after State approval of the first regional plan by the LURB.



For now, all other Future Land Use Planning Areas constitute Tier 2 areas for the purposes of Act 250 jurisdiction. This simply means that Act 250’s jurisdictional thresholds remain unchanged, with the important exception of the “Road Rule”.² If a project triggered Act 250’s jurisdictional thresholds prior to Act 181, they will continue to trigger Act 250 jurisdiction in Tier 2 areas. See 10 V.S.A. §6001(3)(A) for the definition of “development” triggering jurisdiction.

Tier 3 areas will contain special sections of natural resources deemed to require additional protection. The Land Use Review Board is charged with creating Tier 3 areas and is drafting its rules as of early 2026. Tier 3 areas do not exist yet and are not depicted in this Plan. ACRPC’s Future Land Use Planning areas as depicted on its Future Land Use map include the following:

DOWNTOWN AND VILLAGE CENTERS

These areas constitute the areas designated as a “Designated Downtown” and designated “Village Center” by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development under Chapter 76A and are eligible for benefits through the Community Investment Program under §5804 of

Figure 6: Vergennes Transit-Oriented Design Master Plan



this title. These areas are the mixed-use centers bringing together community economic activity and civic assets of the region. The Addison Region did not have any new town centers designated under that program, nor does it seek to add any.

Downtowns

The Addison Region has three Designated Downtowns: Middlebury, Vergennes, and Bristol.

Each formerly Designated Downtown retains its status, and as in previous plans, with the growth areas that surround them, remain the cultural centers of the Region. All constitute the areas best suited for most commercial growth and able to accommodate residential growth within the Region because of their community water and wastewater infrastructure, or in the case of Bristol, excellent soils to accommodate individual and small community wastewater systems.

Like the Designated Downtowns noted above, the Addison Region hosted 11 Village Centers that had received a “Village Center Designation” from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, entitling businesses located within the designated area to access tax credits for façade improvements and other benefits when applying for various State of Vermont grants.

In addition to the legacy Village Centers discussed above, in its future land use mapping process for Act 181, ACRPC followed the methodology and, after discussion with each municipality in question, created several new village centers within the Region.



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Village Centers

These areas aim to serve as the central business and civic center of each village. The Region wants to see commercial and civic activity within its villages grow. The Preservation Trust of Vermont notes that healthy villages should include the following civic infrastructure components: general store; post office; library; school; town offices; restaurant; places of worship; community hall; traffic calming; wastewater capacity; public businesses; bank; housing for all income groups; visitor lodging; fire department; monuments; town green; arts and cultural activities or museum; places for kids; and recreational opportunities.² Accordingly, this Future Land Use Plan calls for expanding small-scale, mixed use, and commercial and civic activity within the Village Centers as depicted on its Future Land Use Map to include the uses listed above and other similar uses.

PLANNED GROWTH AREAS

In the Addison Region, its planned growth areas extend from and surround its historic Designated Downtowns in Middlebury, Vergennes, and Bristol. In both Middlebury and Vergennes, they include areas already designated as Neighborhood Development Areas, places where each municipality noted they wanted to achieve extra housing growth. They also include extensively developed areas outside the Downtown Centers, which could include residential neighborhoods and mixed-use areas. Interestingly, in both Vergennes and to a lesser extent Middlebury, they ignore municipal boundaries and extend into neighboring communities. Vergennes' growth area stems largely from the way in which the city was developed. The City of Vergennes was carved from landholdings of Ferrisburgh, Panton, and New Haven to create a manufacturing City at the site of the Vergennes Falls on Otter Creek. As a more urban place surrounded by agricultural neighbors, Vergennes has always served as a sub-regional center for its neighbors and continues to house many of the cultural and service venues for each of its neighboring communities. Historically, some of its growth has spilled into its neighbors as a natural extension of the city. Other neighbors, like Waltham, have recognized Vergennes as their de facto town center and structured their planning and zoning to match densities in the area near Vergennes to resemble Vergennes.

Vergennes possesses both water and wastewater that has also sometimes spilled beyond its boundaries, or in the case of the Vergennes Panton Water system, was created to serve a sub-regional area. In the North of Vergennes and in adjacent Ferrisburgh, the City and Town have been working together planning for transit-oriented development around the train station that lies in Ferrisburgh, receives utilities from Vergennes, and serves them both. The Transit-Oriented Development Plan recognizes and assumes that to achieve the densities both municipalities desire for the area, water and sewer will need to serve Vergennes and Ferrisburgh. It calls for more housing in Ferrisburgh, in part to support its school, and more mixed-use and commercial development in Vergennes to complement and reinforce its existing vibrant downtown and retail establishments. Similarly, in Middlebury, the residential development, supported by existing water and wastewater, extends into the southeastern section of Weybridge.

VILLAGE AREAS

The Village Areas surround the region's historic Village Centers, whether previously designated or not. Village Areas include a significant portion of the Region's existing mix of residential, civic, religious, commercial, and mixed-use buildings. The core area generally contains the existing denser settlements of the Region's villages plus some additional area selected to support additional housing units. These additional areas have been added through careful and inclusive outreach to the municipalities involved and their citizens through a number of public meetings. They are informed by municipal plans and zoning ordinances supplemented by local knowledge of terrain, land use, and ownership patterns of the local planning commissions, citizens, and selectboards/city councils.

The Village Areas expand around the historic center to create additional opportunities for all types of housing development. In the housing targets recently released by ACRPC, the median housing target for 2030 for the Region includes new housing units to be built over a five-year period (2025-29). Sixty percent of those housing units are targeted to be built within the growth areas of the municipalities comprising the Addison Region. Accordingly, for the Region to reach this target it will need its municipalities to support and authorize construction



producing approximately 1,000 new housing units within the Village Centers and Village Areas (approximately 600 fall within Downtown Centers and Planned Growth Areas) and Planned Growth Areas depicted on ACRPC’s Land Use Map within the next five years, an average of 200 housing units per year.³

Many communities in the Region consider that number of building permits per year daunting. Anecdotally, in many, it roughly doubles the amount of housing that has been permitted and constructed in the entire town, on average, over the last 10 years. The primary reason behind this skepticism stems from the lack of water and/or wastewater infrastructure in most of the Region’s communities. Given the area’s lack of existing municipal water or sewer systems, this target will be difficult to achieve. However, this Plan has expanded the Village Areas to provide the physical acreage needed to achieve the target. This Plan also predicts that the new housing proposed within easy walking distance of the facilities, services, community spaces, and businesses in the Addison Region’s existing small villages will help to revitalize them as centers of the community and enrich the rural community experience that many in the Addison Region desire to preserve and enjoy.

Table 2: Addison Region Designations

	Total ACRPC Area	Existing Designations	Interim Act 250	Proposed Eligible Tier 1B
Acres	459,627	1,549	8,020	14,776
% of Total ACRPC Area	-	0.3%	1.7%	3.06%

TRANSITIONAL AREAS

Transitional Areas constitute existing, largely highway-oriented development that is also served by water and/or wastewater service. In its current condition it often constitutes retail businesses drawn to the highway corridor by the traffic that travels along it every day in the hopes of securing customers. While many support the local economy, they offer little in the way of amenities that connect them to or support the local villages or growth areas.

This Plan envisions using existing infrastructure in these areas to expand housing development. Walkable infrastructure will help transform these Transitional Areas into active community centers that support nearby villages or downtowns. The Plan envisions towns adopting zoning changes to promote dense housing development with pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. The newly adopted Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP) can help fund this infrastructure by using the increased property tax revenue generated over time to support the growth.

Transitional Areas in the Addison Region exist in Middlebury along Route 7 and Orwell in a small area along Route 22A. Middlebury has already engaged in planning to develop housing nodes within the Transitional Area. The area in Orwell is much smaller and less developed. This Plan encourages both Middlebury and Orwell to revise their plan and development regulations to intentionally create mixed-use development within these Transitional Areas that will link and incorporate them into their growth area and village area, respectively.

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Waterworks, Bristol

ENTERPRISE AREAS

The Addison Region’s Enterprise Areas include locations of high economic activity and employment. Enterprise Areas include existing industrial operations (Middlebury Industrial Park and Phoenix Feeds in New Haven Junction); areas of natural resource extraction (Pike Quarry in New Haven, the Omya Quarry in Middlebury, and other quarries or sand and gravel extraction operations along Route 116 and the foothills of the Green Mountains); and, other commercial uses that involve larger land areas.

Enterprise Areas are generally not adjacent to the Region’s Villages. Instead, the Addison Region’s Enterprise Areas tend to form around the natural resources they extract (quarries) or congregate along the Green Mountain Railroad corridor and/or the Route 7 corridor, the major freight transportation and electrical networks within the Addison Region. The Middlebury Airport is also included as an Enterprise Area to support its operation.

The Region’s Enterprise Areas are generally zoned to support mixed commercial and industrial uses. They are less likely to include areas for new housing because of their proximity to a major truck route (Route 7) and the existing Commercial/Industrial uses. Retail uses shall be discouraged and limited in the Enterprise Areas.



OMYA Quarry, Middlebury

HAMLETS

The Addison Region boasts several Hamlets, areas of historic housing development, often located at an important crossroads, but generally lacking the commercial, retail, or civic structures that benefit villages. This Future Land Use map recognizes these historic centers as points and places appropriate for rural housing development or small commercial activities.

Town	Hamlet Name
Ferrisburgh	North Ferrisburgh
Lincoln	Downingsville
Lincoln	South Lincoln
Lincoln	West Lincoln
Middlebury	Lindale-Mead Neighborhood

RESOURCE-BASED RECREATION AREAS

The Addison Region also recognizes and supports several areas that have been developed as recreational areas, mainly because of their proximity to a natural feature like Lake Champlain. Like much of Vermont, the Addison Region’s clean air, water, open spaces, summer and winter activities, fall foliage, and mountain views have made it a haven for visitors. Tourism is an important part of the economy. These Resource-Based Recreation Areas offer food, lodging, and recreational amenities close to the resources that nurture them. Properly planned, they constitute appropriate places to further develop infrastructure and amenities that attract visitors and support residents drawn by the recreational opportunities and quality of life they provide.

RURAL GENERAL AREAS

A significant portion of the land in the Addison Region falls into the Rural General Area. This Area consists largely of rural residential housing, often along road networks, on generally larger residential lots that are too small for significant commercial, agricultural, or forestry activity. Not all of us were meant to or desire to live in a village. In its housing targets, the Addison Region recognized this reality. While 60% of the target-

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ed housing development is planned for the Growth Areas and Village Areas, those areas only encompass 3.3% of the land in the region. The Rural General Area encompasses 12.82% of the Regions' land and by default will accommodate a significant portion of the remaining 40% of the Region's proposed housing growth. This area allows for low-density residential development, home occupations, and some other limited commercial development that is compatible with productive lands and natural areas. It also allows well-regulated recreational or natural resource dependent businesses, including extraction operations as allowed by local development regulations. As an example, the Town of Middlebury specifically allows natural resource extraction in its rural areas and has a number of small gravel pits and even the very large OMYA quarry as allowed uses.

RURAL AGRICULTURE AND FORESTED AREAS

This area includes significant, active farmland or forest blocks, generally in larger parcels greater than 25 acres and generally lacking access to public water or wastewater infrastructure. It is the majority of land in the Addison Region and encompasses the "working landscape" that a significant portion of the economic activity in the Region derives from. Most of the land in the Region enrolled in the State of Vermont Current Use Program falls within this category of land use. Land conserved by the Vermont Land Trust or other organizations specifically for or allowing farming and forestry activity are also included in this category since the intent of these easements is to preserve agricultural soils and/or promote farming or forestry.

In the agricultural towns in the western plains of the Addison Region, more than 20% of the land is encumbered by conservation easements for farming. The area includes the homesteads of the farmers and foresters that work the land. It also includes some protected natural resources which should be field verified during any development review process. The area provides critical wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation opportunities, flood storage, aquifer recharge, and scenic beauty, and contributes significantly to the Region's economic well-being and quality of life. Development in this area shall be carefully managed to provide rural housing opportunities, promote the working landscape and rural economy, and protect the agricultural and forest resource value.



Fishing on the Otter Creek



Demers Park, New Haven



Bristol Pond

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RURAL CONSERVATION AREAS

The Region's last future land use area, the Rural Conservation Area, includes areas of significant natural resources based upon existing Agency of Natural Resources mapping for wetland protection and for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors and other conservation purposes. Specifically, it includes parcels owned or controlled through easements by the following types of entities for the specific purpose of preservation or conservation:

- ✦ **The Federal government**, like the large swath of Green Mountain National Forest that spans portions of most of the mountain towns on the east side of the Addison Region.
- ✦ **The State of Vermont** and managed for conservation or wildlife, like the Lewis Creek and Fred Johnson Wildlife Management Areas in Starksboro or the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison, Panton, and Bridport.
- ✦ **Local governments and municipalities**, like town forests that lie outside of a village or growth area.
- ✦ **Non-profit groups**, like the Nature Conservancy or the Middlebury Area Land Trust. Rural agriculture and forest uses and recreational uses are allowed in this area but should be sited to mitigate or avoid impacts on the resources noted above.

In addition to land controlled by the types of entities listed, wetlands greater than 5 acres are mapped into this area to depict the areas protected and to highlight the significant wetlands and floodplains of the Region, especially in the southern communities along the Otter Creek.

The areas noted significantly restrict or regulate both housing and commercial development to preserve natural resources. However, they do allow some low impact recreational infrastructure and uses. The State of Vermont Wildlife Management Areas encourage trails and hunting. The Moosalamoo National Recreation Area, within the Green Mountain National Forest, encourages a myriad of recreational uses, including the construction of limited infrastructure necessary to support those uses. Additionally, some towns, particularly Lincoln, chose to include significant blocks of private property in this Land Use Area to depict forest blocks on the Land Use Map. On private property within this area, low density housing, forestry and farming, and low impact recreational uses are allowed pursuant to the municipal plan and regulations implementing those plans.



Canoeing on Bristol Pond

Goals, Objectives, and Actions

GOAL 1: To plan development to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact villages and urban centers separated by rural countryside.

Objective 1:

Concentrate residential and commercial development in downtown centers, village centers, and growth areas in accordance with smart growth principles.

- a. Work with the Region's municipalities to structure their plans' land use areas and corresponding development regulations, which implement those plans to clearly define, and articulate village areas surrounded by rural areas.
- b. Encourage towns to plan for and amend the supporting development regulations to promote housing development to reach the targets contained in this plan, with a focus on concentrating most of the residential development within Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas.
- c. Collaborate with Addison County Economic Development Corporation (ACEDC) to advance business development within Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas.

Objective 2:

Invest in public infrastructure that reinforces and supports compact settlement patterns in growth areas and villages.

- a. Work with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to incentivize municipalities to embrace the CHIP Program, using future tax revenue to invest in local infrastructure that supports development, housing, and a stronger tax base.
- b. Promote, plan for, and construct public infrastructure like water and wastewater systems, sidewalks, bike lanes, stormwater, energy, and communication systems that support and promote locating in a growth area or village area.

Objective 3:

Strengthen the economic connection between growth centers and the Region's working landscape.

- a. Support value added agricultural/wood products manufacturing in growth areas and villages to provide jobs and markets for products from the working landscape.

Objective 4:

Protect and conserve rural agricultural lands, forestlands, and natural areas.

- a. Support the Vermont Land Trust's efforts to permanently conserve appropriately located agricultural and forestry lands.
- b. Support the delineation boundary of the Green Mountain National Forest.
- c. Work with the Region's municipalities to structure land use area categories and implement corresponding regulations that clearly define and maintain protections for rural and conservation areas.

Objective 5:

Support agricultural and forestry operations through policies that maintain the economic viability and integrity of working lands.

- a. Promote Freedom to Farm policies within this Plan and municipal plans in the Region.
- b. Support taxation and other state policies that provide incentives to preserve working blocks of agricultural and forest land.
- c. Work with ACEDC to encourage the production of value-added farm and forest products in close proximity to the source areas.

Substantial Regional Impact

In addition to the planning component, the regional plan serves as a regulatory document. Where planning documents can be suggestive or visionary and permissive, regulatory documents must unambiguously direct the intent of the regional plan and involve mandatory language. This duality of purpose often creates conflicts within the plan itself. This chapter of ACRPC's Plan defines those things that constitute substantial regional impact within the Addison Region and indicates when and how both ACRPC itself and quasi-judicial bodies should apply the policies of the Regional Plan.

Two state regulatory proceedings that specifically require the reviewing authority to review regional plans include:

- ✦ Chapter 151 of Title 10 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, entitled, "State Land Use and Development Plans", commonly known as "Act 250", which includes compliance with local and regional plans as one of the 10 criteria district commissions use to evaluate land development large enough to trigger jurisdiction; See 10 V.S.A. §8086(10).
- ✦ Section 248 of Title 30 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, which regulates utilities and large-scale energy generation and transmission, also includes a subsection that requires the Public Service Board include compliance with local and regional plans in its review of a project's compliance with the "orderly development of a region". See 30 V.S.A. §248(b)(1).

APPLICATION

There are two specific situations in which these guidelines will be used:

- ✦ First, ACRPC's uses the "substantial regional impact" criteria to determine its course of action if a conflict exists with a local plan on a project determined to have a substantial regional impact; and
- ✦ Second, the "Substantial Regional Impact" section directs the Quasi-Judicial body reviewing an application and project parties how ACRPC's Plan should be read in cases of conflict or potential conflict with a municipal plan.

If ACRPC's plan indicates the project impacts resources or infrastructure deemed regionally significant, this Section instructs the quasi-judicial body reviewing an application to give the Regional Plan effect over the local plan. This chapter also intends to limit the primacy of the Regional Plan only to those aspects of the development that affect substantial regional interests; otherwise, the local plan should be given effect. In other words, if a project is deemed to have a substantial regional impact because it significantly impacts the carrying capacity of a significant regional highway, only those aspects of the regional plan relating to traffic impacts on the highway will supersede the local plan, otherwise the local plan will control.

DEFINITION

Projects that trigger one or more of the following criteria will be considered to be projects with "substantial regional impact."

1. A project or development which would substantially impact on the traffic-carrying capacity of state highways or Class I and Class II roads. Substantial impacts include changes warranting new signals or roundabouts, requiring capital improvements to the roadway, or decreasing the Level of Service of an adjacent or ancillary intersection on the Roadway to LOS D or below.
2. A project or development which will generate new employment equal to or greater than 1% of the Region's existing employment level.
3. A project or development which will generate residential construction where the total proposed housing units exceeds five percent of the total housing count of the host town.
4. A project or development which would substantially change the service area or capacity of inter-municipal facilities, including, but not limited to, union high school districts, or public water or sewer systems serving more than one municipality.
5. A project or development locating or expanding regional public and quasi-public facilities such as solid waste facilities, union district schools, the County courthouse, Porter Hospital and expansions or reductions in air/rail services on the Green Mountain Railway line or at Middlebury State Airport.
6. Projects which will have significant impacts on or benefits to "Regionally Significant Resources" as identified by the Regional Plan, Maps 8-2A and B, and listed in Table 1;
7. A project or development which includes the construction of power generation or energy transmission facilities that requires Public Utility Commission review under 30 V.S.A. §248 and at least one of the following applies:
 - a. It impacts identified significant regional resources in more than one municipality;
 - b. A generation facility that requires transmission, substation or distribution upgrades in more than one community.
8. A project or development which includes the construction of a telecommunications facility that requires Public Utility Commission review under 30 V.S.A. §248a and either impacts or benefits more than one municipality.

Any one or combination of the criteria listed above shall characterize a development with substantial regional impact.

Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated (VSA), Sub-Section 4345a(17), requires that all regional plans: "define substantial regional impact as that term maybe used with respect to its region." 24 V.S.A. § 4345A(17).

It then states that, "This definition shall be given due consideration, where relevant in State regulatory proceedings." Id.



ENDNOTES

¹ NPShistory.com; “The Land We Care for”, Chapter VI

² As part of Act 181 the legislature will reinstate the road rule as a jurisdictional threshold for Act 250. It has nothing to do with the Tier system discussed above, but is an important change to Act 250 that is part of the overall statutory scheme and which individuals thinking of developing property, especially in rural areas, should understand.

³ Preservation Trust of Vermont newsletter (July 2006) archive. ptvermont.org

⁴ See Chapter 5, Population and Housing, page 23 for charts of the Region’s housing targets.



Middlebury College Lands Planning Meeting with ACRPC

- Figure 1** Image of educational signboard “At This Spot on Chipman Hill” erected by the Battell Trust. Artwork by Kate Tolano.
- Figure 2** Image of sign stating “Welcome to Salisbury, Chartered 1761”
- Figure 3** Map of Addison County, Vermont 1857 - Print of wall map. (n.d.). https://www.old-maps.com/vermont/vt_CoAdd_Opaperwallmap.htm
- Figure 4** Image of Vergennes Waterfalls - Industrial facility - Adobe #374233126
- Figure 5** Preservation Trust of Vermont. (2012, June 15). Holley Hall, Bristol, VT: 2012 PTV Award Winner. <https://ptvermont.org/holley-hall-bristol/>
- Figure 6** Vergennes-Ferrisburgh Transit-Oriented Design (TOD) Master Plan

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View of New Haven Village