

Summary of the Revision to the Land Use section of the Sharon Town Plan

The Sharon Planning Commission has been working for the past year to revise the Land Use Chapter (14) of the Town Plan; only Chapter 14 has been revised. The Sharon Town Plan was last adopted on April 6, 2015.

The purpose of this revision is to strengthen the Town Plan’s alignment with Vermont’s land use goals as stated in 24 V.S.A. Sec. 4302, “*Municipal and Regional Planning and Development*”. The purpose of this revision is to strengthen and clarify the language in Chapter 14 regarding large-scale development. Any proposed large-scale development in Sharon would require an Act 250 review by the State of Vermont. Sharon’s Town Plan will play an important part of any Act 250 review; it is used by the State to ascertain how and where the Town of Sharon wants growth to happen and what existing features and qualities the Town wants to preserve.

The table below highlights of the revisions made to Chapter 14, along with their references to 24 V.S.A. Sec. 4302.

Chapter 14 Land Use Revisions	24 V.S.A. Sec. 4302 References
<p>The definition of the Town’s “Rural Character” has been clarified.</p> <p>Descriptions of the Town’s existing Village Area, Residential Area, and Forest Conservation Area, have been clarified and identified on maps.</p> <p>Emphasis has been placed on a single community center i.e. the Village Area.</p>	<p>(4)(C)(1) To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.</p>
<p>The importance of wildlife corridors and the value of preserving unbroken tracts of forest has been emphasized.</p> <p>High-density development is inappropriate in the Forest Conservation Area. Therefore a minimum five acre lot size has been added.</p>	<p>(6)(C) Vermont’s forestlands should be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.</p> <p>(9)(E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.</p>
<p>New emphasis has been placed on the burden that large-scale development places on Town services and infrastructure.</p>	<p>(12)(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.</p>
<p>Sharon’s 2010 Flood Hazard Bylaw is referenced.</p> <p>The risk of flooding in the existing Small Enterprise Area is noted.</p>	<p>(14) To encourage flood resilient communities.</p> <p>(A) New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.</p>

The Sharon Planning Commission also made minor edits to Chapter 14 to improve legibility and eliminate inconsistencies or outdated information. In addition, a loophole was closed that would have allowed home businesses in the Rural Residential Area to expand into large commercial enterprises.

For the complete text of Chapter 14: Land Use, please refer to the draft version which has all the recently-edited language in bold type which is available at the Sharon Town Hall.

The Sharon Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on _____ at the Sharon Volunteer Fire Station to gather input on its revisions to Chapter 14 of the Town Plan.

The Sharon Selectboard will then hold its own public hearing, at which point they will vote whether or not to adopt the new Town Plan language, or send it back to the Planning Commission for further work.

As always, the public is welcome to attend Planning Commission meetings which are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Sharon Town Hall.