

**RE: TOWN OF CHELSEA,
VERMONT PLAN REVIEW
CASE # FY 25-1**

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A., Section 4350, the Town of Chelsea, Vermont requested TRORC to review and approve the Chelsea Town Plan adopted on December 3, 2024. The Plan encompasses all land in the Town of Chelsea and is referred to hereinafter as the Plan.

Section 4350 provides that prior to approving a Plan, the Regional Commission find that the Plan meets four tests. These tests are that the Plan is:

- A. Consistent (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(1)) with the planning goals in Section 4302 of Chapter 117;
- B. Compatible (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(2)) with the Regional Plan;
- C. Compatible (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(2)) with the approved plans of other municipalities within the Region; and
- D. Inclusive of all elements required of a plan as set forth in 24 V.S.A., Section 4382.

This review is based upon the Town Plan as adopted. Plans stand on their own and this review is based on the Plan as adopted.

FINDINGS

A. Is the Plan consistent with the planning goals?

General Goals

1. Is a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework established to guide decisions?

Yes. The 2024 Chelsea Town Plan is a comprehensive planning document to guide municipal decision making that has been divided into fifteen distinct chapters, as required under 24 VSA § 4382.

2. Is citizen participation encouraged at all levels of the planning process?

Yes. "Through the process of drafting this plan, the Planning Commission has invited public input to determine what Chelsea's vision for the future should be" (p. 2).

3. Is consideration being given to the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development to the municipality, region, and state?

Yes. One of the Plan's goals is to "allow for reasonable development without sacrificing important cultural and natural resources," (p. 59) which requires the Town to "ensure careful review of all development projects to minimize the impact on

Chelsea's natural and cultural resources" (p. 59).

4. Is the municipality working creatively together with other municipalities to develop and implement plans?

Yes. The Town's policy is to "cooperate with neighboring towns, regional planning commissions and economic development groups to plan for and maintain a balance between the type and number of jobs created and natural population growth in the area" (p. 16). The Plan also states that the Town should "work with neighboring towns and the region to encourage good land use and environmental policy that benefits the citizens of Chelsea," which may be achieved through continued communication, participation in TRORC, and planning information/development data exchanges with neighboring communities (p. 95-96).

Specific Goals

A plan for a municipality may be consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302 but must be found to be consistent for regional approval.

1. Is development planned to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside?

Yes. The goals and recommendations of the Land Use chapter call for preserving open space and concentrating development around the existing Village district (pp. 65-72).

a. Is intensive residential development being encouraged primarily in areas that are identified as community centers, and is strip development along highways being discouraged?

Yes. The Plan encourages residential growth in the Village and Rural Residential Areas "while balancing the flood safety and the character of the village" (p. 66). With respect to strip development, the Town's policy is "to prohibit development that has the effect of creating sprawl, such as strip development" and that "primary retail development should be located in designated Village Center areas" and is prohibited in the Mixed Use Development and Conservation Areas as well (p. 16, 72-73).

b. Is economic growth being encouraged in locally-designated and any state-designated growth areas, and/or employed to revitalize existing urban or village centers?

Yes. As per the Plan's "Future Land Use" section in the "Land Use" element, the Town encourages "the growth of Chelsea's village in the parts of the Village Area that are outside of the Flood Hazard Area," while providing "a location for higher density residential and commercial development at a scale that does not negatively impact Chelsea's ability to provide services or protect homes and businesses from severe flooding events" (p. 66). While the Village Area would be

ideal for future growth, the Plan recognizes that there are limitations because new development may be subject to additional requirements to mitigate against the risk of flooding if they are either located within or adjacent to the Chelsea Flood Hazard Area (p. 14). Chelsea's historic village area is part of the Village Center Designation program.

c. Do plans for public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area?

Yes. The Plan routinely states that growth should not exceed the provision of services in the Town, and seeks to "provide residents with safe, effective, responsible and affordable municipal infrastructure, facilities and services consistent with other town goals and wherever possible, to encourage and work with other public and private utility providers to do the same" (p. 37). In support of this, the Plan recommends that the Selectboard "create a Capital Budget and Program to guide future investments in infrastructure" (p. 38, 91).

d. Does the Plan support development being undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 2791(13))?

Yes, in that growth is concentrated in appropriate areas and not linear along all roads. The goals and policies of the Land Use chapter for the Village District (p. 66-67) and Rural Residential District (p. 68) direct development to the existing village center and prohibit strip development in the more rural areas of town. Furthermore, the Transportation chapter calls for concentrated growth and supports the development of multimodal transportation choices (p. 77-78).

2. Does the Plan support providing for a strong and diverse economy with satisfying and rewarding job opportunities that maintain high environmental standards; and expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes?

Yes. At the outset of the Plan, the Town sets a goal to "encourage a strong and diverse local economy that provides satisfying and rewarding employment opportunities for residents while maintaining the community's rural character" (p. 72). The Town sets a policy to "attract diverse and sustainable businesses to Chelsea which provide jobs and contribute to the small-town quality of life" (p. 15).

3. Does the Plan support broadened access to education and vocational training opportunities sufficient to realize the full potential of residents?

Yes. The Plan adequately addresses the need to "provide a safe and secure learning environment... to all students" and to "encourage the creation of affordable childcare facilities" (p. 28-29). It is a policy of the Plan that, "Educational opportunities required to meet the needs of current students and residents should be readily available including vocational and technical training" (p. 29). That policy is supported by a recommendation that the "School board and Selectboard should

identify career, vocational, and technical education needs by working with employers and the staff of the secondary schools that students attend" (p. 29).

4. **Does the Plan support the provision of a safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation system that respects the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.**

Yes. It is a goal of the Plan to "provide and maintain a safe, energy efficient, and cost- effective transportation system integrating all modes of travel (auto, pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit) and meeting the needs of the public in a manner consistent with the other goals, policies and recommendations of this Town Plan" (p. 78). The Plan's Energy chapter also discusses the relationship between land use and transportation, as well as the disproportionate use of transportation fuels for private cars (p. 81).

- a. **Does the Plan provide that highways, air, rail, and other means of transportation be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated?**

Yes. It is Town policy to "cooperate with other communities in the region through the TRORC and its Transportation Advisory Committee to ensure that the region's transportation system is developed in a well-coordinated manner that recognizes and balances the needs and desires of each community," which entails promoting access and linkages to highways, air travel, rail travel, and other means of transportation (p. 81).

Nearby air and rail services are outlined on page 78.

5. **Does the Plan identify and support the protection and preservation of important natural and historic features of the community's landscape, including: significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways, and views; and important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas?**

Yes. The "Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources" element provides thorough discussions on each of the following resources within its many subsections: water resources, the working landscape, wetlands, flood plains, flora, fauna, natural communities, invasive species, mineral resources, and significant natural and historic areas (pp. 47-59).

6. **Does the Plan seek to maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources?**

- a. **Are air, water, wildlife, mineral and land resources being planned for development and use under the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A section 6086(a) (Act 250)?**

Yes. The Town seeks to "identify and protect those natural and historic resources that are unique to Chelsea and make it special," (p. 61) which, as previously stated, requires "careful review of all development projects to minimize the impact on Chelsea's natural and cultural resources" (p. 62). Air quality is not mentioned specifically, although clean air and water are stated as overall goals of the Plan on page 1. Water, wildlife, mineral resources, and land are each discussed separately in the Natural, Scenic, and Cultural Resources chapter.

b. Is the maintenance and improvement of water quality supported in accordance with the policies and actions set forth in the basin plans?

Yes. While the Plan does not specifically mention the White River Tactical Basin Plan, the Plan's goals and policies for water quality (pp. 47-48) are in alignment with the interventions recommended by the basin plan.

c. Are forestlands proposed to be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors?

Yes. The Land Use chapter calls for development in the Rural Residential District to "remain or become connected so that species can move between them" (p. 68). It also calls for subdivisions to be "planned to decrease forest block fragmentation and interference with habitat connectivity" (p. 67).

7. Does the Plan support the development of renewable energy resources, efficient use of energy, and reduced emissions of greenhouse gases?

Yes. The Plan contains goals that: "encourage a continued pattern of settlement and land use that is energy efficient;" "promote the construction of energy efficient residential and commercial buildings;" "increase awareness and use of energy conservation practices;" "increase public transportation opportunities" (p. 93). Further, "Chelsea supports the development and use of renewable energy resources ... at a scale that is sustainable, that enhances the energy system capacity and security, that promotes cleaner, more affordable energy technologies, that increases the energy options available locally, and that avoids undue adverse impacts of energy development on the local community and environment" (pp. 93-94).

a. Does the plan list any general strategies for achieving these goals, such as: increasing energy efficiency of new and existing buildings; identifying areas suitable for renewable energy generation; encouraging the use and development of renewable or lower emission energy sources for electricity, heat, and transportation; and reducing transportation energy demand and single occupancy vehicle use?

Yes, the Plan's Energy chapter contains several goals and policies regarding the construction of new energy-efficient buildings, the promotion of low-carbon transportation options, energy-efficient land-use patterns, supporting new generation, and so on (p. 93).

b. Does the plan list any specific strategies and recommendations for achieving these goals, such as those identified in the State energy plan?

Yes, the recommendations listed in the Energy chapter contain specific, actionable items for achieving the goals, including active measures to identify areas suitable for new renewable generation, implementing energy-efficiency retrofits in municipal buildings, evaluating the possibility of a municipal or community solar project, etc. (p. 93).

8. Does the Plan seek to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors?

a. Is growth being planned so as not to significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities?

Yes. The Plan includes a chapter on Recreation & Parks, which has the goal of "ensur[ing] that the patterns of land use in Chelsea continue to allow for recreational opportunities for all" (p. 41).

b. Has public access to non-commercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, been identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate?

Yes. The Plan addresses non-commercial outdoor recreational opportunities and sets recommendations to encourage state highway improvements that will include "a wider shoulder to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists" and a need to ensure walking trails, bicycle trails, and cross-country ski trails are "part of a long-range plan for the community" (pp. 42-43).

9. Does the Plan encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries?

a. Does the Plan encourage strategies to protect long-term viability of agriculture and forestlands, including maintaining low overall density?

Yes. The Plan seeks to "encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the town's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features" (p. 63). It is the Town's policy to "avoid the fragmentation of valuable agricultural and forest lands by maintaining flexible zoning that encourages development at a scale that protects the working landscape," such as encouraging clustered or peripheral development in areas with high-value agricultural and forest land to prevent fragmentation and sprawl (p. 49).

b. Has the manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products been encouraged?

Yes, the Plan explicitly "Support[s] the development of value-added farm and forestry products in Chelsea" (p. 64).

c. Is the use of locally-grown food products encouraged?

Yes, the Plan explicitly "Support[s] the use of locally produced foods by residents, visitors, and the Town" (p. 64).

d. Are sound forest and agricultural management practices encouraged?

Yes. According to this Plan, "[f]armers, loggers, and foresters should use Accepted Management Practices (AMP) and are encouraged to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) in their operations and to minimize point and non-point source pollution" (p. 64).

e. Are public investments planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land?

Yes. The Town seeks to ensure that the "construction of utilities, roads or other physical modifications should skirt tracts of productive agricultural land rather than divide them" (p. 68). The Plan also recommends that the Planning Commission consider policy mechanisms-such as Transfer of Development Rights, etc.-that can be used to help preserve undeveloped land in drafting future bylaw changes (p. 64).

10. Does the Plan provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources and facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetics of the area?

Yes. With respect to mineral resources, the Plan states that extraction and processing facilities "shall be planned, constructed, and managed... [t]o reclaim and re-vegetate sites following extraction" (p. 58). The Plan also states that, with respect to silviculture, the Town will "[p]reserve recreational and scenic access by ensuring that at the completion of logging projects all roads are restored to their previous condition" (p. 63).

11. Does the Plan ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing?

a. Is housing encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income?

Yes. The Town's goals are to "help Chelsea remain a well-balanced community that offers housing for all income levels," and allow for "growth of housing for all income levels at a rate consistent with the community's ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner..." (pp. 22-23).

b. Does the plan provide for new and rehabilitated housing to be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities?

Yes. The Town establishes two important community goals related to planning

for housing: providing "[s]afe, adequate, and affordable shelter for present and future populations" and "[s]uitable density and distribution of housing throughout the town." One of the housing goals that Chelsea has established to guide housing development is to "conserve and protect the quality of existing residential neighborhoods and to renew or rehabilitate obsolete and deteriorating dwelling units and neighborhoods" (p. 18). With respect to housing location, the Town encourages growth in or near the Village Area, but not within the Flood Hazard Area.

c. Does the Plan support sites for multi-family and manufactured housing that are readily available in similar locations to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings?

Yes. With respect to multi-family (and senior) housing, the Plan states that such housing "should be encouraged to locate in areas free from flood hazards, where adequate public sewer and water services are available and access to schools and other services reasonably are afforded," and subsequently encourages them to be sited in the Village Area (p. 23, 66). Manufactured homes are allowed in the Village district pending site plan approval and allowed outright in the Rural Residential District (pp. 67-68).

d. Does the plan allow for accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences allowing close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons?

Yes, in part. The Plan encourages the "conversion of larger homes to two and multiple family units to meet the needs of the community appropriate where the historic character of a building or neighborhood is not unnecessarily destroyed or diminished," and that Chelsea "should explore incentives to encourage homeowners to convert portions of their property into affordable apartments" (p. 23). The Plan also allows for ADUs, "especially...in close proximity to the Village center," and it discusses the need for affordable elderly housing, however it does not explicitly make a connection between elderly housing and ADUs (p. 23).

12. Does the Plan prepare for the provision and financing of an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs?

a. Does the Plan include services as fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal in its planning for facilities and services?

Yes. The "Utilities & Facilities" and "Health and Emergency Services" elements discuss matters related to Chelsea's community buildings, public water, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, cemeteries, communication facilities, healthcare facilities, fire protection services, police protection services, and other emergency medical services (p. 30-38, 42-46).

b. Does the planned rate of growth exceed the ability of the town and the area to provide facilities and services?

No. The Plan seeks to ensure that growth is effectively managed to avoid growing beyond the Town's capacity to provide the necessary facilities and services to residents, and "encourage[s] new business development in appropriate locations where services such as roads, fire protection and power supply are available or planned" (p. 16).

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

Yes. The Plan encourages "the creation of affordable childcare facilities that meet the established needs of residents in Chelsea," while also supporting the "creation of licensed childcare facilities that are run from the home as home occupations" (p. 29).

14. Does the Plan encourage flood resilient communities?

a. Is new development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas avoided? If new development is to be built in such areas, are policies in place to not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion?

Yes. Flood risk is considered throughout the Plan, and the Future Land Use section calls for the use of best planning practices within designated Flood Hazard and Fluvial Erosion areas (p. 69).

b. Is the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion encouraged?

Yes. The Plan "Encourage[s] the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion" (p. 70).

c. Are flood emergency preparedness and response planning encouraged?

Yes, the Plan recommends that flood emergency preparedness and response planning should be given special attention in planning documents (p. 45).

B. Is the Municipal Plan Compatible with the Regional Plan?

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan was adopted on July 15, 2020 and it will remain in effect until July 15, 2028.

The Chelsea Town Plan is found to be **compatible** (12/03/2024) with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan. As used in this review, the term "compatible with" has been defined (in Section 4302) as meaning: that the Plan in question, as implemented, will not

significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan (emphasis added). If a Plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other Plan (in this case, the Regional 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.

C. Is the Plan Compatible with Approved Plans of other Municipalities in the Region?

At the time of review of this Chelsea Town Plan, the following municipalities have Plans approved by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission that are in effect:

Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Braintree, Bridgewater, Corinth, Fairlee, Granville, Hancock, Hartford, Hartland, Newbury, Norwich, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Randolph, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, Tunbridge, Vershire, West Fairlee, and Woodstock.

These approval decisions and Plans have been reviewed in the context of the above question. Based on this, we find the Chelsea Town Plan to be compatible with these Plans.

D. Municipal Plan Elements -Are They Included?

A plan for a municipality shall include the following required elements. These elements or components are, in summary:

- (a) a statement of overall objectives and policies;
- (b) a current and future land use plan and maps;
- (c) a current and future transportation plan and maps;
- (d) a current and future utility and facility plan and maps;
- (e) a statement of policies for "special resources";
- (f) a current and future education plan and maps;
- (g) an implementation program;
- (h) a statement on relationship of plan to trends and plans for adjacent towns and the region;
- (i) an energy plan; and
- (j) G) a housing plan.
- (k) (k) an economic development plan
- (l) (1) a flood resiliency plan

- 1. Does the Plan include 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.**

The "Goals of the Plan" element includes 11 general goals that serve as overarching objectives for the Plan in meeting state statutory requirements and fulfilling the Town's present and future needs (p. 3). Each subsequent element of the Plan contains a listing of goals, policies, and recommendations that will guide future growth and development within Chelsea while also protecting the environment.

- 2. Does the Plan include a land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land use, that:**

- A. indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture, (using 6 VSA Section 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 town that require special consideration for aquifer protections, for wetland protection, for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors, or for other conservation purposes?**

Yes, the Maps show all of these areas, and the goals and policies of the Land Use chapter, particularly for the Rural Residential district, include provisions for the preservation of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, etc. (p. 68). There are separate goals for separate goals for the Flood Hazard area which reserve space for the floodplain (p. 70). Map 4 identifies a Source Protection Area for the town's wellheads and Map 7 identifies state wetlands.

- 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 services?**

Yes, the Utilities, Facilities, and Education Map (#4) shows the distribution of town facilities and services. The Land Use chapter dictates that "New development must not place undue burdens on municipal or regional facilities, utilities, and services, including transportation systems" (p. 66).

- C. identifies those areas, if any, proposed for designation under chapter 76A of Title 24, together with, for each area proposed for designation, an explanation of how the designation would further the plan's goals and the goals of 24 V.S. A. section 4302, and how the areas sought meets the requirements?**

Yes, the Chelsea Designated Village Center is shown on Maps 2 and 6. Present and future land use in the village is detailed in the corresponding chapters.

- D. and 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?

Yes, Map 7 and the Land Use chapter identify forest blocks and include strategies to minimize fragmentation. The Conservation Area goals and policies provides additional protections to sensitive lands therein.

3. **Does the Plan include a transportation plan, consisting of a map and a 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.**

The "Transportation" element serves as a transportation plan (pp. 74-79), and a Transportation map can be found in the appendix.

4. **Does the Plan include 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**
- a. **priority of need,**
 - b. **costs and**
 - c. **methods of financing**

Yes, partly. The Utilities and Facilities chapter (pp. 30-38) details municipal facilities and anticipated future needs but does not discuss costs or potential funding sources in detail. A future iteration of the Plan must address costs and funding sources in more detail for approval.

5. **Does the Plan include a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.**

Yes, the "Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources" element includes statements of policy on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources in Chelsea (p. 59), and a natural resources map can be found in the appendix.

However, it does not use the term "Rare and Irreplaceable Natural Areas" except in the maps.

6. **Does the Plan include an educational facilities plan consisting of a map and a statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system.**

Yes. The "Education" element contains an educational facilities plan (pp. 24-29), and educational facilities information is included within the facilities map that is located in the appendix.

7. Does the Plan include a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan?

The "Town Plan Implementation" element contains information on the regulatory and non-regulatory implementation methods that may be employed to further the Plan's objectives, along with the parties responsible for implementation (pp. 96-110).

8. Does the Plan include a statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under Title 24?

The "Relationship to Other Plans" element contains information on how the current Plan relates to plans of adjacent municipalities within the TRORC region as well as with the Regional Plan (pp. 95-96).

9. Does the Plan include 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, and a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.

Yes. The "Energy" element includes a thorough analysis of energy issues within Chelsea, namely looking at energy demands, a discussion on renewable energy resources, regulatory considerations, residential energy efficiency measures, the role of the Town in energy efficiency, and the nexus between energy and transportation policy (pp. 80-94).

10. Does the Plan include a housing element that shall include a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs as identified by the regional planning commission pursuant to Section 4348a (a)(9) of Title 24, including the permitting of accessory dwelling units?

The "Housing" element (pp. 18-23) addresses the community's needs for low- to moderate- income housing. It includes a policy to encourage the use of ADUs and has a program of recommendations to improve access to affordable housing (p. 23).

11. Does the Plan include 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.

The "Economic Development" element describes Chelsea's current state of the Town's economy and the desired direction of economic development, along with

policies and recommendations for economic growth (p. 10-17). The chapter includes policies discouraging sprawl and strip development and directing commercial development to the Village Center and other locally-designated zones such as the Mixed Use Development Area (p. 16). The chapter's recommendations include specific, actionable steps to encourage economic growth (p. 16-17).

12. Does the Plan include a flood resilience plan that:

identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas based on river corridor maps provided by VT ANR or other maps recommended by the Secretary of Natural Resources, 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?

- 1. and recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments?**

The Plan's "Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources" contains a "Flood Plains" section (pp. 51-54) and the "Land Use Plan" element contains a "Flood Hazard Area" section (p. 71). These sections include policies and recommendations aimed at mitigating flood risk; for example, "It is the policy of the Town that the preferred uses for flood hazard areas should be for open space, greenbelts, and non-commercial recreational or agricultural uses" (p. 54). A flood hazard map is included in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the above findings, it is the conclusion of TRORC that the Chelsea Town Plan be approved. This approval shall remain in effect until the date that the Plan expires, or until it is amended or readopted and reviewed pursuant to these provisions, whichever occurs first.

DISCUSSION

Prior to issuing a Permit under Act 250, the District Environmental Commission or Environmental Court must find that the project is in conformance with the duly adopted Town Plan, where this Plan includes clear, unambiguous mandatory language regarding development that can be reviewed by these bodies as part of an Act 250 project application.

Comments and suggested improvements for the next iteration of the Chelsea Town Plan:

1. Facilities planning must discuss the priority of anticipated future projects, rough cost estimates, and potential funding sources for the next iteration of this Plan to be approved.

Dated this 26th day of February, 2025 at Woodstock, Vermont.

By: Peter G. Gregory
Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director