
St. Albans City Planning Commission Report on Proposed City Plan

Version: November 4, 2025

The St. Albans City Planning Commission has drafted a proposed Municipal Development Plan (hereafter referred to as the City Plan or simply the Plan), as described in 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, Subchapter 005.

A draft of the proposed Plan is available at the City Clerk's Office, St. Albans City Hall, 100 North Main Street, or online at www.stalbansvt.com/cityplan.

This report has been drafted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4384 (c), and its purpose is to explain the proposed City Plan's consistency with State planning goals and to describe the likely effects of any new land designations in the Plan.

Extent to which the proposed City Plan is consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A. § 4302

Each chapter of the City Plan begins with one or two planning goals and leads into topical background text and data. Each goal is supported with various objectives, policies, and actions, either at the beginning or the end of the chapter.

Since May 2023 the Planning Commission has been developing the goals, objectives, policies, and actions in the City Plan, as compiled from various sources of input, including:

- the previous 2017 St. Albans City Plan,
- priorities adopted by the City Council,
- updates from City programs and initiatives, and
- community input received via surveys, stakeholder discussions, at public meetings, and submitted in writing.

The following table links each of the 24 V.S.A. § 4302 state planning goals with the City's goals, under which are found relevant objectives, policies, and actions.

State Planning Goals in 24 V.S.A. § 4302:	Met by City Planning Goal(s):	Comments
b1. Establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework	1.1, 1.2	The City’s planning process seeks to facilitate conversations about our goals for many aspects of life in our community and to produce regulations, ordinances, and programs that most effectively and equitably implement the City’s objectives and policies and enhance the quality of life in our community. The City seeks to balance the use of resources with taxpayers’ abilities to provide funds, as well as the ability of the City to find external sources of support. The Plan proposes to promote growth and development while maintaining the positive aspects of the built form and quality of life in St. Albans.
b2. Encourage citizen participation	1.1	The City’s planning process welcomes input from the community, including efforts to involve historically marginalized groups. The Plan was discussed in public meetings, and special advertising was used to alert the community to the opportunity. Two community surveys were fielded, and there were conversations with key stakeholders.
b3. Consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development	8.2, 9.1	The Plan seeks to decrease the amount of water and air pollution from properties and activities in the City; mitigate the effects of development and municipal operations on air quality, wildlife, significant natural and fragile areas, and important water resources, including stream corridors, aquifers, and wetlands; and make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce production of greenhouse gases and other hazards. The Plan proposes to capitalize upon and continue the City’s historically dense and efficient pattern of smart growth development.
b4. Encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together	10.1	Chapter 10 of the Plan specifically discusses how the City can collaboratively engage in regional planning and use its unique setting to benefit the region with its unique perspective as a historic urban center.
c1. Maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside	2.1, 5.1, 9.1	The City of St. Albans embodies this goal, and the Plan proposes to continue the City’s historically dense and efficient pattern of smart growth development.
c2. Provide a strong and diverse economy	2.2, 5.1	The Plan proposes to maintain and grow the wide range of available options for employment, retail, housing, services, and more found within the City’s Downtown Center, Planned Growth Area, and Enterprise Area.

State Planning Goals in 24 V.S.A. § 4302:	Met by City Planning Goal(s):	Comments
c3. Broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities	6.2	The Plan places high value on educational and vocational opportunities as a key factor in wellness and prosperity. The Plan proposes that the City engage as it is able with entities in the region to broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of residents and visitors.
c4. Provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems	7.2	The City's street and sidewalk network is inherently walkable and efficient, and the Plan proposes to maintain and improve this infrastructure, as well as to collaborate appropriately on other options, like public transit.
c5. Identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic features	6.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1	The Plan identifies important and unique areas and features in the City with policies and actions for preserving them or mitigating the effects of development.
c6. Maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources	6.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1	The Plan identifies the aspects of urban life, especially trees and green areas, that connect one to nature and advocates for their protection and cultivation. The Plan also identifies the priority habitat block within the City and known endangered species, with policies and actions for preserving them or mitigating the effects of development.
c7. Make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases	8.1, 8.2	The Plan identifies heating energy sources, vehicle miles traveled, energy burden, and other data and includes various proposals for increasing energy resilience and reducing greenhouse gases.
c8. Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities	6.1, 9.1	The Plan celebrates the City's recreational resources and proposes their preservation and improvement.
c9. Encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries	2.2, 5.1, 6.1	The Plan highlights the Farmers Market, encourages allowances for personal gardening, supports local purchases, the Aldis Hill forest, and other aspects of urban life that interconnect with this goal.
c10. Provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources	8.1, 8.2, 9.1	The Plan advocates for the preservation and cultivation of the City's current urban natural resources and settings and proposes to maintain the City's compact, smart growth form of development, which benefits the landscape of the surrounding region.

State Planning Goals in 24 V.S.A. § 4302:	Met by City Planning Goal(s):	Comments
c11. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing	2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 9.1	The Plan includes an updated analysis of data on housing needs and discusses the regional housing targets assigned to the City. The Plan highlights the role of the City’s neighborhoods and Downtown in providing housing, describes recent residential development efforts, and includes multiple proposals for ensuring affordable, safe housing for a broad range of residents.
c12. Plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services	7.1, 7.2	The Plan describes the services provided by the City and advocates for efforts to plan for sustainable financing and anticipated capacity needs.
c13. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare	6.2	The Plan proposes that the City provide reduce barriers and provide the incentives that it can to achieve this goal.
c14. Encourage flood resilient communities	8.1, 8.2	The Plan includes multiple proposals toward this goal and describes flood risks, climate resilience, and the City’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.
c15. Equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens	6.2, 8.1	The Plan states the City’s commitment to being a welcoming environment for residents of all backgrounds and recognizes the importance of Environmental Justice as defined in state law to ensure equity in all planning processes. The Plan also discusses the energy burdens of different areas of the City.

Effects of proposed Land Designations

24 V.S.A. § 4384 (c) also requires comments on the effects of any new land designations proposed in the Plan. The City Plan proposes exploration of seven alterations to current land designations in the City’s Land Development Regulations. For the most part, the proposals are to be reflective of current uses and character and do not suggest significant divergence from current land use districts or current uses.

A. Residential 8700 District Neighborhoods to be Classified by Current/Future Density

The City Planning Commission has discussed intentions to perform analyses on the current neighborhood forms and densities in the Residential 8700 District for possible inclusion in the Residential 7500 District or for the delineation of new districts, with an eye toward increasing allowed residential densities. Any changes to density rules would be informed primarily by existing neighborhood forms, as well as State guidance to address the “housing crisis.”

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal is meant to better reflect current uses and densities and thus would not lead to any predictable change from current traffic patterns.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal is meant to better reflect current uses and thus would not lead to any predictable changes to the current grand list values of the included properties or their need for public services.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new alternative land use type for the area. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

This proposal does not suggest a new proposed use, in general, for the City. It suggests that neighborhoods in the Residential 8700 District, could be altered in designation to more closely reflect the current uses.

B. New Civic and Recreation District(s)

This area consists of schools, parks, cemeteries and natural areas that are largely nonconforming within their zoning district, typically within the Residential 8700 District. The goal would be to analyze the typical needs and benefits of the existing uses in these areas and propose changes necessary to do not suffer excessively from any issues of current or future nonconformity. In the case of the Aldis Hill property, particular attention would be paid to ensuring the quality of the area as a Habitat Block identified by the State of Vermont.

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal is meant to better reflect current uses and thus would not lead to any predictable change from current traffic patterns.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal is meant to better reflect current uses and thus would not lead to any predictable changes to the current grand list values of the included properties or their need for public services.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new alternative land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

This proposal does not suggest a new proposed use, in general, for the City. It suggests that certain existing lots that exhibit uses and configurations not typically found in their zoning district could be altered in designation to more closely reflect the current uses.

C. Historic Downtown District

This district is proposed for the historic storefront blocks and civic edifices of the Downtown area. This area represents the nexus of the highest densities of commercial use and residential life, along with the critical nature of a welcome sense of place. The provision of amenities for both residents and visitors is also a defining feature of this area. Thus, this area of the City has needs for land use regulation and careful attention

to compatible and incompatible uses that other land use districts do not. The delineation of this area would provide for more focused land use solutions to be implemented.

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal does not diverge from current uses already found in the area and thus would have not predictable change from the traffic patterns of the current land use designations.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal does not diverge from current uses already found in the area and thus would not lead to any predictable changes to the current grand list values of the included properties or their need for public services.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better unify the designated uses in the area.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new alternative land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better unify the designate uses in the area.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

This proposal does not suggest a new proposed use, in general, for the City and does not diverge from current uses already found within the area.

D. Multi-Family District

This potential delineation is proposed for existing large multi-family complexes that stand out from their surrounding areas, typically in the Residential 8700 District. The

purpose of this district would be to ensure that these existing uses do not suffer excessively from any issues of nonconformity with their existing zoning district. If so, changes would be proposed.

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal is meant to better reflect current uses and thus would not lead to any predictable change from current traffic patterns.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal is meant to better reflect current uses and thus would not lead to any predictable changes to the current grand list values of the included properties or their need for public services.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it does not suggest a new alternative land use type for the City. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

This proposal does not suggest a new proposed use for the City. It merely is meant to better reflect current uses in the area.

E. Expansion of Design Review along Fairfield Street and Lake Street

This proposed change is noted in the Proposed Design Review District map and suggests extending a design review overlay along Fairfield Street and Lake Street properties, from the current design review districts to the City boundary. The primary

purpose of this change would be to preserve a gateway aesthetic along these two major through-ways into the City, much like the Gateway Design Review Districts on North and South Main Street.

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. It would not lead to any predictable changes to the need for public services. As for the municipal tax base, the design review process may ensure a higher quality of exterior work on properties, which could have a positive neighborhood effect on grand list values. However, such an effect would likely be negligible compared to the other structural factors considered in the assessment process.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. Furthermore, this change would be based solely on the context of the area being designated.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. Furthermore, this change would be based solely on the context of the area being designated.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

The area proposed for designation is specific to the properties along the street and state route that provide an entrance to the City for large amounts of

incoming traffic.

F. Exploration of Expanding Design Review for New Downtown Center

This proposed change is noted in the Proposed Design Review Districts map and suggests reviewing the design review requirements associated with Step 3 centers and ensuring that the entirety of the new Downtown Center would be adequately covered.

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. It would not lead to any predictable changes to the need for public services. As for the municipal tax base, the design review process may ensure a higher quality of exterior work on properties, which could have a positive neighborhood effect on grand list values. However, such an effect would likely be negligible compared to the other structural factors considered in the assessment process.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. Furthermore, this change would be based solely on the context of the area being designated.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it would establish an overlay review procedure to the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. Furthermore, this change would be based solely on the context of the area being designated.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

The area proposed for designation is specific to the properties along the street and state route that provide an entrance to the City for large amounts of incoming traffic.

G. Federal Street Design Review Alteration

This proposed change is noted in the Proposed Design Review Districts map and suggests one of two options:

- removing properties on Federal Street and Lower Newton Street from the DR3 design review district or
- adding design review overlay to properties on the western side of Federal Street.

Currently there are properties on Lower Newton Street and Federal Street that are included in the DR3 design review district. However, these properties are not part of the North Main Street “gateway.” Furthermore, many of the properties in this area are located across Federal Street from properties that are not required to go through design review. Therefore, there is a regulatory procedural disparity between either side of the street. In general, it is unclear what design review would accomplish in this area unless the properties on the western side of Federal Street were brought into the design review overlay. Therefore, the Plan is suggesting that change either be made or that the other properties on Federal Street and Lower Newton Street be removed from the DR3 design review district.

- (1) The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use:

This proposal would revise design review procedures for the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities.

- (2) The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities:

This proposal would revise design review procedures for the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. The revision would not lead to any predictable changes to the need for public services. As for the municipal tax base, the design review process may ensure a higher quality of exterior work on properties, which could have a positive neighborhood effect on grand list values. However, such an effect would likely be negligible compared to the other structural factors considered in the assessment process.

- (3) The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation and actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it would revise design review procedures for the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. Furthermore, this change would be based solely on the context of the area being designated.

- (4) The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated:

This analysis does not pertain to this proposal, since it would revise design review procedures for the properties in the area and would not revise allowed uses or densities. Furthermore, this change would be based solely on the context of the area being designated.

- (5) The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area:

The area proposed for changes in designation is specific to the properties being referenced and their particular context. The status of other properties in the City is not relevant.

For more information, please contact:

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