

Vermont Healthy Community Design Resource

Active Living & Healthy Eating

TOOLKIT

A large, stylized sun graphic is positioned on the left side of the page. It features a large, solid orange semi-circle on the left, with several triangular rays of varying lengths extending from its right edge towards the right side of the page. The rays are a lighter shade of orange than the semi-circle. The entire graphic is set against a background of a light orange gradient.



Key Messages

As Vermonters, we take great pride in our quality of life, our strong communities, our natural places, and our commitment to healthy lifestyles. We share a common aim: to ensure that Vermont continues to be one of the healthiest states in the nation and best places to live.

- **Why you are here:** Community design affects public health. The design of our communities should accommodate and encourage physical activity and access to healthy food as a regular, routine part of our daily lives. This will ensure that all Vermonters — regardless of age, ability and income — have access to healthy options that make the healthy choice the easy choice.
- **What you want:** The strategies for maintaining our quality of life and creating economically vibrant and socially connected communities are the same strategies needed for creating healthy communities: higher density mixed-use development; pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments; access to parks, recreation and green space; and access to healthy foods.
- **What you can offer:** We all care about health, and together we have the ability to mobilize the public, new partners and volunteers. We can provide data related to the health benefits of bike paths, sidewalks, concentrated development and a strong agricultural economy. And we can bring skills in planning and grant writing to locate and secure additional health-related funding.

Note: *Obesity prevention may not be the best starting point in discussions about healthy community design. Obesity is commonly assumed to be a result of personal choices and therefore the assumed solution is to create programs aimed at individual behavior change (e.g., nutrition education, exercise classes). Suggesting a common goal, such as increasing options for all Vermonters to lead healthy lives, now and in the future, may be more effective than starting with the goal of preventing obesity.*



Vermont Health Facts

Despite our reputation as one of the healthiest states in the nation, Vermonters are growing more overweight — a trend that holds true for both adults and children:¹²

- The obesity rate for adults rose by 35% from 2000 to 2012.
- More than half (60%) of adults and almost one-quarter (23%) of children are overweight or obese.
- Highest rates of obesity are among people with lower incomes. Adults without food security must often compromise quality for quantity, buying less nutritious and higher-calorie, but lower-cost foods for themselves and their families.

Being overweight or obese greatly increases a person's risk for many serious health conditions, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and certain cancers. The primary causes of weight gain are inadequate physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of the two. Poor diet and physical inactivity are the second leading cause of death in the U.S.¹³

According to Healthy Vermonters 2020 data, in 2010/11:

- 17% of youth in grades 9–12, and 30% of adults age 18+ eat three or more servings of vegetables each day.
- 36% of youth in grades 9–12 and 38% of adults age 18+ eat two or more servings of fruit each day.
- While 59% of adults meet physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes each week, 17% have no leisure time physical activity.
- 76% of youth in grades 9–12 do not meet physical activity guidelines of 60 minutes a day, every day.

Creating built environments that support healthy eating and active living is an essential strategy for good health. Peer-reviewed studies demonstrate a 35 percent increase in physical activity (e.g., number of walkers or percentage of active individuals) in communities with more inviting and safer outdoor environments for activity.¹⁴

Decisions made by government, businesses, and institutions have an important impact on shaping the conditions in the built environment. Transportation and land use, investments in commercial and residential developments, and the location of schools and worksites ultimately influence the distances people travel to work, the convenience of purchasing healthy foods, and the safety and attractiveness of neighborhoods for walking and using parks and trails.

Design of our communities so that physical activity and access to healthy food is part of our regular daily routine ensures that healthy options are available to all regardless of age, income and education.^{15, 16, 17, 18, 19}





Land Use Planning Terminology

The following are key terms used in this guidebook. For more information, see the glossary created by the Vermont Planning Information Center: <http://www.vpic.info/Publications/Reports/PlanningManual/AppendixC.pdf>.

Active Living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. The goal is to accumulate 150 minutes (two hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate intensity physical activity. This may be done in a variety of ways, such as walking or bicycling (for transportation, exercise, or pleasure), playing in the park, working in the yard, taking the stairs, and using recreational facilities.

Active Living Community is a community designed to provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. By encouraging people to be more active, communities may improve health by lowering risk for health conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Built Environment refers to the buildings, roads, utilities, homes, fixtures, parks and all other man-made features that form the physical characteristics of a community.

Bylaw, Regulation, Ordinance, and Code are terms used interchangeably when referring to local regulations such as zoning. "Bylaw" is used in the Vermont statutes in reference to zoning, subdivision, and the combination of the two — unified development bylaws. "Ordinances" usually refer to regulations adopted by the selectboard or legislative body. Municipalities can only impose regulations as enabled or allowed under the guidelines set forth by state statute.

Complete Streets principles are based on safety and accommodation of all transportation system users, regardless of age, ability, or modal preference. Complete Streets are roadways that are designed and operated so users of all ages and abilities — including bicyclists, pedestrians, public transit riders, and motorists — can safely travel along and across them.

Development Review Board is a single board that can be created to perform all the regulatory review functions for the town. It replaces the Zoning Board of Adjustment and takes over the subdivision and site plan review role of the planning commission. This permits the planning commission to focus on its planning function as a drafter of the town plan and land use regulations. [24 V.S.A. §4461]

Municipality for the purposes of planning includes towns, cities and incorporated villages.

Municipal Plan is a comprehensive plan adopted by a municipality that forms the basis for local bylaws, etc. Must be updated and readopted every five years, but can be amended at any time.

Official Map identifies and maps the locations of existing and proposed public lands and facilities and the connections between them, including utility corridors, roads, sidewalks, and trail networks. It provides a clear picture to property owners, developers, and the public of the municipality's intentions with regard to its future physical form and design.

Planning Commission may be created at any time by a selectboard, and its members are either appointed or elected by the voters. The majority of towns have appointed planning commissions. The planning commission has many responsibilities, including preparation of the municipal plan. As part of that process, the planning commission typically oversees the public outreach efforts, coordinates with other stakeholders, and may delegate some of the preparation process to committees or other entities. The commission may also undertake studies related to a wide range of topics. The planning commission is also responsible for certain aspects of the plan's implementation, including: preparation of land use regulations and making recommendations to the selectboard; preparation of a capital budget and program, recommending building, plumbing, fire, electrical, housing, and related codes and enforcement procedures, and construction specifications for streets and related public improvements. In some towns, planning commissions also conduct quasi-judicial site plan and subdivision review hearings on development proposals.

Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) serve every town in the state. Regional planning commissions play a critical role both in land use policy and implementation at the local, regional and state levels. They are staffed by professionals with training in land use, transportation, emergency management and watershed planning, as well as geographic information systems mapping, brownfields planning and other areas of expertise. Each commission is governed by a board of commissioners comprised of representatives from each participating municipality. The RPCs have multiple roles in the context of local planning. In order to qualify for some state grant funding, municipal plans must be approved by the regional planning commission. In addition, regional commission staff frequently provides extensive technical assistance to local planning commissions in drafting municipal plans and bylaws as well as other local regulatory and non-regulatory documents. For a link to each of the 11 regional planning commissions, visit www.vapda.org.

Selectboard is the legislative body at the center of Vermont's town government. This is the elected body responsible for the general supervision and control over the affairs of the municipality. The selectboard has the authority to adopt a municipal plan (unless the voters have opted to adopt a municipal plan by a vote of the municipality). The selectboard also is charged with a wide range of duties that relate to plan implementation, including: adopting a capital budget; proposing an annual budget to the voters (after a public hearing); overseeing the maintenance, operation, and improvement of most municipal buildings and facilities (excluding schools and, in some communities, other facilities such as libraries); authorizing a variety of grant applications; and adopting land use regulations (after a public hearing, unless the selectboard or voters opt to submit the regulations to the voters). In cities and some larger towns, the city council, aldermen, or village trustees serve as the legislative body instead of a selectboard.

Smart Growth refers to the pattern of land development that uses land efficiently, reinforces community vitality and protects natural resources. Smart growth strategies include efforts to maintain Vermont's historic settlement pattern, encourage concentrated development in and around downtown and villages while supporting Vermont's rural working land. Key benefits include the creation of diverse housing options, protection of farm and forest land, diverse transportation options and less dependence on the automobile,

greater social interaction with neighbors, lower cost for public services resulting in reduced taxes, and a higher quality of life. Smart Growth Vermont has some excellent information and tools for learning more: <http://www.vtsmartgrowth.org/>.

Traffic Calming Measures can include: street narrowing (reducing the number of lanes); the addition of speed bumps or speed humps; the addition of traffic circles or roundabouts; the addition of raised pedestrian crosswalks; the conversion of two-way streets to one-way streets; and the addition of curb extensions (also known as bulb-outs).

Vermont Farm to School Network provides statewide leadership, coordination, and advocacy to advance new and existing Farm to School efforts in Vermont classrooms, cafeterias and communities. <http://www.vtfeed.org/farmtoschoolnetwork>

Walkable Community is a community where people can walk safely. A walkable environment has the following characteristics:

- well-maintained and continuous wide sidewalks
- ramped curbs
- safe and easy street crossings
- level terrain
- well-lighted streets
- grid-patterned street design
- high street connectivity
- safety buffer between pedestrians and motorized vehicles (such as trees, shrubs, streetside parked cars, green space between pedestrians and cars)
- slow traffic pattern
- minimal building setbacks
- cleanliness
- land-use patterns characterized as mixed-use with high-unit density

Zoning is a type of land use regulation governing the location, type, and density of development within a community through the delineation of one or more zones or zoning districts, as depicted on a zoning map. Local zoning regulations must conform to the municipal plan, including the plan's land use goals and recommendations, and proposed land use map.

Zoning Board of Adjustment is purely quasi-judicial, and its responsibilities include considering requests for conditional use permits, reviewing decisions from the zoning administrator, and granting zoning variances. A municipality that has a municipal plan and zoning bylaws may choose to have either a Development Review Board or a Zoning Board of Adjustment.



Who's Who in Local Government

Conservation Commission Member (appointed) - Inventories the natural resources of a community and purchases and administers municipal lands for the purpose of conservation.

Health Officer (appointed) - Appointed by the commissioner of health to a three-year term after recommendation by the town selectboard; enforces the rules and regulations for the prevention and abatement of public health hazards.

Municipal Manager (appointed) - If the manager system has been adopted by the electorate, the town manager is the official administrator of local government and has general supervision of the affairs of the town.

Planning Commissioner (appointed unless town votes to elect) - Duties include preparing a municipal plan; making recommendations on matters of land development, conservation, and preservation; and participating in a regional planning program. Makes site plan and subdivision permit decisions unless there is a Development Review Board in town. Should have a good working knowledge of all aspects of the town and be able to listen to many sides of an issue.

Regional Planning Commission Representative (appointed) - Helps develop the regional plan and assess municipal land use plans

Road Commissioner (elected or appointed) - Has no independent authority, but can assist the selectboard in overseeing town highways at the request of the board. Should have experience with town highways and be a good communicator.

Selectboard Member (elected) - General supervision and control over town; enacts ordinances, regulations and policies for town; oversees town property and personnel; prepares, presents and manages budget; and oversees roads, including laying out, discontinuing and reclassifying roads. Sits on local board of health, liquor control commission and sewer commission. Should know the town well and be able to understand all sides of complex issues.

Town Administrator (appointed) - Sometimes called the administrative assistant to the selectboard, the town administrator is hired by the selectboard to assist in managing the business of the town. The town administrator has no independent statutory authority. The scope of his or her duties is determined by the selectboard.

Town Agent (elected) - The town agent used to prosecute and defend suits; the selectboard now has that authority. Thus, the town agent's duty consists of assisting when litigation is in progress at the request of the selectboard. (This is generally not a very active position.)

Town Clerk (elected) - Records, preserves and certifies the public records of the town. Issues dog, marriage, civil union, hunting and fishing licenses, and motor vehicle renewals. Runs the local elections, serves as clerk of the Board of Civil Authority, and hears tax abatement requests and tax appeals. This position serves as the public face and ambassador for the town.

Town Energy Coordinator or Town Services Officer (appointed) - Appointed on or before April 15th of each year. Assists individuals within the town who require emergency food, fuel or shelter assistance when state support is not available.

Zoning Administrator (appointed) - Appointed by the planning commission with the approval of the selectboard. Approves or denies applications for zoning permits. Administers the municipal bylaws literally. Enforces regulations pertaining to the zoning ordinance.

Zoning Board of Adjustment or Development Review Board Member (appointed) - Holds hearings and makes decisions on land use permit applications and appeals of decisions of the zoning administrator.

Excerpted from Vermont Secretary of State's Who's Who in Local Government, updated October 2008
<http://www.sec.state.vt.us/municipal/pubs/who%27swho.html>

Potential Partners

Use this checklist to help identify partners and allies who can assist with community assessment, outreach and action.

General:

- an existing champion for any aspect of health or healthy community who is already on the local selectboard or planning commission

Concentrated mixed-use development:

- town planner or zoning administrator
- community development organization or a downtown organization interested in creating economically vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown
- group working on traffic calming, sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements (e.g., Safe Routes to School, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition)

Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendliness:

- town liaison on transportation issues
- community development organization or a downtown organization interested in creating economically vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown
- group working on traffic calming, sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements
- Safe Routes to School committee working to promote biking and walking to school
- energy committee with members who might be interested in alternative transportation (e.g., biking and walking)

Increasing physical activity:

- parks and recreation department or committee
- trails committee
- town conservation committee
- community health and fitness group
- community members interested in expanding recreational opportunities for all ages
- active community organization or conservation land trust interested in preserving open land

Access to healthy foods:

- local conservation committee
- local food policy council
- community gardening group or garden club
- Farm to School initiatives
- local farmers interested in participating in a farmers' market
- active food shelf or hunger group in the town
- community supported agriculture (CSA)

Additional potential community partners:

- organizations that represent individuals who are at high risk for chronic disease, racial or ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older adults, etc.
- health care system (e.g., insurers, hospitals, clinics, doctor's or practitioner's offices)
- nutrition experts (e.g., dieticians, nutritionists)
- other medical experts (e.g., dentists, physicians, nurses)
- health volunteers (e.g., AARP, American Diabetes Association, American Cancer Society)
- health and wellness centers (e.g., YMCAs)
- universities or colleges
- school officials
- business leaders
- faith communities
- local media
- land developers
- housing or real estate professionals, including non-profit housing organizations



Signs of Readiness

Identify existing efforts and community readiness for healthy community design.

For example, look for:

- residents who are active in municipal planning including developing the town plan, serving on community committees — e.g., trails, conservation, energy, neighborhood association
- community partnership, coalition, or advisory board on physical activity and healthy eating
- programs and activities that support physical activity — e.g., walking, biking, or other physical activity events, networks, or groups
- programs and activities that support healthy eating — e.g., healthy cooking clubs, educational gardens, farmers' markets, Farm to School initiatives
- local government dedicated full- or part-time staff who are responsible for long-term community planning and economic development
- community or local government dedicated full- or part-time staff who are responsible for suggesting and overseeing improvements to make healthy living opportunities more available
- community fundraising (e.g., passed bonds, allocated funds) to finance the building or enhancement of sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, trails, or greenways
- community fundraising (e.g., passed bonds, allocated funds) to increase availability and accessibility of healthy food and beverages through community stores, new grocery stores, gardens, and farmers' markets



Healthy Community Design Assessment

The following assessment tool reflects community design strategies that have been shown to promote physical activity and increase access to healthy food. These can be used to:

Assess town plans and policies including: the town (municipal) plan; supplementary plans; town bylaws, ordinances and codes; and the town operating and capital budgets.

Conduct community assessments of the existing environment and community resources through observation, walking or driving audits, or reviews of town maps.

Evaluate development and redevelopment proposals from the private sector and for new public infrastructure.

Consider municipal investments and budgets for developing and maintaining public facilities and infrastructure.

This tool can provide the basis for a broad assessment. For each area of inquiry, additional detailed assessment tools are suggested.²⁰

Healthy community design and land use

Does this community have:

- mixed-use development that includes public services, business, retail and housing development directed toward compact, mixed-use centers, at a scale of growth that fits the community and region?
- essential services (public and private) located in the village and community centers?
- public services, public buildings, parks and other common destinations within walking distance for most people?
- healthy food sources (healthy retailers, farmers' markets, community gardens) conveniently located near residential areas and workplaces?
- options for people who cannot drive (e.g., volunteer drivers or a medical transportation system) to provide transportation to major employers, medical facilities, schools, physical activity/recreation facilities and shopping areas with stores and other healthy food retailers?

For additional detailed information:

Use the Smart Growth Scorecard to assess the physical and policy supports in place to: preserve traditional settlement patterns, with a higher-density community center (or centers) surrounded by mostly open space; encourage mixed uses and a diversity of businesses in compact centers; offer a range of choices for housing and transportation; preserve working land and important natural, and historic, resources; involve citizens and interest groups in deciding the community's future.

<http://vnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/SPRAWLscorecard.pdf>

Active daily living promoted through street design and infrastructure

Does this community have:

- streets designed to promote walking (e.g., sidewalks on both sides of the street, pedestrian signals, safe pedestrian crossings, appropriate lighting, trees to provide shade)?
- streets designed for bicycle safety and convenience (e.g., street markings, curb cuts and driveways, potential hazards identified, linked to other bike routes, bicycle parking)?
- connected areas of development to provide easy pedestrian and bicycle access from one development to the next via bicycle lanes, sidewalks or pedestrian paths?
- walking and biking routes that are accessible to people with disabilities, and are in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements?
- key documents to review: the town road map, maps of pedestrian/bike paths, and street design specifications?

For additional detailed information, conduct a walk and bike audit to determine whether it is safe, easy and inviting to walk and bike.

Smart Growth Scorecard: Section II

<http://vnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/SPRAWLscorecard.pdf>

Walkability Checklist, developed by The Partnership for a Walkable America (PWA)

<http://www.walkableamerica.org/checklist-walkability.pdf>

Bikeability Checklist, maintained by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

<http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/pdf/bikabilitychecklist.pdf>

Physical activity promoted through parks, recreational facilities and open space

Does this community provide access to:

- public parks and playgrounds?
- recreational facilities, such as baseball fields, soccer fields, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, skate parks, indoor and outdoor ice skating rinks, swimming pools, tracks, public golf courses?
- open spaces for recreation, such as conservation lands, paths and trails, bodies of water, forests and mountains, for hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, nature observation, cross country skiing, etc.?
- parks, recreational facilities and open space for people of all ages and abilities?
- parks, recreational facilities, or open spaces within reasonable walking distance of most homes?

For additional detailed information:

Update the town recreational inventory. The Inventory of Resources Related to Health in Vermont Towns and Cities was created by the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont.

<http://www.uvm.edu/crs/townhealthresources/>

Review the Official Map and inventory town rights of way that could be used for trails including ancient and historic roads, Class 4 roads and legal trails.

Access to healthy foods

Does this community:

- offer healthy foods and beverages as the main options served and sold at government sites, libraries, parks and recreational facilities?
- serve predominantly healthy foods and beverages at government meetings, events and conferences?
- use municipally-controlled land, including town greens, parks, and school grounds, for farmers' markets?
- use private vacant or under-utilized land (e.g., hospitals, schools) for community gardens or local food production?
- have retailers that offer fresh produce and other healthy food choices located close to where people live, work and play? Does the community have "Healthy Retailer" stores, farmers' markets, roadside vegetable and fruit stands, or farm stands?
- have public transportation, if needed, to retailers of healthy foods, including large grocery stores?
- accept EBT (3 Squares VT) and WIC debit cards at healthy food outlets?
- have local lands in agricultural production or used for agriculture-related enterprises?

For additional detailed information:

Conduct a community food audit with local leaders to assess community access to healthy foods through retailers, farmers and farmers' markets, and community gardens and to identify current sources of healthy foods. Use this process to collect both the data and community support to push for town policy and action. USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit; USDA, July 2002

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02013/>



Prioritizing Actions

The following steps and questions will be useful in framing a discussion on developing an action plan that is based on the assessment of community interests, local policies, and physical design.

Review data gathered

- To what extent do our community's policies and funding support healthy living?
- To what extent does the community design support healthy eating and physical activity?
- What from the assessment leads us to this conclusion?

Decide what needs to be done

- Can we identify three areas where we could make improvements immediately?
- What about three priority areas that may take us longer to accomplish?

Prioritize and plan activities *(see Action Prioritizing Tool & Action Plan Worksheet, following pages)*

- Can we identify the areas where we are most ready to make changes and start from there?
- What barriers will we need to overcome to advance our priorities for change?
- How likely are we to be able to influence decisions and make improvements in these areas?
- What should we do first?
- Who else needs to be part of this process?
- What resources will be necessary to make these changes?

Action Prioritizing Tool

Once you have identified potential strategies or actions you would like to implement, list each one in the table below. Use the five-point scales defined below to rank each action on five dimensions (importance, cost, time, commitment, feasibility). Add the points for each action to get the total points. Higher scores should indicate the priorities. Use the total points to help you choose one, two, or three top-priority actions that you will recommend for implementation this year.

- Importance** **How important is the action to my community?**
 5 = Very important 3 = Moderately important 1 = Not important
- Cost** **How expensive would it be to plan and implement the action?**
 5 = Not expensive 3 = Moderately expensive 1 = Very expensive
- Time** **How much time and effort would it take to implement the action?**
 5 = Very little time or effort 3 = Moderate time or effort 1 = Much time or effort
- Reach** **How much of the target population would this action impact?**
 5 = Most of it 3 = Moderate amount 1 = Not many at all
- Feasibility** **How difficult would it be to influence the decision or implement the action?**
 5 = Not difficult 3 = Moderately difficult 1 = Very difficult

Actions	Importance	Cost	Time	Reach	Feasibility	Total Points	Top Priority

Action Plan Worksheet

Instructions:

1. In the first column, list, in priority order, the top **Actions** for implementation.
2. In the second column, list the specific **Steps** that need to be taken to implement each Action.
3. In the third column, list any **Materials or Resources** that will be needed.
4. In the fourth column, list the people **Who** will be responsible for each Step and **When** it will be completed.

Actions	Steps	Materials & Resources	By Whom & When

Sample Language for Town Plans

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>(A) A plan for a municipality may be consistent with the goals established in Section 4302 of this title and compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region and with the regional plan and shall include the following:</p>			
<p>(1) 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.</p>	<p>[Town] is committed to fostering the health and well-being of all residents.</p> <p>[Town] will consider community health when making decisions and setting policy.</p> <p>[Town] will build relationships and implement procedures that make community health a priority.</p> <p>[Town] will utilize health impact assessments in the evaluation of future land use decisions and projects.</p> <p>[Town] will integrate health and smart growth considerations, including in-fill development; compact, transit oriented development; mixed-use buildings; walkable, bikeable neighborhoods; and green building practices into general plans, area specific plans, and zoning decisions.</p>	<p>[Town] will encourage patterns of land use, population density, transportation strategies and street design to promote walking, biking and public transportation and support access to fresh and healthy foods for all — regardless of age, ability and income.</p> <p>[Town] will create and maintain recreational facilities and opportunities for all community users — with special attention to the needs of handicapped, youth, elders, those with low incomes, and people from a variety of ethnic groups, who may not be current users.</p> <p>[Town] will encourage or require new residential and mixed-use developments to include sidewalks, outdoor open space, recreational facilities, and community gardens.</p> <p>[Town] will incorporate shared-use trails in development planning to connect communities, schools, and other facilities, and to increase residents' options for physical activity.</p>	<p>[Town] will increase availability and access to groceries, farmers' markets and community gardens to expand healthy eating options for lower-income Vermonters.</p> <p>[Town] will have a vibrant local food economy to increase access to healthy foods.</p> <p>[Town] will provide incentives to food retailers to offer healthier food and beverage choices in underserved areas.</p> <p>[Town] will provide incentives for the production, distribution, and procurement of foods and other products from local farms.</p> <p>[Town] will support agricultural enterprises including processing and distribution facilities.</p> <p>[Town] will allow and encourage infrastructure and businesses that are necessary for thriving farm businesses such as machinery supply and repair shops, saw mills, bed and breakfasts, and other businesses that can help farm families improve profitability.</p>

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>(2) A land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land uses, indicating those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture, residence, commerce, industry, public/semi-public uses and open spaces reserved for flood plain, wetland protection, or other conservation purposes; and setting forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity and character of land uses and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services.</p>		<p>[Town] will adopt high-density mixed-use residential, commercial and office zoning with housing situated within walking and bicycle-riding distance of attractive, pedestrian-friendly commercial areas.</p> <p>[Town] will encourage in-fill development and density to increase walkability, potential for public transit and maximize use of town infrastructure.</p> <p>[Town] will protect open space for recreational use.</p> <p>[Town] will provide access to parks, shared-use paths and trails, or open spaces within reasonable walking distance of most homes.</p> <p>[Town] will incorporate shared-use trails to connect communities, schools, and other facilities, and increase residents' options for physical activity.</p>	<p>[Town] will support local zoning and other regulation that helps to preserve and protect agricultural land.</p> <p>[Town] will protect primary agricultural soils; work with agricultural specialists to assess exceptional soils and locations for local food production and distribution.</p> <p>[Town] will require gardening spaces in housing and commercial development projects where sufficient space is available. If space is not available on individual lots, make provisions for community gardens within walking distance of all new development.</p> <p>Open space [Town] will develop an open space plan that focuses on agricultural land preservation and identifying locations for market and community gardens.</p> <p>[Town] will establish a local land trust and/or a fund for conservation of key parcels identified in the open space plan.</p> <p>[Town] will allow select agricultural practices in open spaces set aside in permitting — e.g., community gardens or small agricultural enterprises in open spaces of cluster housing.</p>

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>(3) A transportation plan, consisting of a map and 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 and need.</p>		<p>[Town] strives to create a balanced transportation system that provides for safety and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, those with strollers and in wheelchairs at least equal to that of automobile drivers.</p> <p>[Town] will use Complete Streets guidelines in the development of all new projects, maintenance and repair of roads, and zoning decisions.</p> <p>[Town] will work with regional authorities to improve transit services linking residents with destinations (jobs, retail outlets, health services, educational facilities) to decrease residents' reliance on cars and increase physical activity.</p> <p>[Town] makes every effort to create continuous bicycle routes and sidewalks.</p> <p>[Town] will improve the street, sidewalk, and street-crossing safety of routes to schools in order to encourage/allow students to walk or bike to school on a regular basis.</p>	

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>(4) 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 services with indications of priority of need, costs and methods of financing.</p>	<p>Inventory should include local resources for active living:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hiking or walking trail(s) • biking path(s) • public park(s) • public swimming pool • river with canoe/kayak/boat • watersport access • skate park • ice skating rink • roller skating rink • town recreational center (e.g., YMCA or town recreational facility) • private fitness facility • playground(s) • playing fields or courts 		<p>Municipal Facilities: [Town] will model best practices related to promoting healthy communities at all municipal facilities and events (such as providing nutritious foods).</p> <p>[Town] will identify and make available town-owned empty lots and vacant fields for community gardens and/or farmers' markets.</p> <p>[Town] will identify all public vacant properties that could be used for community-supported agriculture, community gardens and farmers' markets.</p>
<p>(5) A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.</p>		<p>[Town] will protect natural, scenic and recreational areas so that they may be maintained as destinations for hiking, biking and other physical activities.</p> <p>[Town] will seek to establish public access to hunting and fishing and other outdoor recreation activities.</p>	
<p>(6) An educational facilities plan consisting of a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system.</p>		<p>[Town] will work with the school board to renovate or rebuild schools located in neighborhoods that students can easily walk or bicycle to and from, or when building new schools ensure that they are located in areas that are easily accessible by walking, bicycling, and public transit.</p> <p>[Town] will pursue joint use agreements for community use of school facilities for physical activity and recreation.</p>	<p>[Town] will work with schools to establish school gardens open to both students and the community at large.</p> <p>[Town] will establish joint use agreements for using school sites for community gardens and farmers' markets.</p> <p>[Town] will work with school board to endorse Farm to School programs and provide procurement support.</p>

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>(7) A recommended program for the implementation of the development plan.</p>		<p>[Town] will develop a master bike and pedestrian plan and/or an alternative transportation plan.</p> <p>[Town] will provide incentives for developers to provide sidewalks, parks, bike paths, etc. (e.g., density bonuses, permit streamlining).</p> <p>[Town] will require that a portion of the transportation budget be apportioned for pedestrian and bicyclist amenities including street traffic calming measures, street lamps, sidewalks, bike racks.</p> <p>[Town] will maintain a network of walking routes.</p> <p>[Town] will maintain a network of biking routes.</p> <p>[Town] will enhance access to public transportation (e.g., bus stops, van pool services, park and ride).</p> <p>[Town] will maintain a network of parks.</p>	<p>[Town] will provide incentives to encourage food retailers to provide healthy foods.</p> <p>[Town] will provide incentives to stimulate establishment of new food retailers (e.g., shops and markets).</p> <p>[Town] will provide supports to agricultural enterprises and businesses.</p>
<p>(8) A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title.</p>			

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>(9) An energy plan, including 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, a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.</p>		<p>[Town] will support infrastructure for bicycle, pedestrian and transit links energy, land use and transportation planning.</p>	
<p>(10) 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.</p>		<p>[Town] will calculate and present the economic benefit to downtowns, housing developments, and residents, of creating and maintaining safe and attractive facilities that support active living (sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, recreation, open space).</p> <p>Safe and attractive facilities that support active living (sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, recreation, open space) support [Town's] economic growth and development.</p>	<p>[Town] will calculate the economic benefits to downtowns, housing developments, and residents, of creating and maintaining facilities and polices that support access to healthy food (farmers markets, community gardens, preserving agriculture lands).</p> <p>Facilities and polices that support access to healthy food (farmers markets, community gardens, preserving agriculture lands) support [Town's] economic growth and development.</p>
<p>(11) 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. The program may include provisions for conditionally permitted accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences</p>		<p>[Town] provides a range of housing types and affordable housing units that are connected to schools, safe areas for physical activity and healthy food access via safe walking and biking routes and public transportation.</p>	

Element of Town Plan	General Health	Increase Physical Activity	Increase Access to Healthy Foods
<p>which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons.</p>			
<p>(B) The maps called for by this section may be incorporated on one or more maps, and may be referred to in each separate statement called for by this section.</p>		<p>[Town] will produce road maps that identify infrastructure and amenities for all road users — motorized vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users.</p>	
<p>(C) Where appropriate, and to further the purposes of Section 4302 (goals) of this title, a municipal plan shall be based upon inventories, studies, and analyses of current trends and shall consider the probable social and economic consequences of the proposed plan. Such studies may consider or contain, but not be limited to:</p> <p>(1) Population characteristics and distribution, including income and employment.</p> <p>(2) The existing and projected housing needs by amount, type, and location for all economic groups within the municipality or region.</p> <p>(3) Existing and estimated patterns and rates of growth in the various land use classifications, and desired patterns and rates of growth in terms of the community’s ability to finance and provide public facilities and services.</p>	<p>Review data available through the Vermont Department of Health to assess current community health status including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diabetes • heart disease and stroke • respiratory diseases • overweight and obesity • physical activity • nutrition • traffic-related injury 	<p>[Town] will collaborate with interested parties to complete walkability/ bikeability audits to identify inconvenient or dangerous routes and prioritize infrastructure improvements to areas with the most need.</p>	<p>[Town] will collaborate with interested parties to complete a community food audit to identify existing access and future opportunities to increase access to healthy foods.</p>



Introduction to Planning in Vermont

Vermont Planning & Development Goals [24 V.S.A. §4302 - as amended by Act 200]
<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=24&Chapter=117&Section=04302>

Vermont Municipal Plan Requirements [24 V.S.A. §4382]
<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=24&Chapter=117&Section=04382>

Definition of Smart Growth [24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A Section 2791 (13)]
<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/sections.cfm?Title=24&Chapter=076A>

Vermont Planning Information Center
www.vpic.info

An on-line information clearinghouse on local planning and regulation.

Welcome Packet for New Board and Commission Members
<http://www.vpic.info/WelcomePacket.html>

Provides basic information on the roles and responsibilities of local officials and an easy-to-read overview of local planning and regulatory processes. The packet is organized around 10 questions and answers that new members often have before attending their first meeting.

Planning Manual for Vermont Municipalities - 2000 Edition
<http://www.vpic.info/PlanningManual.html>

A guide for the municipal planning commission in fulfilling its role and responsibilities as set forth in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act. Provides information that will help the planning commission with developing the municipal plan, from designing the planning program to adopting the plan.

Essentials of Land Use Planning and Regulation - 2nd Edition, May 2007

<http://www.vpic.info/Essentials.html>

A 50-page manual that provides an overview of municipal roles and responsibilities and the fundamentals of local planning and permitting in Vermont — what every board and commission member needs to know.

Vermont Land Use Planning Implementation Manual

<http://www.vpic.info/ImplementationManual.html>

A package of 30 topic papers introducing a wide range of concepts, tools, and techniques for helping communities achieve their planning goals. These materials were developed with oversight from the Vermont Land Use Education and Training Collaborative.

The Community Planning Toolbox

<http://vnrc.org/resources/community-planning-toolbox/>

The Community Planning Toolbox was developed by Smart Growth Vermont, which merged with the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) on July 1, 2011. The toolbox introduces users to the issues, techniques and resources for smart growth planning. It features case studies and sample tools that demonstrate how other communities have addressed similar challenges to those facing your community.

Growth Center Planning Manual for Vermont Communities - March 2007

accd.vermont.gov/sites/accd/files/Documents/strongcommunities/cd/designations/GrowthCenter%28hr%29.pdf

Vermont Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)

<http://www.vapda.org/>

Vermont Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) provide municipalities in each region with a wide range of planning services and should be the first stop for local officials seeking planning assistance.

General Healthy Community Design Resources

Change Lab Solutions: Healthy Planning

<http://changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning>

The ChangeLab Solutions team has extensive experience researching best practices, providing guidance, and developing land use plans to support community health and well-being in a diverse range of communities. Their work spans a range of health issues, including creating healthier food environments, increasing physical activity, making schools healthier, participating in the planning process, and redeveloping communities.

Design for Health

<http://designforhealth.net/>

Design for Health (DFH) is a collaborative project that serves to bridge the gap between the emerging research base on community design and healthy living, and the everyday realities of local government planning. The first phase of DFH (2006-08) created innovative, practice-oriented tools to help integrate human health into urban planning and environmental design in 19 communities. The second phase is focused on tool development and public education.

Design for Health and Policy

http://www.lgc.org/freepub/healthy_communities/index.html

The Local Government Commission (LGC) provides resources, technical assistance and networking opportunities to local elected officials and other dedicated community leaders for establishing healthy, walkable, and resource-efficient communities.

Leadership for Healthy Communities • Advancing Policies for Active Living and Healthy Eating • Action Strategies Toolkit - February 2011

<http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/index.php/home-toolkitnav-161?task=view>

The toolkit is based on the most current research on childhood obesity and the most relevant policy approaches.

Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States - July 2009

http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/community_strategies_guide.pdf

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified evidence-based strategies for obesity prevention by increasing active living and healthy eating.

Guide to Community Preventive Services. Environmental and Policy Approaches to Increase Physical Activity: Community-Scale Urban Design Land Use Policies

<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/environmental-policy/index.html>

The Guide to Community Preventive Services provides systematic reviews to determine program and policy interventions that have been proven effective. This section describes recommended environmental and policy approaches to increase physical activity.

Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities

www.icma.org/ruralsmartgrowth

Focuses on how to adapt smart growth strategies to rural communities through three central goals:

1) support the rural landscape by creating an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands; 2) help existing places to thrive by taking care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main Streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values; and 3) create great new places by building vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don't want to leave.

Tools for More In-Depth Assessment

A number of tools offer a more in-depth assessment of the policies and infrastructure in place for active living and healthy eating. Once a community has identified its priority areas for action, these tools may be helpful in collecting additional data and engaging more community members in planning and action.

The Vermont Smart Growth Scorecard

<http://vnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/SPRAWLscorecard.pdf>

Assesses the physical and policy supports in place to: preserve traditional settlement patterns, with a higher-density community center (or centers) surrounded by mostly open space; encourage mixed uses and a diversity of businesses in compact centers; offer a range of choices for housing and transportation; preserve working land and important natural, and historic, resources; involve citizens and interest groups in deciding the community's future.

Inventory of Resources Related to Health in Vermont Towns and Cities

<http://www.uvm.edu/crs/townhealthresources/>

Created in 2005 by the Center for Rural Studies at UVM in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health. Provides results of a survey of every city and town in Vermont that documents availability (or not) of assets such as miles of sidewalks and bike paths, town recreational facilities, and nutrition-related information, as well as town policies related to physical activity and healthy eating. The results can serve as a baseline; the questions can be useful in updating the inventory.

Community Healthy Living Index

<http://www.ymca.net/communityhealthylivingindex>

Created by the YMCA USA to help communities assess support for healthy living in six community settings: afterschool child care, early childhood program, neighborhood, school, work site, and community-at-large.

The Community Health Assessment aNd Group Evaluation (CHANGE) tool

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/change.htm>

Developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help community teams develop a community action plan for improving community health through policy changes that support healthy living strategies (e.g., increased physical activity, improved nutrition, reduced tobacco use and exposure, and chronic disease management). The section most relevant to healthy community design is the Community-At-Large Sector. This focuses on community-wide efforts that impact the social and built environments, such as improving food access, walkability or bikeability, tobacco use and exposure, or personal safety.

Walkability Checklist

<http://www.walkableamerica.org/checklist-walkability.pdf>

This tool was developed by The Partnership for a Walkable America (PWA), a national coalition working to improve conditions for walking and increase the number of Americans who walk regularly.

Walk Friendly Communities assessment tool

http://www.walkfriendly.org/WFCAssessmentTool_Nov2011.pdf

Create the Good: Sidewalks and Street Survey

<http://www.createthegood.org/sites/default/files/how-to/SidewalksStreets.pdf>

This straightforward how-to guide was created by the AARP to help small groups take simple “walkability” surveys and to take recommended actions for community improvements.

Bikeability Checklist

<http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/pdf/bikabilitychecklist.pdf>

Maintained by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.

The Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) Tools

<http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/11947>

Assess the physical environment features and amenities, town characteristics, community programs, and policies that could potentially influence levels of physical activity among residents in rural communities.

Community Food Audit – USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit - USDA, July 2002

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EFAN02013/>

This toolkit provides standardized measurement tools for assessing various aspects of community food security. It includes a general guide to community assessment and focused materials for examining six basic assessment components related to community food security. These include guides for profiling general community characteristics and community food resources, as well as materials for assessing household food security, food resource accessibility, food availability and affordability, and community food production resources.

City of Portland, Oregon – Diggable City Report

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/42296>

Comprehensive report describing how the City of Portland Oregon addressed urban agriculture. Report includes methods, results and language used for comprehensive plans, zoning and resolutions adopted to support urban agricultural projects.

Health Impact Assessment Resources

Planning for Healthy Places with Health Impact Assessments

<http://advance.captus.com/Planning/hia2/home.aspx>

An online course, developed by the American Planning Association and the National Association of County & City Health Officials. Explains the value of conducting health impact assessments and the steps involved.

UCLA Health Impact Assessment Clearinghouse

<http://www.hiaguide.org/>

Administered by the University of California, Los Angeles. Includes links to dozens of HIAs conducted in the United States, as well as HIA guides, news, and academic research.

Human Impact Partners

<http://www.humanimpact.org/>

A nonprofit project of the Tides Center. Provides materials that are easy to understand and use for health impact assessments.

Increasing Physical Activity through Community Design: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners and Livable Community Advocates

http://www.bikewalk.org/pdfs/2010/IPA_full.pdf

Guidebook from the National Center for Bicycling and Walking. Describes problems and solutions for creating active communities. Includes ways to secure funding to support projects.

Access to Parks, Recreational Facilities and Open Space

Vermont Trails and Greenways Council

www.vermonttrailsandgreenways.org

A non-profit dedicated to maintaining and improving the Vermont Trails System.

Vermont Trails and Greenways Manual: Everything You Need to Know to Build and Maintain a Trail

<http://vermonttrailsandgreenways.org/resources/manual>

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)

www.vycc.org

Provides work crews on a weekly or monthly basis to towns, agencies, or organizations in need of crew services.

Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program (RTP)

<http://www.vtfpr.org/recgrant/trgrant.cfm>

Provides funding for the development and maintenance of recreation trails, trailside amenities, and trailhead facilities. Funds are available to municipalities, schools, and non-profit organizations.

Vermont Recreational Facilities Grant Program

<http://bgs.vermont.gov/formsandpublications> (scroll down to "Grants")

Provides competitive grants to municipalities and to non-profit organizations for capital costs associated with the development and creation of community recreational opportunities in Vermont communities. For each dollar requested, documentation must be provided to show that one dollar has been raised from non-state sources.

Sample Joint Use Agreements

<http://www.nplanonline.org/childhood-obesity/products/nplan-joint-use-agreements>

Opening School Grounds to the Community After Hours

http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/joint_use_toolkit

A comprehensive toolkit for increasing physical activity through joint use agreements.

Access to Healthy Food

Resources: Toolkit for Community and School Garden Organizers

<http://www.burlingtongardens.org/gardenorganizer.html>

Supporting Your Farmers' Market: A Guide for Municipalities

<http://nofavt.org/sites/default/files/FM-municipaloutreach.pdf>

Outlines ways in which farmers' markets benefit communities, and ways that municipalities can support and improve their local farmers' markets.

Organizing and Maintaining Your Farmers' Market - NOFA VT

<http://nofavt.org/node/764>

Farm to Plate (F2P) Initiative

<http://www.vsjf.org/project-details/5/farm-to-plate-initiative>

The Farm to Plate initiative, approved at the end of the 2009 Vermont legislative session, directed the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, in consultation with the Sustainable Agriculture Council and other stakeholders, to develop a 10-year strategic plan to strengthen Vermont's food system.

Smart Growth Vermont

<http://vnrc.org/resources/community-planning-toolbox/issues/productive-farms/>

An on-line reference detailing the tools available to communities to support the protection of farm land through land use planning and local economic supports.

Planning for Agriculture in NY: A Toolkit for Towns and Counties

<http://www.farmland.org/documents/PlanningforAgriculturePDF.pdf>

Contains a helpful checklist to assess the level of support for agriculture in town plans and policies, and offers tools for improvement.

Sustaining Agriculture: A Handbook for Local Action

The Vermont Agency on Agriculture is currently updating the 1994 edition, which outlines the connections between land use and agricultural planning in greater depth.



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- Vermont Agency of Agriculture
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Vermont Department of Economic, Housing & Community Development
- Vermont Natural Resources Council

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Footnotes

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