

Community Planning & Municipal Planning Grant Survey Results

Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD)
Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)
January 14, 2020

SURVEY SUMMARY, CONTENT & RESPONSES

OVERVIEW

- The Department received 68 responses from Vermont's planning and development community.
- Respondents took an average of 19.5 minutes to complete the form.
- The survey was not designed to be statistically significant from a random sample. It offers insights and feedback from voluntary participants.
- The survey was issued following the October 1, 2019 submission deadline for the FY2021 Municipal Planning Grant applications to capture feedback while the topic was fresh on the minds of municipal and regional planners.
- The Department promoted the survey through the Vermont Planners Association and the Vermont Zoning Administrator Listservs, as well as the Department of Housing & Community Development's Strong Communities Fall Newsletter.
- The survey was open for response between October 2, and October 16, 2019, approximately 2 weeks in duration.
- The quality of suggestions on ways the State can strengthen community planning and the Municipal Planning Grant program are truly helpful; the Department (DHCD) continuously looks for opportunities to improve.

KEY FINDINGS

Participants

- Members of the planning community from towns large and small and every county in Vermont remain engaged and interested in the program, especially professional municipal planners.

MPG Priorities

- Housing, economic development, and land use are priority areas of planning, and specific area plans, municipal plans, and special purpose plans are priority planning projects.
- Although planning for housing was the highest priority under areas of planning for MPG funding -- regulations and bylaws ranked lower as a priority planning project. Because the Department routinely encounters municipal regulations that do not reflect municipal plan housing priorities, unnecessarily limit housing in development-ready places, or contain requirements that add costs without commensurate value, the Department is likely to continue prioritization of funding for regulatory updates, particularly those that implement the Zoning for Great Neighborhoods guidance now under development.

- The FY20 scoring formula placed less emphasis on statewide priorities following feedback that the priorities were inflated to such a degree that they discouraged good projects. This change provided more flexibility than in years past to fund locally needed projects that do not meet a statewide priority. Although the program has de-emphasized statewide priorities, DHCD will continue to nudge projects that address pressing challenges of statewide significance. DHCD also recognizes an ongoing need to communicate program changes. Several survey responses raised concerns that the program has shifted in significant ways to address.

MPG Success Factors

- The top ranked success factors affirm the program’s FY20 changes to score for need, urgency, public support, and effective project approach. The Department will consider the overall rankings of success factors and evaluate how the program allocates points to align with the most important success factors.

MPG Eligible Grant Amounts & Local Cash Match

- With the exception of a preference to increase the maximum grant amount for single municipality applications (\$22,000), a majority of the respondents preferred to leave the other grant amounts as-is: maximum consortium grants at \$35,000, minimum grants at \$2,500, and 10% minimum local cash match.

MPG Materials and Staff

- 87% of respondents rated the overall program as “excellent” and “good”. Accessibility of program information, clarity of program information and instructions, and state program staff assistance are highly valued; however, DHCD could improve program satisfaction by evaluating its online application and grants management system -- which 40% rank as “average” or “poor”.
- DHCD recognizes that the grants management system is not easy to use. Shifting away from this cross-departmental software program poses significant organizational costs that make improving this measure difficult. DHCD will continue to do what it can to make the platform as user-friendly as possible as well as provide resources to assist applicants and grantees navigate the platform. To promote equity across the state, DHCD will also encourage first-time applicants and citizen planners writing applications to contact the Department directly for guidance and support prior to submission.

Reasons for Not Applying for an MPG

- Of the 14 responses, some feared a mismatch between program priorities and the community’s priorities. Others said the lack of Selectboard support for planning or a lack of willingness to pay a 10% match is a barrier. Some responses hinted at limited bandwidth and capacity to prepare an application and administer the grant.

General Community Planning Priorities

- Participants’ top three community planning priorities mirrored their MPG priority areas of planning, with housing, economic development, and infrastructure to support development mentioned most.

Needed Incentives to Address Priorities

- Participants listed a wide range of helpful incentives to implement community priorities. Funding appeared to be the most mentioned item. Technical assistance and regulatory solutions were also referenced. There are many valuable ideas to help guide the Department’s work to support great places and strong communities.

Local Obstacles

- A lack of funding, lack of capacity, and public resistance to change are the biggest barriers to change at the local level. These are realities the MPG program and other DHCD initiatives aim to pragmatically acknowledge.

State Action

- Suggestions on high-impact actions the State could take that would make the biggest difference were very diverse. Solutions for water/wastewater infrastructure, affordable housing, and cross-agency cooperation and coordination were common themes.

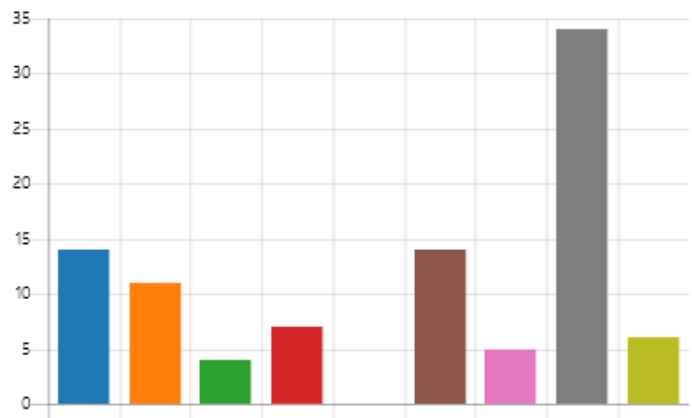
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Please identify your role in Vermont’s planning community.

Select all that apply. Answer required.

68 responses

● local planning commissioner	14
● regional planning commissioner	11
● zoning/development review b...	4
● selectboard/alderman/council ...	7
● advisory committee/commissi...	0
● zoning administrator	14
● municipal manager/town adm...	5
● professional planner	34
● other	6



If you selected “other” to the question above, please specify your role.

If not, skip this question.

6 responses

● Downtown Organization Coordinator
● Economic Development Advisor
● community design consultant
● Not for Profit Administrator
● consultant

- Bike-Pedestrian Planner

If you are a professional planner, please identify your primary role.
If not, skip this question.

41 responses

● municipal/local planner	17
● regional planner	14
● state or federal agency planner	2
● non-profit planner	2
● private consulting planner	6



If you work for or serve in a municipality, what is its size by population?
If you work in multiple municipalities, identify the average size you serve.

- small (fewer than 2,000 residents)
- medium (greater than 2,000 and fewer than 5,000 residents)
- large (greater than 5,000 residents)
- not applicable, I don't work for or serve in a municipality

65 responses

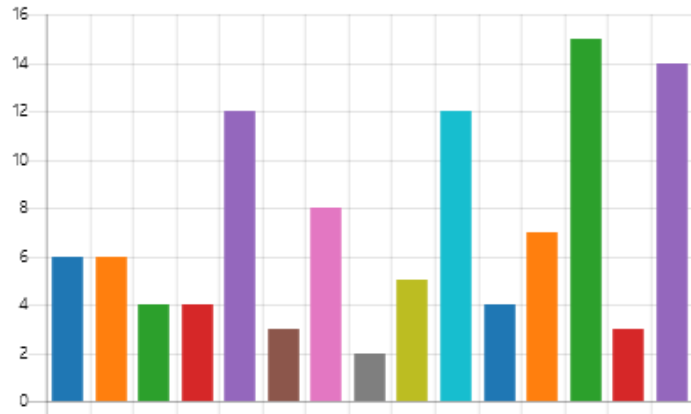
● small (fewer than 2,000 reside...	19
● medium (greater than 2,000 a...	18
● large (greater than 5,000 resid...	14
● not applicable, I don't work fo...	14



Which county (or counties) do you work or serve in?
 Select all that apply.

68 responses

● ALL COUNTIES: Statewide	6
● Addison	6
● Bennington	4
● Calendonía	4
● Chittenden	12
● Essex	3
● Franklin	8
● Grand Isle	2
● Lamoille	5
● Orange	12
● Orleans	4
● Rutland	7
● Washington	15
● Windham	3
● Windsor	14



MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANTS

Approximately \$450,000 in funding is available annually to Vermont municipalities to further Vermont's planning and development goals. Applications are due each fall (October 1st in 2019) and awards are announced in December. Grants are awarded competitively and administered by DHCD.

[2020 Annual Report](#)

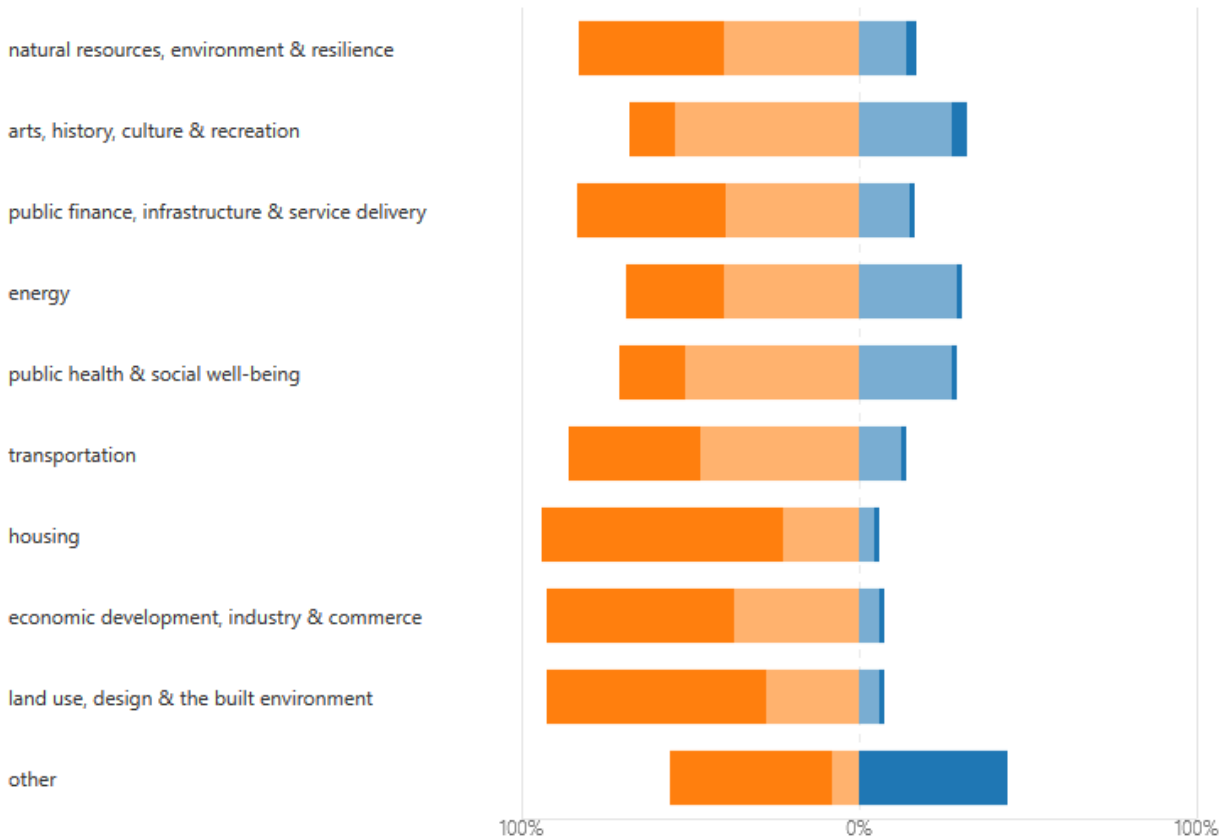
[Program Information Page](#)

[2020 Program Description](#)

[2020 Application Guide](#)

What areas of planning should be high or low priorities for MPG funding? 68 responses

■ high ■ medium ■ low ■ no opinion



The top three priority areas of planning:
1) housing
2) land use, design & the built environment
3) economic development, industry & commerce

If you answered “other” above or would like to add more detail to your response, please specify.

If not, skip this question

13 responses

- It is time for dramatic transformation of the MPG process. For truly small, rural towns with no staff, continue to provide whatever help they need to do good work. For larger towns with staff, no more grants to write plans or bylaws, things the staff should be doing anyway, Challenge all towns, but especially the latter, to require proposals for truly creative or transformative projects; challenge them to be

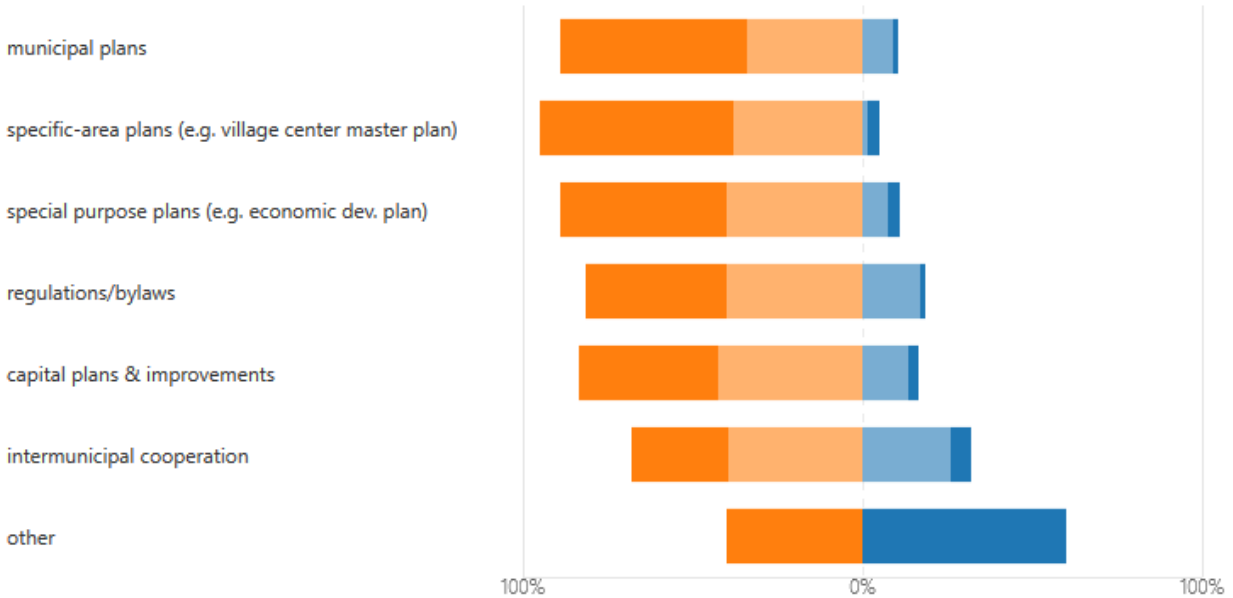
transferable; and require that they give presentations to other communities on lessons learned, roadblocks to progress, challenges overcome... how about a 'doing more with less' challenge - how to better accomplish goals with simpler/fewer bylaws, not just more hyper-regulation?!

- Modernizing zoning bylaws. Improving town plans.
- Local plans and zoning are still the greatest need and benefit from MPG funds
- MPGs should also do basic planning, which is a mix of these, so basic town plans
- municipal plan development (covers all of the above topics!), capacity building, professional development, training program for local planning and zoning officials (board development, required training for ZA's...)
- public outreach to show how all of the above currently manifest in a community's built environment, to build will to action for positive change
- Promotion and implementation funding for small community-level "package" septic systems for business development in village areas.
- Since it is a municipally focused program, priorities should be dictated by priorities in municipal plans. No additional priority should be assigned by the state.
- Communities that serve Elders well
- Adaptive reuse of "civic anchors" in Village Centers that have outlived their original use -- particularly church buildings with dwindling congregations and rural Schools in consolidating districts
- Community Engagement
- Vision: Municipalities identify what planning area they need to plan for and are not restricted by funding categories
- community engagement, building volunteerism

What categories of planning projects should be high or low priorities for MPG funding?

68 responses

■ high ■ medium ■ low ■ no opinion



The top three priority planning project categories:
 1) specific area plans
 2) municipal plans
 3) special purpose plans

If you answered “other” above or would like to add more detail to your response, please specify.

If not, skip this question.

7 responses

- Please see answer above; applies here, as well, and also to #10 below.
- Regional watershed engineering studies evaluating flood control basins to capture storm event volumes into rural greenspace areas as opposed to having the flood water destroy VT villages located along these hydro-challenged communities with little protection from major storm events.
- Plans (especially as they are now 8-year plans) and bylaws should remain the fundamental priority of this program. All other priorities should be those identified in local plans.
- Planning for working lands
- Action plans. Not just visions. Action plans. Too many pretty pictures, not enough hand son "get it done". Fund getting it done.

- Vision: Municipalities identify what planning area they need to plan for and are not restricted by funding categories
- As a cyclical planning obligation and such limited funds available for MPG projects, routine municipal plans should be "owned" by the municipality and supported by RPC funding streams unless the project tackles a major overhaul or undertakes a new approach with robust outreach.

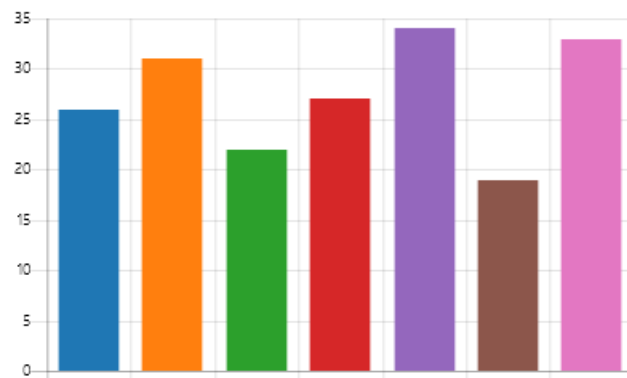
Which of the following factors are the most important to the overall success of an MPG-funded planning project?

Select your top THREE (3) or skip this question if you're unsure.

- Project issue/definition/framing
- Project need/urgency
- Project readiness
- Project management
- Community partnership & support
- Public engagement
- Project approach: effective work plan & budget

66 responses

● project issue/definition/framing	26
● project need/urgency	31
● project readiness	22
● project management	27
● community partnership & sup...	34
● public engagement	19
● project approach: effective wo...	33



The top three MPG success factors:
 1) community partnership & support
 2) project need/urgency
 3) project approach: effective work plan & budget

Please evaluate the program's eligible grant amounts and local match requirements.

Note that if overall MPG funding remains stable, smaller grant amounts allow for more grants awarded while larger grant amounts allow for fewer grants awarded.

66 responses

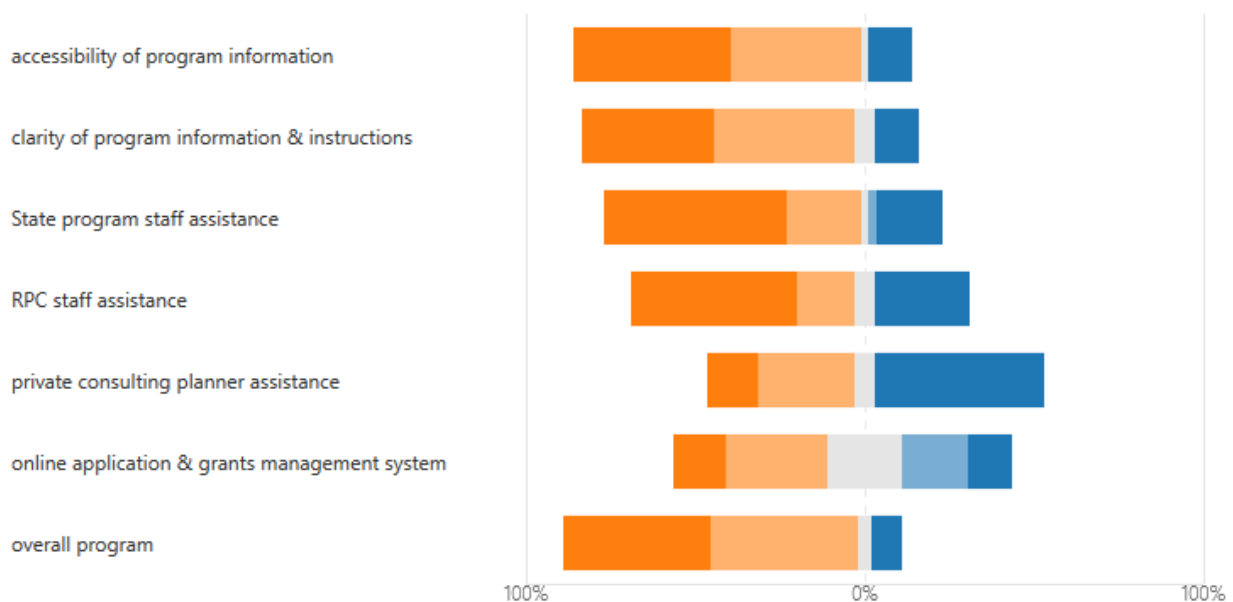
	Increase	Decrease	Leave as-is	No opinion
Single municipality max grants of \$22k	40.9%	15.2%	13.8%	12.1%
Consortium max grants of \$35k	17.2%	20.3%	40.6%	21.9%
Min. grants of \$2.5k	27.7%	4.6%	44.6%	23.1%
10% min. local cash match	10.8%	18.5%	58.8%	12.3%

If you have recently applied for a Municipal Planning Grant, please rate the program materials and staff.

If not, skip this question.

48 responses

■ excellent
 ■ good
 ■ average
 ■ poor
 ■ no opinion



87% of respondents rated the *overall program* as “excellent” and “good”.

If you have opted not to apply for an MPG in the past, what are the reasons?

14 responses

- fear of an uncompetitive project; mismatch between program priorities and community projects

- Match requirements can be a problem, especially for small towns.
- Bandwidth
- I'm not currently a PC member but have served as such in the past and when discussion regarding MPG grants came up concerns were mostly about the amount of time required for the application, reporting, and whether or not the municipality had enough resources to take on the project.
- MPGs take significant staff time to apply, and for smaller projects it can be easier to just do the project than get a grant.
- Selectboard deciding project was not a priority due to local match requirement
- Match sometimes an issue for smaller towns, GEARS is not user friendly for smaller towns
- Not needed for project at this time.
- We recently applied and are waiting a year to apply for another.
- Lack of clearly defined projects that would be competitive for grants; availability of local funds sufficient
- No match funding
- Numerous communities in Region have chosen not to apply for MPGs since the match requirement was imposed. Those that submitted applications this year only did so because the RPC was able to identify other sources of funds for match.
- Moved to VT recently
- Lack of Selectboard support.

Please offer any other MPG program feedback that you would like to share.

26 responses

- Thanks for doing this survey; hope it offers illuminating insights. Think my expansive answer to #7 says it all for me.
- Smaller municipalities rely on these grants to fund planning projects in areas where there is not otherwise funding, such as small-scale neighborhood plans, addressing pedestrian safety and community needs adjacent to a larger development, and so on.
- The MPG program needs a mechanism for dealing with plans and bylaw revisions that include a local adoption component. Too many projects fail because of a lack of professional support through the adoption process post-MPG grant. Comprehensive bylaw revisions in particular should be required to be a 2-cycle project with the second phase focused on public education and facilitation of the public hearing process. If the MPG program is going to continue to emphasize public engagement, there needs to be a significant increase in the grant amounts - like double (\$40k). Successful public engagement is extremely time/\$ intensive. It is becoming harder to get people to engage every year. Consider that each public meeting or event should be supported by 16 hours or more of consultant time. Almost none of the MPG budgets provide that amount of time/\$ for the outreach component.

- Increased overall funding for the MPG program needed. Press Administration and Legislators harder. Given how little funding is available, consider eliminating statewide priorities as a scoring category. Instead, focus on funding projects that advance planning and help implement municipal plan priorities.
- Excellent program for small rural towns, who don't have the resources to investigate or research solutions to community needs. My experience is that needs far outpace resources.
- I really value the opportunity that MPGs present, but in a community that chronically sidelines the planning process and planning products, some other intervention other than financial support may be more valuable.
- It's an important program to fund needed planning efforts that are sometimes hard to fund locally.
- Procurement requirements can be a challenge for towns with respect to preparing an application, especially due to timing.
- The MPG program is essential for small and medium sized communities. Additional funding for municipal planning projects is needed and will lead to greater project implementation in the future.
- I think it's among the most efficient and effective programs I've ever worked with and it's vital for supporting good basic local planning in VT!
- I would like to see a bit more involvement from ACCD locally in MPG programs (attendance at meetings/providing more information about state resources related to a given project). Having a state level expert at meetings can go a long way in getting community member and local authority buy-in when it comes to adoption or implementation of plans/bylaws.
- I think a ramped match would be good, so maybe 10% on \$5000, 20% on \$10k and so on. Bigger towns can pay more. I think regional share is important, and there needs to be a very strong reason to override it.
- Too many roles in the grant writing process.
- I've led and managed MPGs in two Lamoille communities where this funding led to residents and officials seeing their villages with different eyes. Several years down the road, this is enabling positive action taking in these communities, hyper local and incremental change that can create multiplier effects for their economies. (I'm currently consulting on an MPG funded project for such an initiative). The public "conversation" critical for this resolve began with MPGs. The MPGs did not themselves result in direct action-taking in these communities, but the projects they funded helped people understand how public/civic spaces are valuable community assets, and why investing in them makes sense. Without this important state funding it's unlikely that insights that now being translated into positive change would have materialized.
- Thank you for the support the MPG program has provided to the Town of Concord!
- Vermont has continued to expand its expectations for planning at the municipal level. The Municipal Planning Grant program is a vital program that supports our communities as they try to meet state expectations and plan for their futures. In truth, the MPG program could have double the funding and there would still be

communities with unmet needs. Keep up the good work and thank you for continuing to assess its value and establish priorities based on yearly needs.

- It seems like the expectations to do a Town Plan or a zoning bylaw are quite high. Towns need the bare bones, and often times cannot afford a consultant or RPC to assist them in this work, and these projects are not competitive with other 'fancier' projects in the state. Somehow the funding for these grants should be increased as well, I'm sure the RPCs would be willing to act on this at the state legislature.
- Greater emphasis on green infrastructure for streetscape retrofits and local drainage "problem areas."
- The entire staff is so focused on applicant success that it makes the process easy. The process provides new information that adds to a more meaningful outcome.
- Planning Commissions are so ill-equipped to write their own municipal plans - technical assistance should be mandatory for every plan.
- The MPG program was created in the aftermath of Act200 to ensure that planning was accessible and affordable to ALL communities, regardless of population, wealth, or size of grant list. Recent changes to the program, notably the match requirement and procurement rules, have undermined that objective. The match requirement has ruined the MPG program for rural communities. It has created an unnecessary barrier for planning in communities that need it the most. When measured on a cost-per-resident basis, the burden of a match is significantly greater on communities with small populations and grand lists. The reason that more communities have not expressed this concern directly to ACCD is that past experience suggests that State Agencies will not be responsive to their needs or concerns. The new procurement requirements have also created an unnecessary burden for communities. The new procurement rules effectively prohibit communities that rely on their RPC for grant writing, procurement, and project management from also receiving planning assistance from their RPC. This back-door privatization is destructive to planning in the long term, as continuity is extremely important to all stages of the planning process. The "multiple quote" requirement demonstrates that a lack of understanding of actual procurement standards. Professional services are most commonly procured through a qualifications-based process. Some professional services that, by nature, require continuity, such as legal and accounting, may not be part of a procurement process at all. As planning is most similar to these types of professional services, the competitive procurement requirement should not apply in any of the following cases (1) The project will be completed by municipal staff, hours over-and-above their regularly budgeted workload (2) The project will be completed by the Regional Planning Commission of which the municipality is a member (3) The project is a phased project that will be completed by a consultant selected through a prior phase (4) The project will be completed by a consultant on retainer by the municipality, provided the retainer contract was competitively procured.
- Planning is very important, but too many plans sit on the shelf. Be sure that applications to fund consultants to help implement action are encouraged.
- Please eliminate match for small communities. Ever since the 10% match was implemented, LCPC supplied the match on behalf of our least populated municipalities, otherwise, these municipalities would like to ask for the funding.

- The ever-changing priorities make it difficult for communities to plan for applications until several months before the application is due. This results in the program funding project that are already in the pipeline, rather than inspiring action toward a particular state goal.
- Gears is a nightmare.
- This is program helps understaffed and under-resourced cities and towns get things done. The program has not received and increase in many years. Directing more funding to the program would pay huge dividends to communities and ensure Vermont's future is more prosperous.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Land use planning in Vermont is governed by statewide planning goals and guided by smart growth principles established by statute. These goals and principles, defined in 24 V.S.A. §4302(c) & §2791(13), provide the framework for municipal and regional plans and guide state agency policies. Responses to these questions are intended to help DHCD shape its programs in ways that support communities' planning goals.

What are the top three priorities for the municipality/municipalities or organizations you serve?

Please provide a very short phrase for each priority (example 1. Promoting workforce housing starts.)

59 Responses



- 1. economic development 2. housing - workforce housing 3. public water/wastewater infrastructure (tied to other two issues)

- Bringing our town plan into current usage and getting more understanding and buy-in from the public, reviewing and revising bylaws when applicable, development of a true village center for increased citizen and visitor participation.
- economic development; financial efficiency; transforming zoning/regulatory systems
- 1. moving vital community services out of the floodplain 2. promoting development of senior housing 3. upgrading existing rental housing stock for workforce
- Providing infrastructure and planning for infrastructure to support land use, housing and economic development goals. Out-of-date regulations and DRBs and ZAs that are not adequately trained to administer the regulations lawfully. Reducing the cost / increasing efficiency of providing municipal and educational services given the lack of population and economic growth in most areas of the state, including the need to move to regionalized and shared services.
- 1. Building affordable housing 2. Safer and multi-modal streets 3. Economic development
- 1. addressing public infrastructure limitations - e.g., water, sewer, transportation 2. creating more affordable and reasonably priced housing 3. funding - annual operating and longer-term capital improvements
- Housing - finding a realistic solution; economic development that can create good jobs; retention of youth and young families which ties into first two, housing and economic development.
- 1. Establishing safe and appealing pedestrian connections between existing community assets 2. " 3. "
- workforce housing smart growth working landscape
- Updating our regulatory environment Attracting new population PILOT programs to allow non-taxable entities to pay into the cost of services
- Economic development/village revitalization, home options/affordability, natural resource planning/resiliency
- Affordable housing, supporting agricultural and creative economies, infrastructure (water and sewage)
- Creation of municipal wastewater infrastructure, development of workforce housing rental stock, enhancing non-snow dependent recreation portfolio in the face of a changing climate.
- - Economic development - Downtown revitalization - Attracting more middle-class residents (we need to have a more balanced population in our community)
- 1. Planning for public infrastructure 2. Ensuring the Development Regulations are clear and concise 3. Promoting economic development
- Capital improvement planning, municipal energy use, tax stabilization
- Wastewater capacity Basic zoning and bylaw updates Village center investments
- 1. workforce housing starts 2, infrastructure planning and investment 3. rural fragmentation
- Housing, Economic Development, Revitalization
- affordable homes subdivision fragmenting lands paying for local infrastructure/property taxes

- Infrastructure improvements; various required plans; grants
- 1 - downtown/neighborhood center redevelopment generally - inventory/data collection, visioning, urban design, regulatory reforms, 2 - housing - of all types and price-points 3 - economic development - of all types to support/grow tax base and increase incomes
- Affordable housing, Updating municipal plans/ bylaws to meet state requirements, Alternative transportation, bike/pedestrian issues
- 1. Revitalizing Downtowns/Villages/Centers-of-Commerce 2. Connectivity in/between Municipality(ies) 3. Keeping People in the municipality over time.
- building local capacity for undertaking a rural municipal planning program (including administration of land use regulations), addressing declining local economy, ability to afford infrastructure improvements
- 1) providing public wastewater in the village 2) promoting housing diversity and economic development in the village 3) expanding and capitalizing on recreational opportunities
- 1. Getting a community wastewater system in the village of the town I work for so the density our FBC zoning allows and the revitalization the community desires can emerge in this location. 2. Encouraging more economic revitalization and affordable housing in the town where I live 3. Helping more residents support multimodality in the town where I live by creating a manual of "context appropriate" bike/ped improvements for roads in our town.
- Economic development, tax reduction,
- increasing housing supply and affordability, shared services, fighting NIMBY
- Economic Development Zoning & Junk Ordinance Enforcement Parks & Recreation
- Building infrastructure that enhances sense of place and community and provides opportunities for economic growth. Identifying local housing needs and supporting efforts to expand affordable (and workforce) housing options for young and old. Understanding how to take advantage of unique assets such as trails and other natural resources, to bring visitors into the community and attract younger residents.
- Flood resilience, affordable housing, and economic development.
- 1. Redevelopment of empty or underutilized spaces. 2. Revitalizing current commercial and housing spaces. 3. Modernization of planning and regulation.
- Storm Resiliency Economic development in the Village District Sewer infrastructure investments where appropriate
- Transportation infrastructure. Wastewater. Revitalization of existing housing/buildings.
- 1. Town plans 2. Affordable housing 3. Promoting weatherization & renewable energy resources
- fostering compact development healthy, equitable, diverse communities integrated, efficient infrastructure
- Keeping a rural village center relevant in the new economy Providing opportunities and venues to groom community participation and leadership Keeping

communities vibrant and connected to attract new residents and keep older folks in the community longer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy and sustainability, economic development, aging in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development Alternative energy development Transportation development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Balancing amount (level of service) and source (private/public sector) of funding for municipal services 2. Promoting smart growth and vitality of downtown areas 3. Addressing housing affordability through non-growth means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Developing workforce housing 2. Filling vacant Main Street space 3. Promoting greater community engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) Updating zoning bylaws (we get help from RPC staff for that) 2) Preserving forest habitat & wildlife connectors (Bolton) 3) Upgrading municipal facilities (Georgia)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. environmental stewardship 2. quality of life 3. prioritizing PEOPLE above everything else. (just my opinion - not shared by my peers on city council or planning commission)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.) Providing basic services to residents at affordable costs 2.) lack of infrastructure to housing, economic development, and a stable grand list. 3.) Complying with ever growing State mandates that divert resources from items 1 and 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Sustainable Economic Development that is climate conscious
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal plan and zoning integration. Specific plan elements mandated by state. Designated areas compliance and implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figuring out actual development deals that can be put together. Not just dreams; real projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. expanding opportunities for housing, jobs, and recreation in centers; 2. cultivating home-grown entrepreneurs; 3. finding new models & partnerships to maintain and grow municipal capacity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public infrastructure expansion, managing rapid growth, preserving open land
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing, pedestrian scale and oriented development, alternative modes of transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging new/more volunteers Planning for the demographic shift Identifying municipal actions that can support/encourage housing creation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide affordable housing, retain/attract young families, maintain ecological systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Maintaining infrastructure/facilities 2 attracting business 3 public participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Housing 2. Housing 3. Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Forest block and wildlife connector conservation 2. Housing 3. Village Center redevelopment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1). Active Transportation Improvements, 2). Maximizing limited construction dollars to improve infrastructure, 3) Lack of opportunity for public input on projects/within planning processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater Runoff Infrastructure management

- Honestly, I think some form of punishment for disregarding or defying statutes would be most useful.
- funding for special studies training continuing current use
- Housing rehab funds that incentivize private investment Funds for creative projects inspired by community action
- Additional financial incentives for building rehabilitation/home creation. Act 250 exemptions for desirable projects that are clearly identified in town plans (i.e. redeveloping existing buildings, bike path within river corridor). Financial assistance with branding/marketing.
- Support/funding for wastewater infrastructure and reduction of Act 250 requirement in designated Growth Center (and potentially designated village centers).
- - Financial incentives and help with attracting developers to purchase and redevelopment of properties particularly in the downtown. - Financial incentives and help with attracting developers to purchase properties for building new developments on available lands.
- 1. More accessible financial incentives (and larger dollar amounts) to rehabilitate public facilities 2. Greater funding and longer timelines for Development Regulations projects (they're always longer than expected). 3. More technical assistance to assist communities in economic development outreach
- Financial incentives for building improvements, grants for capital improvement planning, not sure about tax stabilization
- Available MPG funds Political and financial support for municipal staff Greater support for planning as part of DEC funded Infrastructure projects
- 1. workforce housing credits 2. infrastructure capital funding 3. development of local markets for forestry products
- Financial incentives for preserving historic or aging housing stock. Highlighting (or creating) benefits for designation or purchase of lands (by municipalities) for public use and/or recreation spaces. What ARE the incentives for large landowners to donate, sell, or set aside land for this purpose? How to cope or "flip" a loss of community identity in a second-home or seasonal-home town.
- move to an income tax as property tax keeps folks thinking of land as money incentive affordable homes and tax ones that are second or high priced have act 250 address some of the fragmentation
- financial incentives
- remove duplicative regulatory processes - grant local delegation of state requirements financial incentives for redevelopment in downtown/neighborhood centers address regulatory obstacles presented by managing urban soils
- Zoning policy changes to promote compact development, Financial incentives for accessory dwelling unit creation, Policies/ financial incentives to encourage community septic.
- 1. Financial assistance for specific area planning, 2. Technical Assistance (from State, RPC) for improving transportation connections, 3. Increased Public Engagement (not an incentive, but necessary for community to have strong solutions to their stated problems).

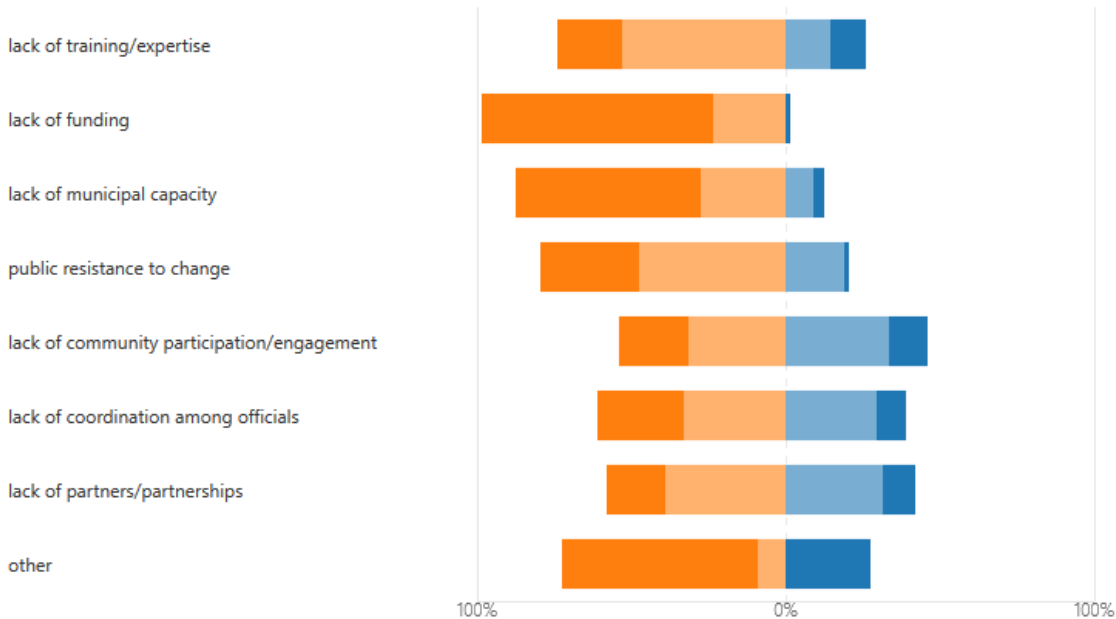
- 1) Act 250 exemptions for towns with zoning and setting trigger to area of impact as opposed to parcel size 2) increasing/expanding grant funding for public water and wastewater infrastructure 3) expansion and promotion of capstone weatherization programs
- 1. expanding funding access to basic infrastructure financing for (motivated) small/rural communities 2. bylaw reform to rebalance governance by single use zoning for housing, to evolve SFH and auto oriented neighborhoods to support more housing diversity for aging in place, for affordability, for multimodal transportation 3. policy reform that requires bike/ped in walkable settings (downtowns, village centers) be on PAR with vehicles, to leverage the 'green living' these existing places offer
- Financial incentives, tax reduction
- permit system overhaul - remove Act 250 from areas with good planning and bylaws. reduce opportunities to abuse the use of appeals.
- Ideas for Economic Development Enforcement Tools
- More funding for streetscape/downtown enhancements. State driven incentives (such as tax credits) for the development of workforce/affordable housing Funding to help communities or regions market themselves and their assets.
- Not all communities have a hazard mitigation plan, so some sort of incorporation of elements of that into flood resilience to make it actionable. Ways for communities with no zoning to attract more affordable housing development. In regards to ED, some way to assist towns with bringing fiber to residents to promote more home based businesses.
- 1. Funding. 2. Funding. 3. Funding.
- Inclusionary Zoning Vacant Structure Program Detailed Engineering Study of the North Branch of the Deerfield River for Flood Resiliency
- Money. Money. Money.
- 1. Funding for town plan updates
- additional funding for local planning and project development paid parental and family leave state/regional/local action teams to help communities with infrastructure development
- Training with real world examples of what works Technical assistance for accessing services and funding to reach goals Funding for local staff to implement projects
- Incentives for better economic development
- 1. Business sector (non-retail or food/personal service) incentives 2. Infrastructure and capital investment assistance 3. Revolving loan fund for housing improvements (energy efficiency and affordability nexus)
- 1. Greater stakeholder collaboration 2. Financial incentives to help transform larger spaces into more "market" ready spaces 3. Facilitation resources
- 1) More state funding for town roads (Bolton's town road grant zero-funded for 2 years now) 2) State bonding for municipal facilities/capital improvements (at municipal expense) 3) Matching grants for affordable housing development
- incentives for energy efficiency upgrades, in addition to Efficiency Vermont rebates

- 1.) Planning funding that communities can use for THEIR priorities 2.) Infrastructure funding that is accessible to rural communities and designed to address modern day issues, rather than inaccessible, complex loan programs that were designed for Mid-20th Century issues and force communities to impoverish their own residents with excessive user fees or property taxes. 3.) More consideration of impacts on rural communities when State adopts new Rules, regulations or "procedures"
- Financial incentives for new infrastructure and high-speed internet Financial incentives for project management Policies around short term rentals
- Funding to actually implement the mandates that the state imposes. Authority to make decisions that are not second guessed at another level of government Discretion to implement innovative solutions to local land use issues.
- 1. location-based tax incentives that support centers; 2. location-based infrastructure investments that support and result in smart growth (not auto-dependent); 3. coordinated technical assistance approaches where a community could be an "all-in" case study
- Infrastructure expansion financial assistance, guidance on how to grow responsibly
- 1. Exemption from state permitting requirements for proposed developments that reflect statewide planning goals for pedestrian oriented mixed-use downtown development. 2. Financial incentives for infill and redevelopment projects in downtowns. 3. Recognition that a great many downtowns are situated within riparian corridors and accordingly there needs to be some easing of river corridor development restrictions for these areas.
- Better integration of state agency actions related to the demographic shift Aligning state and municipal revenue generation, so they don't compete Rewarding true engagement that seeks to involve people in planning, not inform them of decisions made
- More money for affordable housing, unfortunately it cannot happen without major \$ input Housing and sustainable jobs are necessary to retain/attract young people Don't destroy what we have, once gone ecological systems will not come back
- Increased funding for complete streets and infrastructure
- 1. Funding 2. Funding 3. Funding
- Further incentivizing use of e-bikes and public transit, parking policy reform (using parking revenue to support active transportation/infrastructure improvements, participatory budgeting processes)

To what extent are the following factors obstacles to achieving your priorities?

65 responses

■ large ■ medium ■ small ■ not an obstacle



Top three obstacles to achieving local priorities:
 1) lack of funding
 2) lack of capacity
 3) public resistance to change

If you answered “other” above or would like to add more detail to your response, please specify.

If not, skip this question.

9 responses

- political will, yet to be determined
- lack of regional vision - limited resources in an area with common issues should join forces beyond town lines. Too much parochialism.
- Engineering-focused work schedules, unaccountable civic decision-making
- Market forces (e.g. stagnant growth, expense to build houses/renovate buildings). Staff of some permitting programs perceived lack of help to get applicants to "yes."
- Its been getting better but there is a real limitation in the number of consultants doing basic planning and zoning. If Placesense does not have time for you then you will have a tough time finding good help.

- Need a paradigm shift at state level from top down, one size fits all, cars are always privileged way of doing things to place-based approaches that give standing to site-specific conditions. Suggest use of transects to develop matrices at all place scales for natural resource management, transportation, community design (and supporting infrastructure)
- too many competing priorities
- A clear understanding of VT ANR's role and that of FEMA as it relates to permitting development in the future and the potential loss in property valuation based on past storm events and mapping layers that is not parcel specific.
- State level polices undermine objectives of revitalizing Village Centers. Loan based model for wastewater results in unaffordable user fees. River Corridors prevents infill in appropriate areas. I-Rule requires single use spot zoning. State interpretation of fire code discourages mixed use development. Energy code discourages walkable streetscapes. Stormwater and wastewater rules require land consumptive development pattern. Act250 claims jurisdiction for spurious reasons, and then imposes conditions such as ag soil mitigation and road capacity upgrades that are not appropriate for Village Settings.

Looking beyond your community -- if the State of Vermont did nothing else -- what is one community planning action or state policy that would make the biggest difference statewide?

54 Reponses



- Provide financial and technical assistance to communities to build out their public water/wastewater infrastructure. This can and should include a range of traditional and innovative solutions for various scales of villages and future development. Towns are updating their bylaws and building public support for higher density development in historic villages, but if it is not possible to build in these areas due to infrastructure constraints, then the vitality of these areas will decline anyway.
- taking a systems approach to policy development and rulemaking. too often, even here in our small state, agencies work in a vacuum, writing rules for their own sake without regard to cross impacts on other areas, and without regard to actual implementation, whether they make sense, are cost effective, or even accomplish goals; and without regard to impacts downstream on municipalities.
- Adequate senior housing options throughout the state would free up starter homes for new families to move in-- we need to address the lack of suitable housing for our aging population. Increasing incentives and promoting the development of this type of housing could create a needed shift.
- Find a way to sewer the settlements or accept that the goal of compact villages surrounded by rural countryside is not viable and stop the fantasy planning exercise that Vermont has been engaged in for the last 50 years.
- more funding to help implement community plans
- Tough question. Regionalize communities on natural geography and similar economic structure and incentivize cooperation between communities to solve regional/like issues.
- Design all roads for slower vehicle speeds and aggressively enforce speeding, providing support to local communities without enforcement resources. The externalized costs of speeding vehicles are borne most by the densest (highest property value per acre) areas, which is an immense drag on overall prosperity.
- continue to fund planning
- Continue to consider the needs of the older industrial cities in the southern half of the state and the realities of our challenges.
- Focus on ways to improve infrastructure that supports "smart growth" and enhances the public realm.
- Building and improvement of infrastructure
- Full-throated support of infrastructure projects within community defined growth areas.
- Economic development assistance (both technical and financial).
- Greater consolidation of municipal services to increase efficiencies of scale, provide greater transparency, and increase the level customer service provided to citizens.
- A clearer path of funding from planning to implementation
- For the legislature to start to trust planners and planning. The 8-year town plan limit, suspicion of TIF applications, and constant piling of new Stuff into town plan requirements without resources or other support are evidence of a legislature that still does not understand nor trust what planners do.
- more funding at the local level, the state has devastated local tax capacity

- Invest in improvements to the existing built environment.
- tax carbon
- increase the Downtown and village incentives
- address regulatory obstacles presented by managing urban soils
- From a planning perspective I would have planning but more focus on being strategic in its plan implementation. Implementation is more than zoning and a list of policy a community supports (to be used in Act 250). There has been an improvement in this lately, but I think more can be done.
- Provide free tuition to community college for residents, tied to a required community service commitment.
- Affordable Housing, coupled with economic revitalization, may be able to satisfy the need to keep young people in semi-rural communities. It may not be just the work-from-home grant program to get people to move (back) to VT, but other programs, as well as updating the telecommunications infrastructure in the state, may lead to achieving this goal. Further, focusing on specific areas may help alleviate the housing shortage (esp. in resort communities).
- State Planning Office and/or formation of Councils of Government - increased coordination and alignment between state departments, funding streams, technical assistance, regulatory and administrative assistance (vs. advisory.)
- funding (through grants) public wastewater infrastructure in villages
- Reform Act 250! If not politically feasible, exempt the designation program from Act 250 and expand it greatly to make it easy to develop what is wanted where it is wanted and in the form it is wanted. Suggest expanding NDA to 1/2mile (or more) to increase locations for housing density, develop a public realm that incentivizes walking over driving for local trips, and provide flexibility for avoiding/mitigating site constraints like flood hazard and wetlands. Designated areas should have transect based zoning to enable renewal through infill and replicating/expanding historic patterns of development.
- economic development
- ending appeal abuse
- Assistance to promote recreation tourism in Northeast Kingdom.
- Continue to support programs like the Municipal Planning Grant program, the Downtown Program and the Better Connections Program.
- Designated funding to every town for planning, they used to have this.
- Financial incentives to guide planning and regulatory practices.
- 1. Provide a financial mechanism for townships to develop community-based wastewater facilities as a means of promoting economic development and truly visionary planning initiatives. 2. Broadband and cellular phone connectivity state-wide.
- Less bureaucratic hoops to jump through before we can even get to action. Still trying to understand the point of regional plans. Seems like a huge waste of time and gives up communities' ability to develop as they see fit.
- Tuition forgiveness for individuals graduating from a VT institution that stay in VT.
- A better trained and substance free workforce

- Lower taxes and less regulation to attract more people
- Truly focus on economic development to keep people in Vermont.
- Comprehensive state land use plan. We need better inter-municipal and inter-regional planning, as one municipality's efforts and actions are not coordinated with neighbors.
- Revise Act 250
- Matching grants for municipalities to pilot transit projects to reduce single-occupancy commuter trips
- speed up act 250 process
- Build in developed areas only.
- Provide affordable, accessible funding for water and wastewater upgrades in Village Centers. Loans don't count.
- Update Act 250 and state laws to assure that there are areas where housing and business can be located in a cost effective and timely fashion - make infrastructure available (broadband, water supply, wastewater, transportation infrastructure)
- Break down silos of planning and regulation at the state level and create a platform for coordinated and comprehensive planning.
- More money allocated (incentives, permit exemptions, etc ...) to community development projects that implement statewide planning goals of compact centers with a mix of uses, including housing.
- Aligning State agency action with State planning goals (cultural change)
- build affordable housing that mixes in with local settlement
- State incentives to improve the quality housing stock and increase the range of housing opportunities near services, schools and places of work.
- build housing
- Shifting the way funding is prioritized for infrastructure improvements so that infrastructure for cars is prioritized less and infrastructure for other modes is prioritized more, and that this is done in coordination with land-use policy changes
- No idea

FREE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION WINNERS

As a small thanks for participants' time, two lucky individuals completing the survey won free admission to the fall 2019 Municipal Day or the spring 2020 Historic Preservation and Downtown Conference. Thank you.

Municipal Day: Deb Wright of Rockingham
Downtown Day Conference: Josh Jerome of Randolph

Your community contributions and efforts matter!

THANK YOU

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