

Date: December 17, 2025

To: Lindsay Kahn, Charlotte Town Planner

From: Kate McCarthy, Senior Planner, Taylor Newton, Planning Program Director, and Maya Balassa, Planner

Re: Formal Review of the Draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan, Including Enhanced Energy Plan Review

The Town of Charlotte has requested, per 24 V.S.A § 4350, that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1) approve its draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan; (2) confirm its planning process; and (3) issue an affirmative determination of compliance with the enhanced energy planning standards set forth in 24 V.S.A. § 4352.

This draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan is an update of the 2019 Charlotte Town Plan. CCRPC staff completed an initial plan review of the 2019 Charlotte Town Plan and provided a memo to Town in October 2024 with recommendations to improve the plan. At the time of this review, the 2026 Charlotte Town Plan is a substantially complete draft. The only anticipated edits to the plan before the Planning Commission's first public hearing on January 22, 2026 will be in response to this formal review.

Confirming and Approving the Municipal Plan

Following the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's (CCRPC's) *Guidelines and Standards for Confirmation of Municipal Planning Processes and Approval of Municipal Plans (2018)* and the statutory requirements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, CCRPC staff have reviewed the draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan to determine whether it is:

- Consistent with the general goals of § 4302;
- Consistent with the specific goals of § 4302;
- Contains the required elements of § 4382;
- Compatible with the 2018 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan* (per § 4350); and
- Compatible with approved plans of other municipalities (per § 4350).

Additionally, CCRPC staff have reviewed the planning process requirements of § 4350.

Staff Review Findings and Comments

1. The draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan is consistent with the general goals of § 4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that evaluates how the Plan is consistent with these goals.

2. The draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan is consistent with the specific goals of § 4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that evaluates how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
3. The draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan contains the required elements of § 4382. See the attached Appendix A submittal that evaluates how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
4. The draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan addresses compatibility with the planning areas, goals and strategies of the draft 2026 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan*. However, this is not the currently effective regional plan and it is scheduled for adoption in summer 2026. Therefore, compatibility with the current 2018 Chittenden County Regional Plan (the *2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan*) must be addressed in Charlotte’s 2026 Town Plan.
5. The draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan addresses compatibility with the municipal plans and land uses of adjoining municipalities (Shelburne, Hinesburg, Monkton, and Ferrisburgh).
6. Charlotte has a planning process in place that is sufficient for an approved plan. In addition, Charlotte has provided information about their planning budget and CCRPC finds that Charlotte is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning.

Edits Required for CCRPC Approval:

1. The plan thoroughly addresses compatibility with the draft 2026 ECOS Plan. However, the 2026 ECOS Plan will not be adopted (May 2026) until after the 2026 Charlotte Town Plan is adopted (March 2026). Therefore, the 2026 Charlotte Town Plan must address compatibility with the 2018 ECOS Plan. This can be done by stating that the 2018 ECOS Plan’s future land use areas are generally compatible with the 2026 Charlotte Town Plan.

Additional Edits Recommended, but Not Required for CCRPC Approval:

1. It would benefit readability to add chapter/section headings to the Implementation Table.
2. For many years, the Charlotte Town Plan has included land use goals, policies, and strategies to meet the required state planning goal “to plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.”¹ However, there continues to be misalignment between the Town Plan goals and Charlotte Land Use Regulations. The regulations do not implement the Town Plan goals, particularly in the village zoning districts. For example, the minimum lot size for residential use in both village zoning districts is 5 acres. This does not support the development of a compact village center. This misalignment between the plan and the regulations exists despite several municipal projects to explore ways to improve the alignment between the Town Plan goals and the Land Use Regulations.

CCRPC recommends that the Town Plan address the misalignment of the plan and regulations. CCRPC also recommends including specific actions (e.g. “strategies”) in the Town Plan that the Town will take over the next eight years to ensure future alignment between the Town Plan and

¹ 24 V.S.A. 4302

Land Use Regulations and progress toward the goal “to plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.”

CCRPC acknowledges that the Town may need additional assistance providing public outreach and building public support for bylaw changes to support compact development in village centers. CCRPC remains committed to providing resources and technical support to the Town of Charlotte regarding this issue and to helping Charlotte actively engage in the process to implement its plan.

3. The Plan meets the statutory requirement related to mapping forest blocks and habitat connectors and contains a strategy to complete an Open Space and Conservation Action Plan. The plan could be strengthened by explaining more about why this work is important and how this work fits within the regional context including the work of neighboring municipalities.
4. On pages 2-51 and 2-52, there is a table that does a great job of listing community facilities, proposed improvements, and potential funding sources. The table could be improved by indicating priority and costs (as required by 24 VSA 4382(a)(4)), especially in light of the Town not having a capital budget.
5. On page 2-73, there is discussion about past planning efforts in the villages. This section could benefit from referencing the recent *East and West Villages* project. This section could also benefit from updated data on development trends. The data in this section is 12 years old.

Enhanced Energy Plan Review

Following the statutory requirements of 24 V.S.A. § 4352 and Vermont Department of Public Service’s Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans, CCRPC staff reviewed the 2026 Charlotte Town Plan to determine whether:

1. The Comprehensive Plan includes an energy element that has the same components as described in 24 V.S.A. § 4348a(a)(3) for a regional plan and is confirmed under the requirements of 24 V.S.A. § 4350.
2. The Comprehensive Plan is consistent with following State goals:
 - a. Vermont's greenhouse gas reduction goals under 10 V.S.A. § 578(a);
 - b. Vermont's 25 by 25 goal for renewable energy under 10 V.S.A. § 580;
 - c. Vermont's building efficiency goals under 10 V.S.A. § 581;
 - d. State energy policy under 30 V.S.A. § 202a and the recommendations for regional and municipal energy planning pertaining to the efficient use of energy and the siting and development of renewable energy resources contained in the State energy plans adopted pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 202 and 202b (State energy plans); and
 - e. The distributed renewable generation and energy transformation categories of resources to meet the requirements of the Renewable Energy Standard under 30 V.S.A. §§ 8004 and 8005.

3. The Town Plan meets the standards for issuing a determination of energy compliance per the Public Service’s Department Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans, with the exception of “Edits Required for CCRPC Determination of Enhanced Energy Plan Compliance.”

Staff Review Findings and Comments

Consistency with the requirements above is evaluated through the Vermont Department of Public Service’s Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans, which is attached to this document and briefly summarized below.

Standard	Met	Not Met	Comments / Deficiencies	Location in plan
1. Plan duly adopted and approved			Necessary for final determination	N/A
2. Submit a copy of the adopted plan			Necessary for final determination	N/A
3. Plan contains an energy element	X			Pg. 1-54 to 1-62
4. Analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems in the municipality across all energy sectors	X			Pg. 2-63 to 2-68
5.a. Report current energy use for heating, electricity, and transportation	X			Pg. 2-63-2-65
5.b. Report 2025, 2035 and 2050 targets for energy use	X			Pg. 1-56 to 1-57, 2-66
5.c. Evaluation of thermal-sector energy use changes	X			Pg. 2-65 to 2-66
5.d. Evaluation of transportation-sector energy use changes	X			Pg. 2-67
5.e. Evaluation of electric-sector energy use changes	X			Pg. 2-64
6.a. Encourage conservation by individuals and organizations	X			Pg. 1-56 to 1-62
6.b. Promote efficient buildings	X			Pg. 1-61
6.c. Promote decreased use of fossil fuels for heat	X			Pg. 2-67
6.d. Demonstrate municipal leadership re: efficiency of municipal buildings?	X			Pg. 1-59
7.a. Promote shift away from single-occupancy vehicle trips / increased public transit use?	X			Pg. 1-50
7.b. Promote shift from gas/diesel to non-fossil fuel vehicles?	X			Pg. 1-52
7.c Promote walking & biking infrastructure	X			Pg. 1-40 (#2), 1-48 (#3), 1-51 (#18), 1-52 (#8)

7.d. Demonstrate municipal leadership re: efficiency of municipal transportation?	X			Pg. 1-51 (#4)
8.a. Promote smart growth land use policies	X			Pg. 1-13 (#2), 1-55
8.b. Strongly prioritize development in compact, mixed-use centers	X			1-3 (#1)
9.a. Report existing renewable energy generation	X			Pg. 2-63
9.b. Analyze generation potential	X			Pg. 2-68
9.c. Identify sufficient land to meet the 2050 generation targets	X			Pg. 2-67, 2-68
9.d. Ensure that local constraints do not prevent the generation targets from being met	X			Section 1.2, Policy 8, Section 1.12, Policy 9, Map 17-19
9.e. Include policy statements on siting energy generation	X			1-55
9.f. Maximize potential for generation on preferred sites	X			Map 14
9.g. Demonstrate municipal leadership re: deploying renewable energy	X			Pg. 1-50, 1-51
10. Equity Impact Assessment	X			Pg. 1-4 (#7), 1-61 (#8)
11. – 13.A-E, 14. Include maps provided by CCRPC or Municipality	X			Map 14-19
12. Does the plan identify and map existing electric generation sources?	X			Map 14
13.F. Forest Block Evaluation	X			Map 14-19, Pg. 1-60 (#8)

Edits Required for CCRPC Determination of Enhanced Energy Plan Compliance:

Proposed Motion & Next Steps:

The draft 2026 Charlotte Town Plan meets most statutory requirements for CCRPC regional approval. CCRPC staff requests that the

“I move that the Planning Advisory Committee recommend that the CCRPC Board grant regional approval, confirmation of the planning process, and determination of energy compliance to the 2026 Charlotte Town Plan pending including of the required edits listed in this memo by the Town of Charlotte as recommended by CCRPC.”

Upon notification that the Plan has been adopted by the municipality, CCRPC staff will review the plan, and any information relevant to the confirmation process. If staff determines that substantive changes have been made, the materials will be forwarded to the PAC for review. Otherwise, the CCRPC staff will forward the plan to the CCRPC Board for approval, confirmation, and an affirmative determination of energy compliance.