



Promote vibrant communities by directing business and housing development toward compact, mixed-use town centers, at a scale of growth that fits the community and the region.

Vermont is known for its downtowns and villages (town centers), and for its surrounding working lands and natural areas. Ironically, perhaps because of this appeal, Vermont has experienced both conventional suburban sprawl and incremental rural residential development. This increases the amount we must drive for everyday activities, and can also fragment forests and wildlife habitat, consume valuable farmland, and increase municipal road maintenance and other infrastructure costs. By contrast, land use decisions that promote compact villages and well-designed neighborhoods can increase options for transportation, housing, jobs, community-scale renewable energy, locally produced food and fuel, and other economic activity - all ingredients of a resilient and healthy community.

TIPS FOR ACCURATE SCORING:

- Review town plan, town plan maps, zoning, and subdivision regulations
- Check permit records, review parcel maps
- Review sewer system policies
- Look at aerial photos
- If applicable, check with a village trustee or district board members on water and sewer questions

Town centers and state "designations"

"Town center" is the term used in this Scorecard to refer to Vermont's historic, compact downtowns and villages and adjacent residential development. These compact areas are often surrounded by rural countryside, are walkable, and include a mix of business, residential, and civic buildings. This Scorecard also refers to "state designated downtowns, village centers, growth centers, and new town centers." These programs are sponsored by the state, and provide incentives to municipalities who have applied and been accepted as "designated." The program's incentives encourage communities to maintain (or create) compact land use patterns for the many economic, environmental, housing, and transportation benefits they provide.

A. What statement below best captures the desired pattern of development described in your town plan?

- The town plan describes a desired pattern of development that includes one or more town centers, with compact development adjacent to the town center, and very low average densities beyond..... 3
- The town plan is not specific on the desired pattern of development..... 2
- The plan calls for growth distributed throughout town; or there is no town plan 1

B. Do your community's regulations create a distinct land use pattern with a compact town center surrounded by lower densities, working lands, and conserved natural areas?

- Yes 3
- We have defined a town center (or centers), but it is not compact, and/or it encompasses undeveloped land that extends the town center in a linear fashion along major roads..... 2
- No. There is no town center, and minimum lot sizes are similar throughout all districts in the town; or they are mixed in size throughout all areas of town 1

C. Does your community have a state designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center?

- Yes 3
- No, but we are interested or in the process of applying 2
- No..... 1

D. How distinct (e.g., readily visible) is the edge of your town's center (or centers, if your municipality has more than one) compared to outlying areas, including developed or rural areas?

- It is clearly visible 3
- The town center's edge is recognizable, but has begun to blend with outlying development 2
- There is no distinction between the town center and outlying development 1

E. When business development occurs, where is it located?

- Predominantly within the town center, and/or in a state designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center 3
- Both in and outside these areas..... 2
- Outside these areas, in strips along highways and/or on large lots 1

F. When new residential development occurs, where is located?

- Within or immediately adjacent to the town center, and/or in a state designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center 3
- Partly within these areas and partly in outlying areas, often in clustered or conservation developments 2
- Mostly in areas outside compact town centers, on large lots 1

G. Where are your town’s public buildings (e.g., schools, town office, police and fire stations) located, and where are future public buildings planned?

- Most existing and planned public buildings are in the town center 3
- Most existing public buildings are in the town center, but some planned buildings would be located outside the center 2
- Most existing and planned public buildings are outside the town center 1

H. Where are businesses and residential uses located in relation to each other?

- The town center fosters a mix of uses..... 3
- We have areas where uses are mixed, but they are scattered around town 2
- No mixed uses are permitted. Business and residential uses are segregated 1

I. In your town center, how do newer lots (those created within the past 20 years) compare to the typical sizes of older lots in the same area?

- Most newer lots in the town center are similar in size to, or smaller than, older lots in similar locations, and continue the pattern of a compact town center 3
- Lot sizes are a distinct mix. Some newer lots are similar to older lots; some are larger..... 2
- Most newer lots are larger than older lots in similar locations 1





Michael Reynolds

The Waypoint Center in Bellows Falls is built on a cleaned up brownfield.

J. If your community provides public sewer and/or water, how are line extensions managed?

- The sewer and water service area is defined and consistent with the town center’s boundaries. Line extensions outside this area are prohibited 3
- The sewer and water service area is defined and consistent with the town center — but some extensions are approved outside this area or we do not have public sewer and/or water, but are conducting capital planning for a system 2
- The sewer and water service area is not defined, or is defined simply as a set distance from existing lines, allowing the service area to expand as lines are extended 1

K. What scale of business growth is permitted?

- We limit the size of new buildings to fit community character and local consumer needs..... 3
- We limit the size of new buildings in the town center, but not outside.... 2
- We do not limit the size of buildings anywhere 1

L. Does your town (alone or with the regional planning commission) promote “infill” – the reuse of vacant/underutilized properties – particularly in town centers?

- Yes, we facilitate environmental testing and redevelopment of properties suspected of contamination (“brownfields”) and/or we have state designated downtowns, villages, or growth centers to help property owners access tax incentives for redevelopment, etc. 3
- The town plan discusses infill, compact development, and avoiding sprawl, but does not have specific policies and programs. Town staff do not take an active role in promoting infill..... 2
- We do not address infill in the town plan or town policies 1

Score: _____

Scoring	Suggested Steps for Building Resilience
31-36 Resilient Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your RPC about brownfields assessment and redevelopment. • Ensure that planned public buildings are located in or adjacent to the town center.
22-30 In Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look into state designation programs. • Make sure zoning actual creates a distinct, compact town center surrounded by countryside.
12-21 Needs Your Attention!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a town center in your town plan and/or zoning. • Revisit policies on sewer and water service areas (definitions and extensions).