2026 Bennington County Regional Plan

Regional Profile

- Municipalities: 17 (14 towns, 3 villages)
- Population (2020): 35,337
- Households (2020): 14,822
- Population change (2010-2020): -0.4%
- Median age (2020): 46.4*
- Median Household income (2023): $71,494
- Total jobs (2026): 16,065
- Gross domestic product (2022): $2.05 billion

** county-level data, differs slightly from regional commission service area*

Public Engagement

Engagement by the Numbers

335 people engaged at public events

101 survey responses

27 Municipal planning commission meetings

14 focus group participants

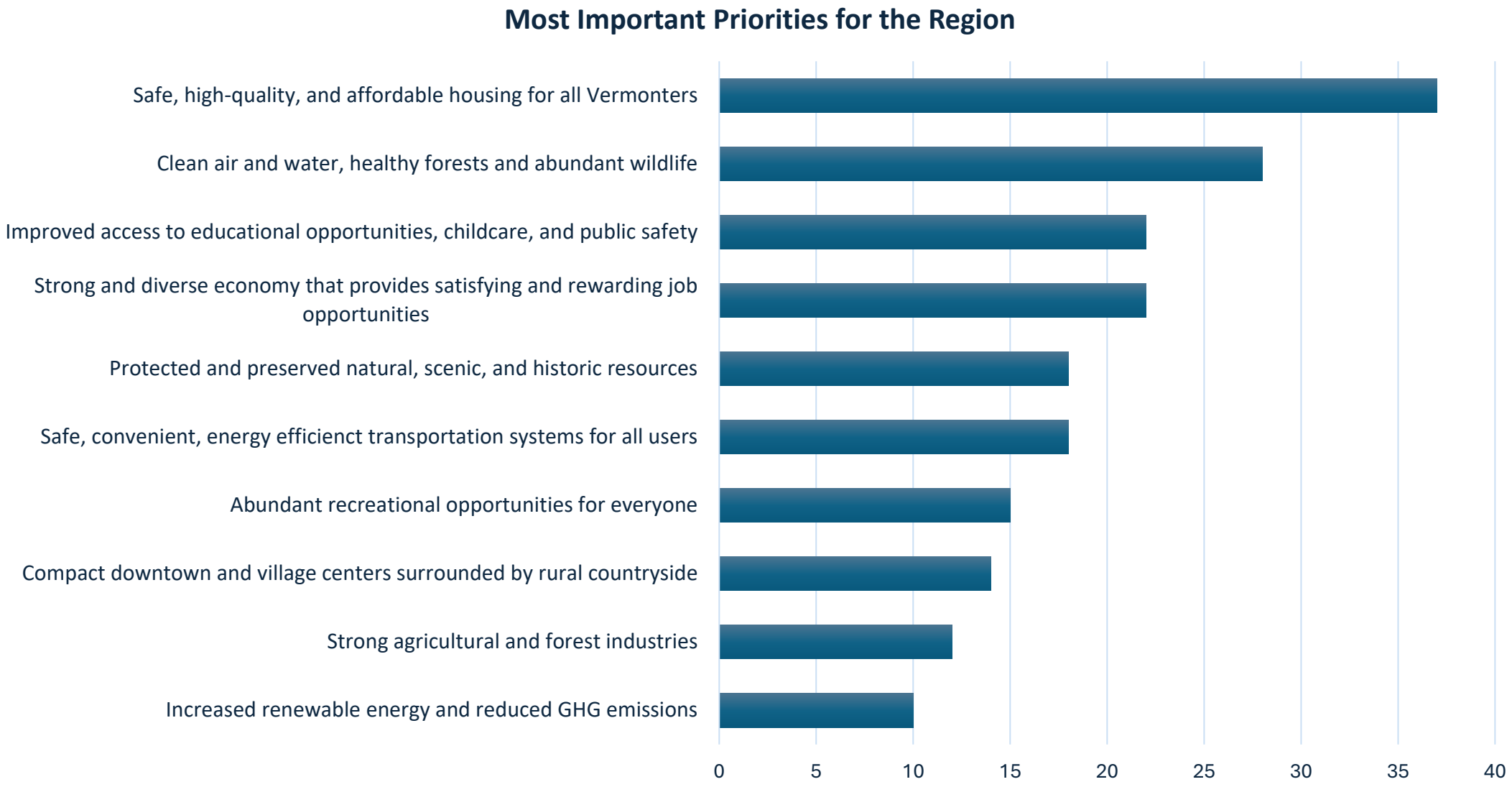
7 public events attended

6 Select Board meetings

4 idea poster locations

2 focus groups

Dot Voting Results



Plan Highlights

Organization of the Plan

Introduction
Natural Systems
- Natural Resources
- Climate Resilience
- Landscape and Character (Rural)

Living and Growing
- Landscape and Character (Growth)
- Housing
- Local Economy

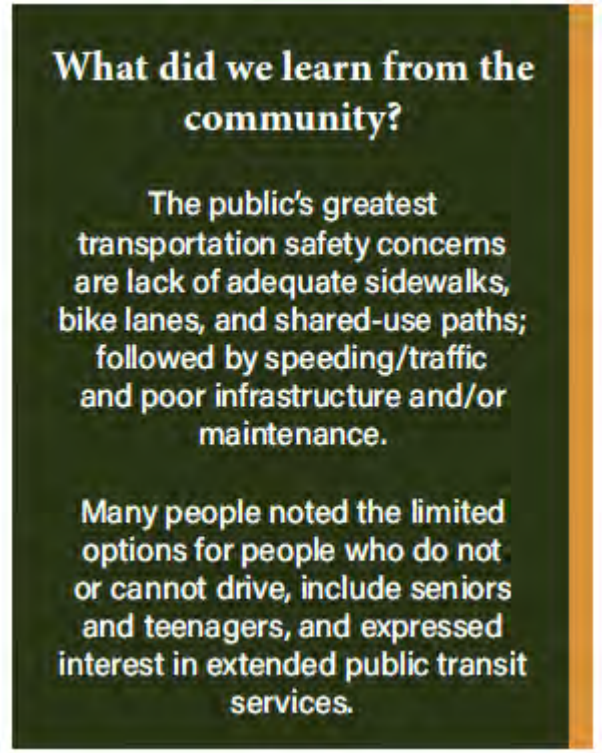
Supporting Infrastructure
- Mobility and Transportation
- Energy
- Utilities, Facilities, and Infrastructure
- Services

People and Community
- Wellbeing and Recreation
- Community Life
- Education

Coordination and Implementation
- Governance and Coordination
- Implementation Matrix

Updates from 2024 Plan

- New **thematic structure** and greater **visual** emphasis
- **Revised introduction** that orients readers to the structure, key elements of the plan, and the BCRC
- Revised land use categories and policies that align with Act 181
- New municipal housing targets and methodology discussion
    - Strengthened **policies to promote housing growth**
- Greater emphasis on the significance of municipal buildings and water/wastewater systems in the Utilities and Facilities chapter
- Emphasis on **community input**, **implementation**, and **environmental justice** throughout the plan
- Expanded **Wellbeing and Recreation** chapter that analyzes public health data and links it with planning
- New **Community Life** chapter developed in response to public input on this topic
- Expanded discussion of municipal governance and capacity in the **Governance and Coordination** chapter
- Discussions of poverty and food access integrated into the **Local Economy** chapter



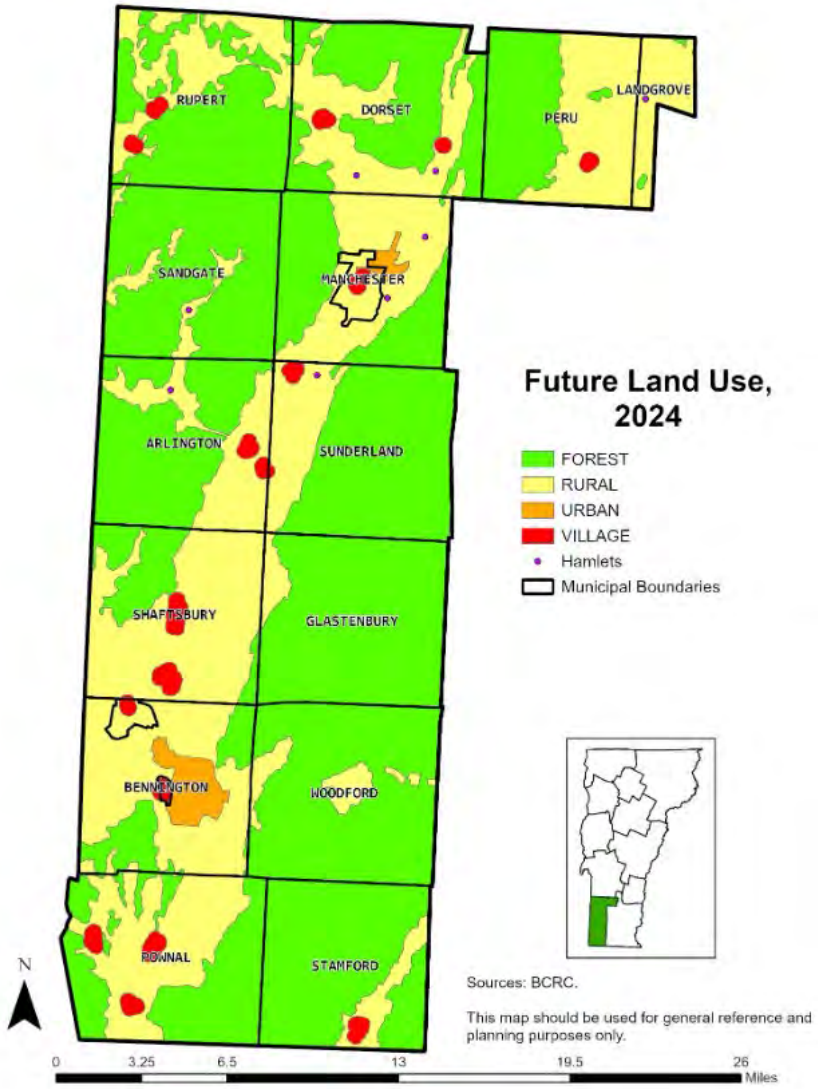
Enhanced Energy Plan - Updates

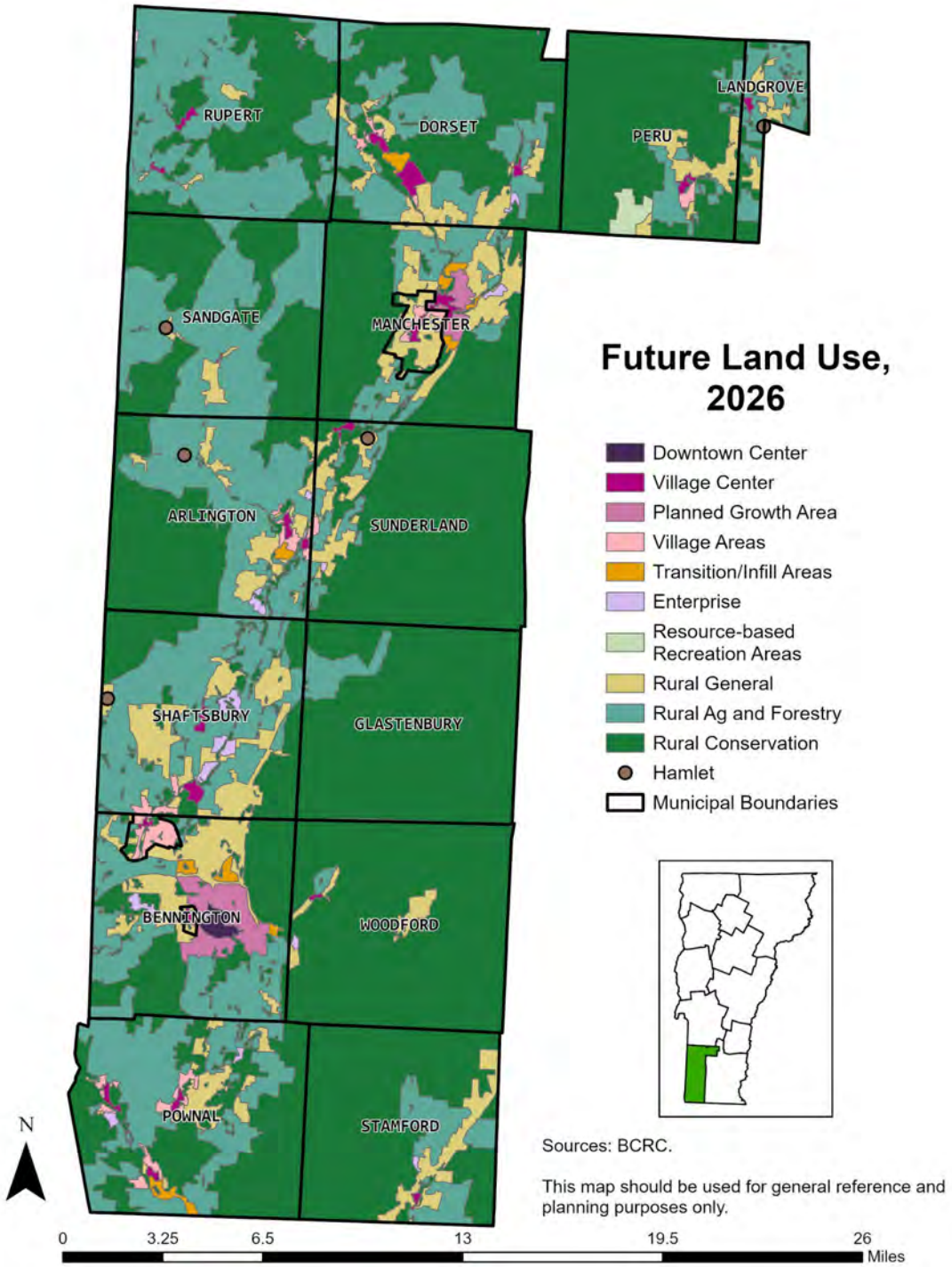
- Some updated current energy use data, LEAP targets are unchanged from the 2024 plan.
- New GHG emissions reductions targets for the region (new graph)
- Wind and solar resource maps: state-identified habitat blocks have been removed from potential resource areas.
- New renewable energy project siting and review criteria
- New environmental benefits & burdens section that aligns with the rest of the plan

Implementation Matrix

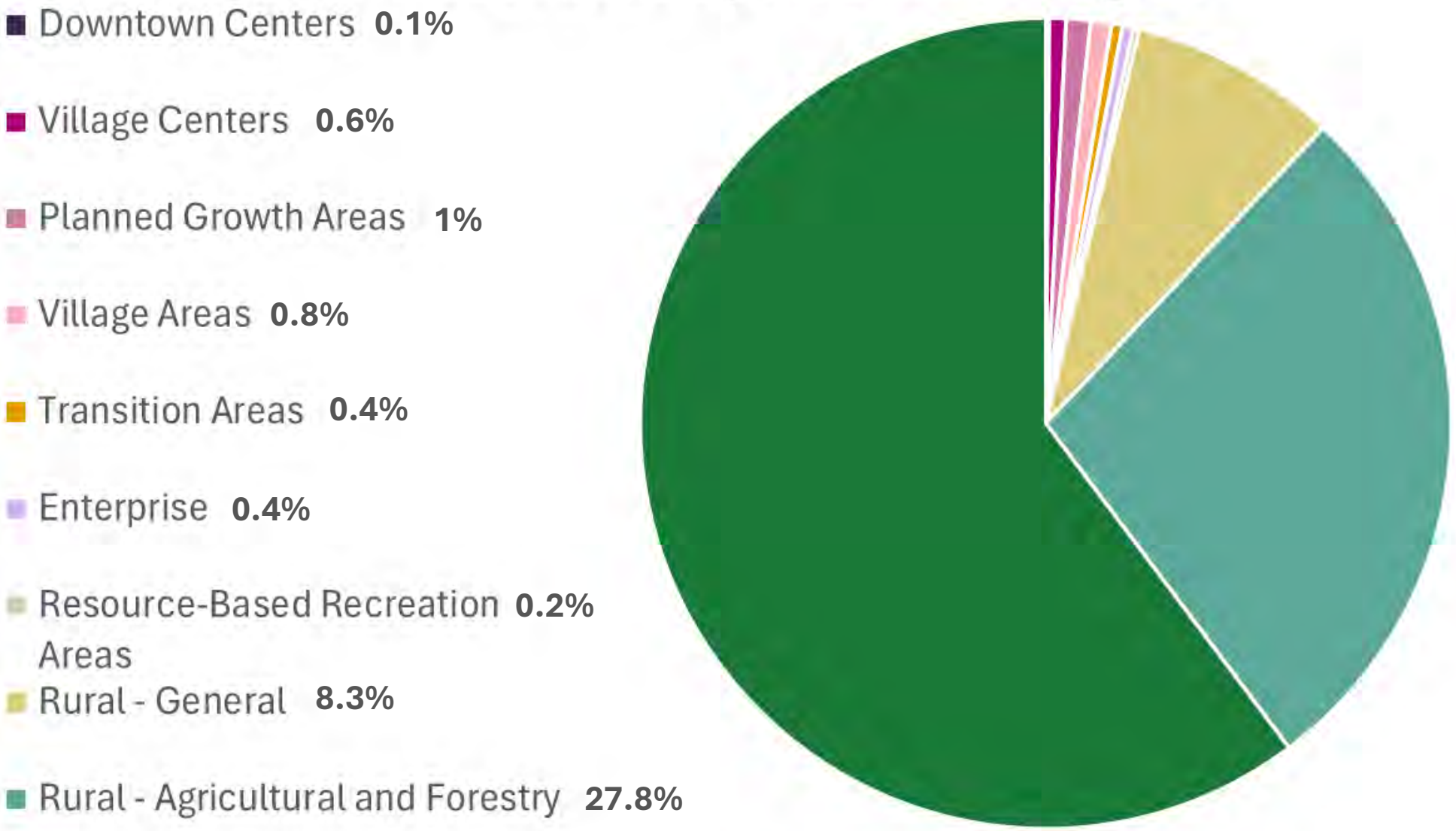
Plan Chapter	Type	Text	EJ	Primary BCRC Program Area
	Policy	Encourages and assists municipalities to meet requirements of the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF).		Climate Resilience
	Policy	Encourages municipalities to maintain Hazard Mitigation Plans. HMPs help municipalities qualify for more funds after a disaster through ERAF and allow municipalities to become eligible for FEMA grant assistance. The BCRC will assist municipalities to complete grant applications under the Hazard Mitigation Funding Program and will respond to municipal RFPs to develop HMPs.		Climate Resilience
	Action	Facilitates municipalities to maintain and submit Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMP) for emergency response and hazard preparedness by the annual June 1 deadline.		Climate Resilience
	Action	Facilitates participation by municipal representatives at all Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) meetings.		Climate Resilience
	Policy	Encourages municipal leaders to assess their community's risk by reviewing the Community Report section on the Flood Ready website.		Climate Resilience
	Action	Facilitates attendance by municipal leaders at Incident Command System (ICS) trainings, Emergency Management Director (EMD) trainings, National Incident Management System (NIMS) trainings, and other necessary trainings listed on the Vermont Learning Management System.		Climate Resilience
	Action	Assists municipal leaders to encourage community members to sign up for Vermont Alert to receive emergency alerts by text, email, or phone call.		Climate Resilience
	Action	Assists municipalities to provide emergency information on municipal websites, such as shelter information, weather alerts, and how to make an emergency kit.		Climate Resilience
	Action	Works to provide additional support to Economically Disadvantaged and Rural Communities (EDRCs).		Climate Resilience
Rural Land Use	Goal	Maintain the region's general character of compact centers surrounded by sparsely-developed rural lands		Land Use Planning
	Goal	Work to repair existing sprawling and linear development by supporting development that integrates such areas with growth areas and/or connects low-density rural areas		Land Use Planning
	Goal	Support working lands by allowing appropriate and traditional rural land and resource-based uses		Land Use Planning
	Goal	Promote conservation of areas far from developed centers, in areas with high elevation and steep terrain, river corridors, floodplains, and wetlands		Land Use Planning
Rural Ag + Forestry	Policy	Encourages development in and around existing village and urban centers to relieve the pressure to develop in outlying agricultural areas		Land Use Planning
	Policy	Supports municipal land use policies and regulations in rural areas containing productive soils that permit those uses, density levels, and development patterns that will not detract from rural character or substantially reduce the viability of current and future agricultural use		Land Use Planning
	Policy	Supports local zoning and subdivision regulations that provide for innovative practices such as transferable development rights and planned unit developments that require or encourage preservation of important agricultural soils		Land Use Planning
	Policy	Encourages member municipalities to promote the Use Value Appraisal program and conservation and preservation programs with local and statewide organizations as viable options for farmland preservation		Land Use Planning

FLU Map Overview



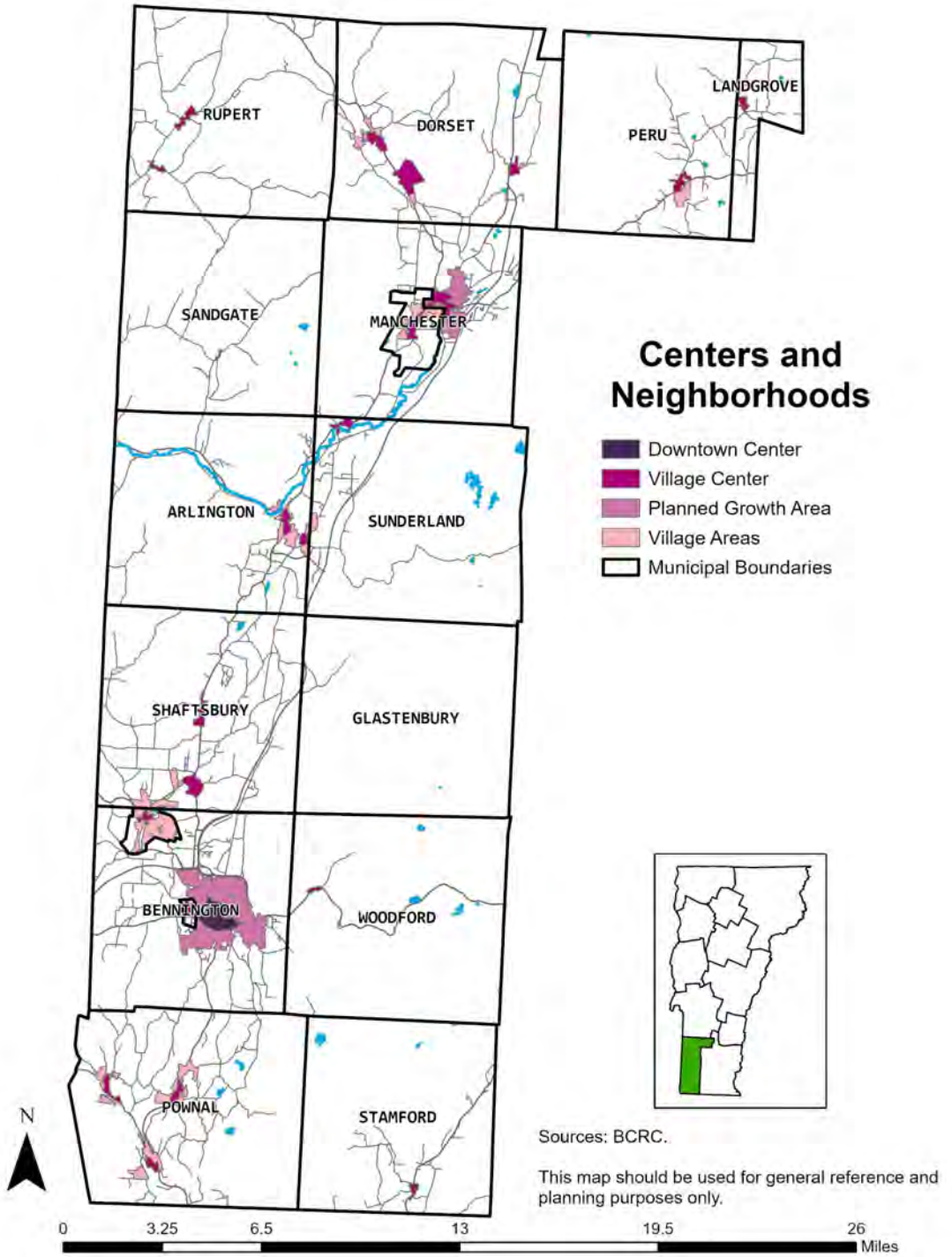


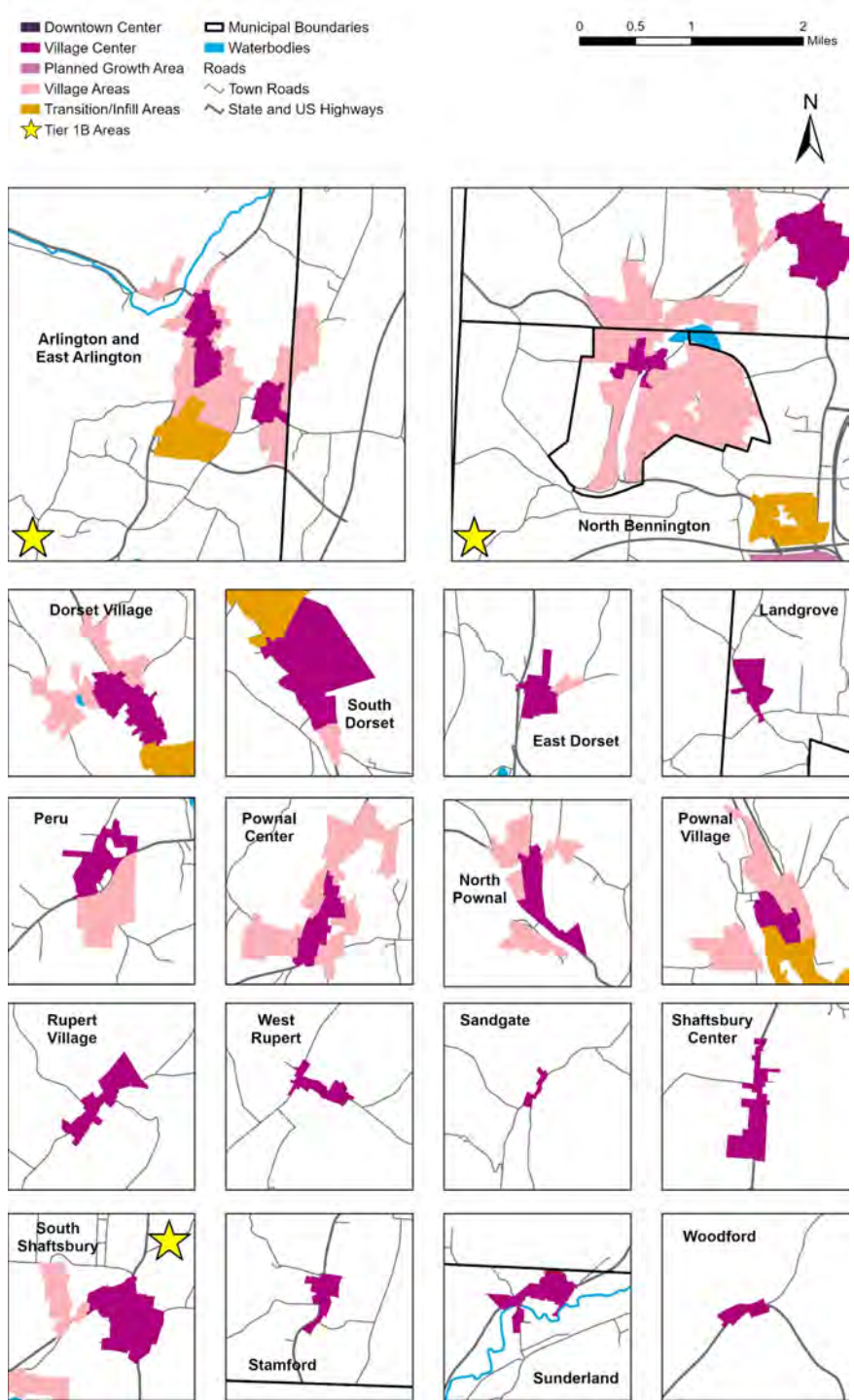
Future Land Use Areas By Fraction of Region

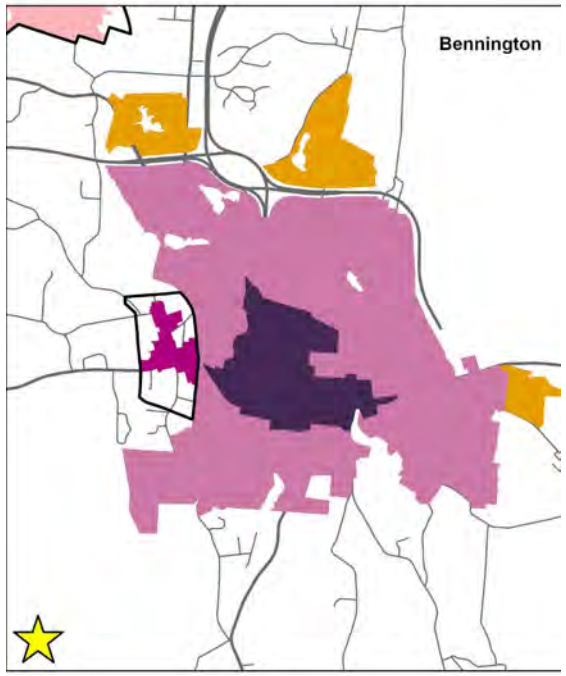


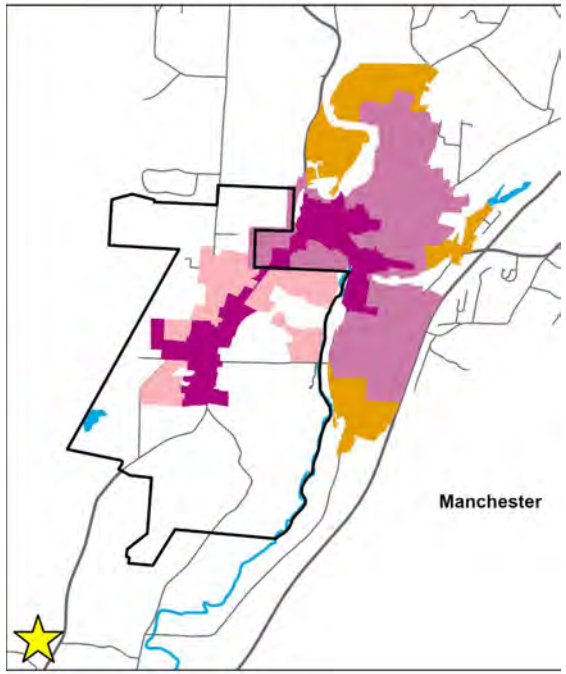
Centers and Neighborhoods

- 1 Downtown
  - 1 legacy downtown
- 22 Village Centers
  - 17 legacy village centers
- 2 Planned Growth Areas
  - 1 legacy Growth Center and 1 legacy Neighborhood Development Area
- 14 Village Areas
  - o Most Village Areas include multiple polygons




Downtown Center
Village Center
Planned Growth Area
Village Areas
Transition/Infill Areas
Tier 1B Areas
Municipal Boundaries
Waterbodies
Roads
Town Roads
State and US Highways
0 0.5 1 2
Miles
N
Arlington and East Arlington
North Bennington
Dorset Village
South Dorset
East Dorset
Landgrove
Peru
Pownal Center
North Pownal
Pownal Village
Rupert Village
West Rupert
Sandgate
Shaftsbury Center
South Shaftsbury
Stamford
Sunderland
Woodford


Bennington


Manchester

Tier 1B

Arlington

Bennington

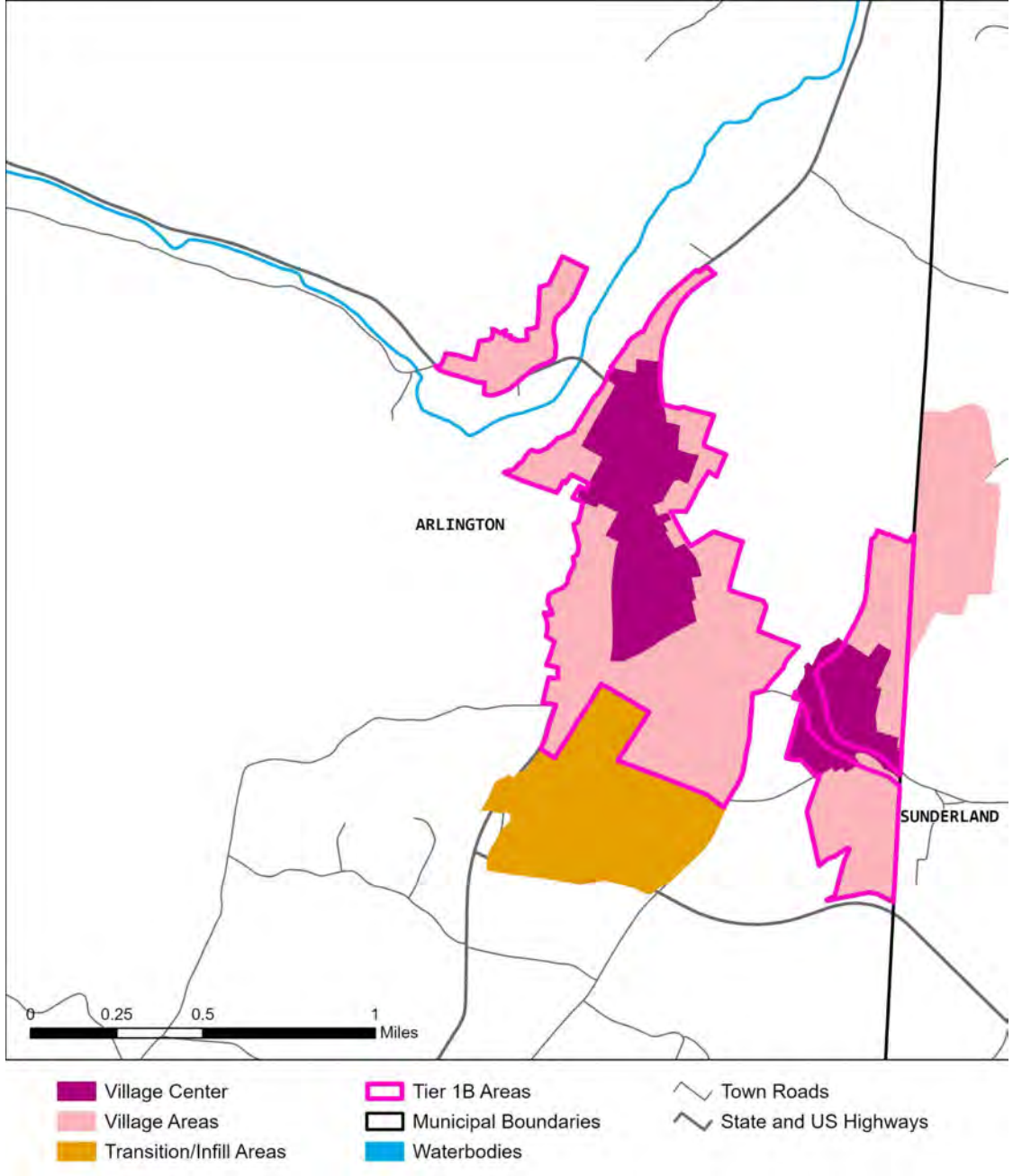
Manchester

North Bennington

Shaftsbury

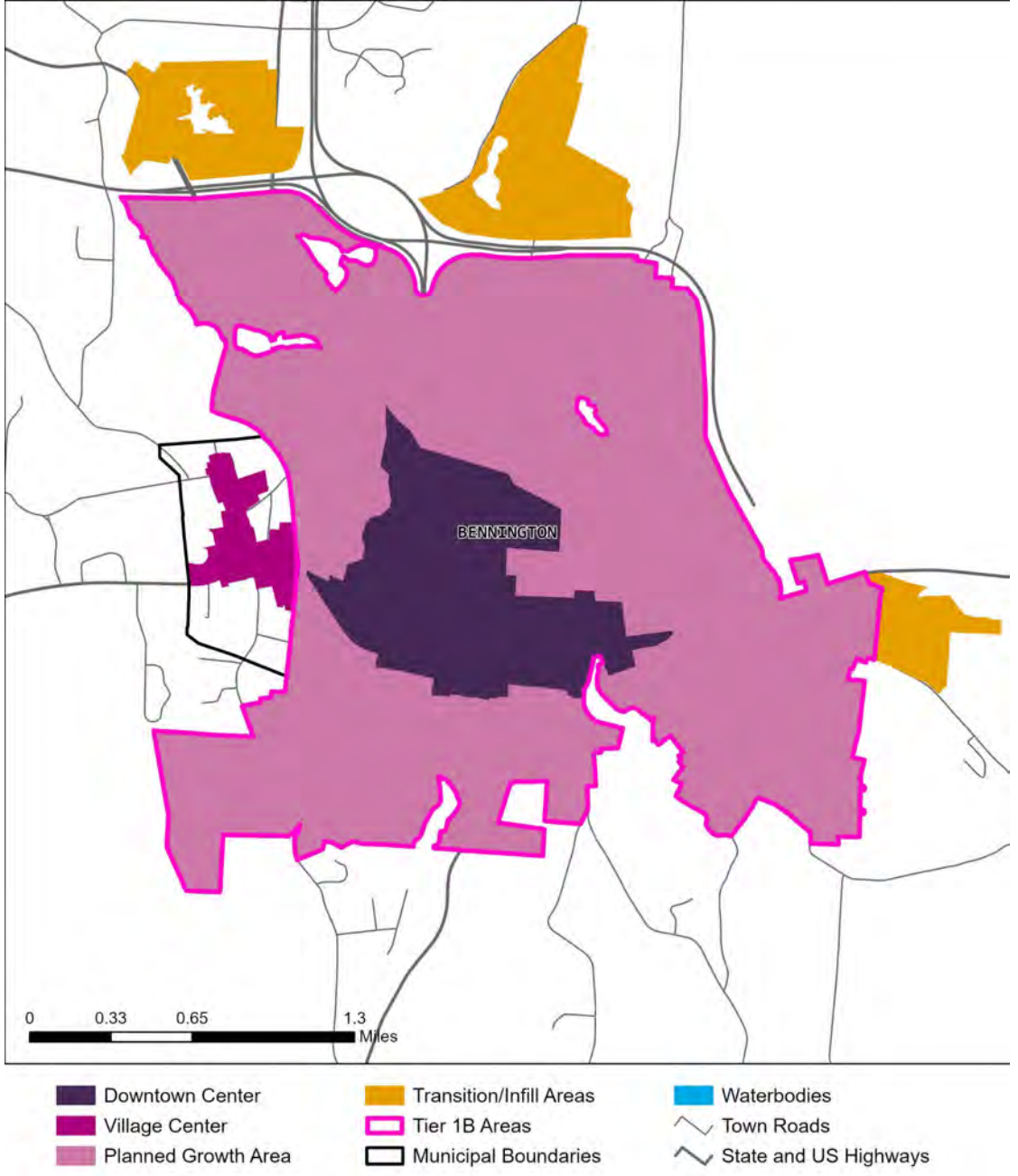
Arlington

- 2 legacy village centers
- National register historic district (Center) and key historic buildings (Remember Baker Mill in East, Chittenden House in West)
- Presence of flood plain and river corridor
- Town water throughout
- All eligible areas included



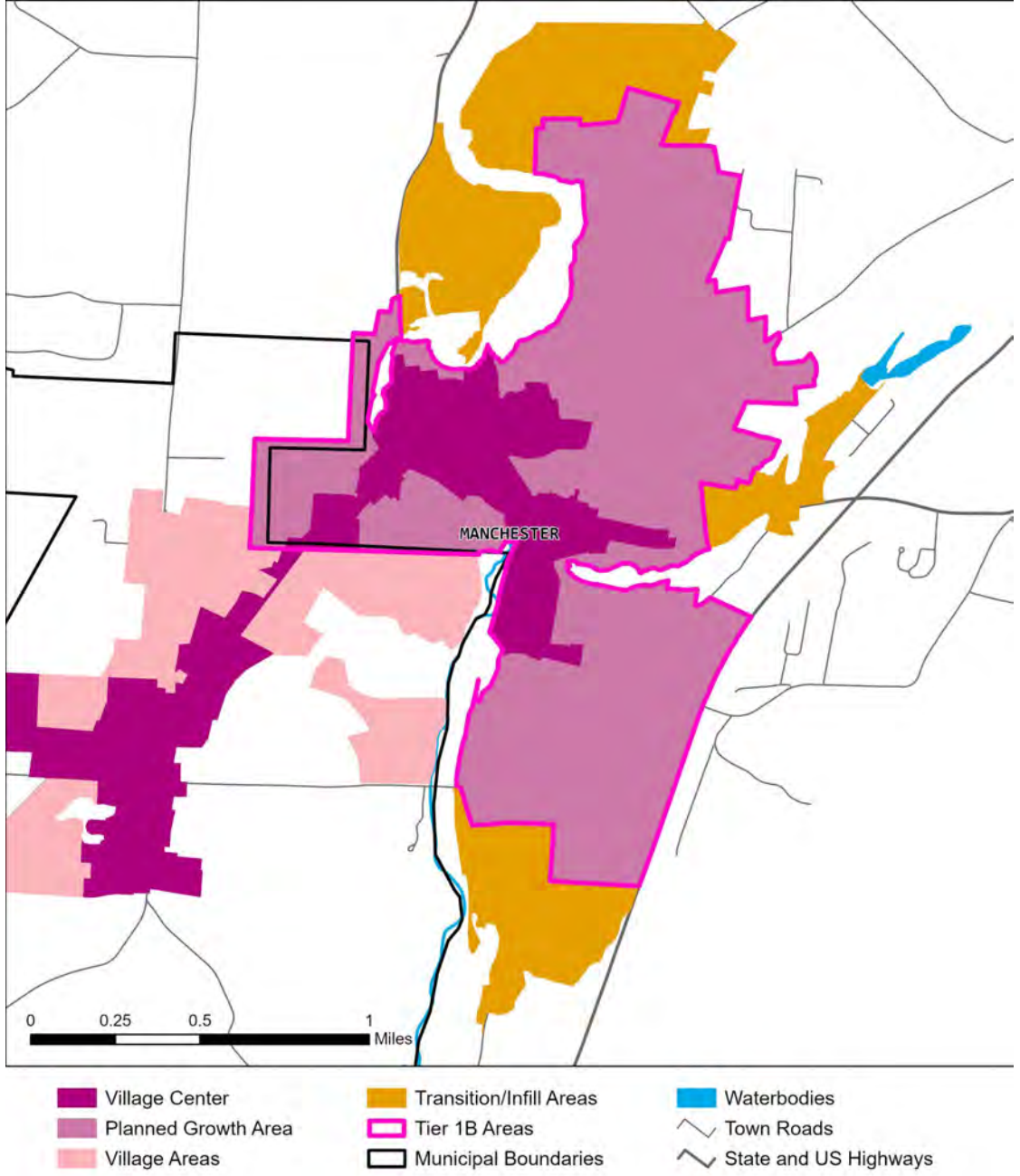
Bennington

- Legacy downtown and growth center
- National Register historic districts and multiple buildings
- Presence of flood plain and river corridor
- Public water and wastewater throughout
- All eligible area included



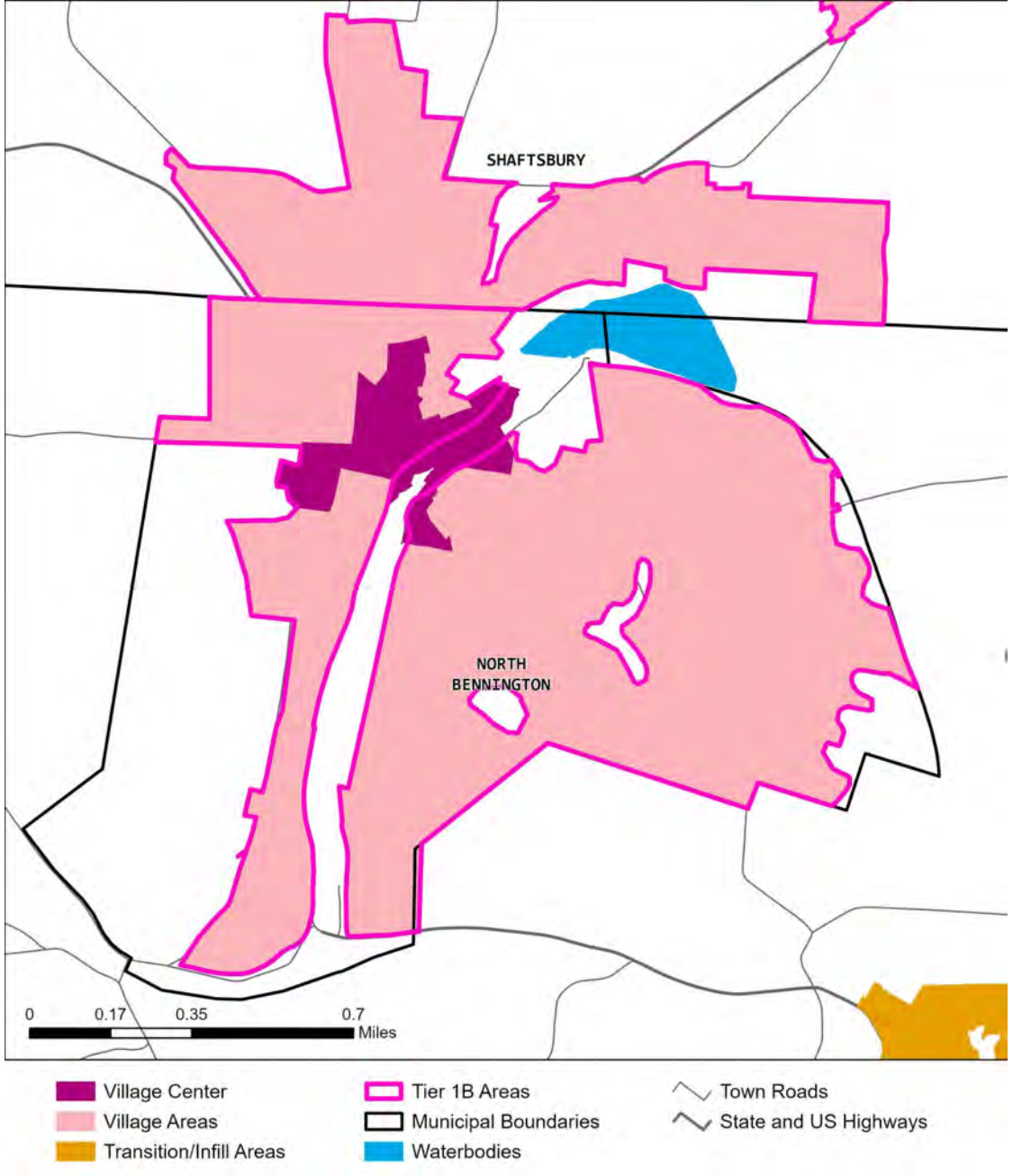
Manchester

- Legacy village center and neighborhood development area
- Multiple National Register listed buildings
- Presence of flood plain and river corridor
- Public water and wastewater, or plans for community water/wastewater systems and existing suitable soils
- All eligible area included



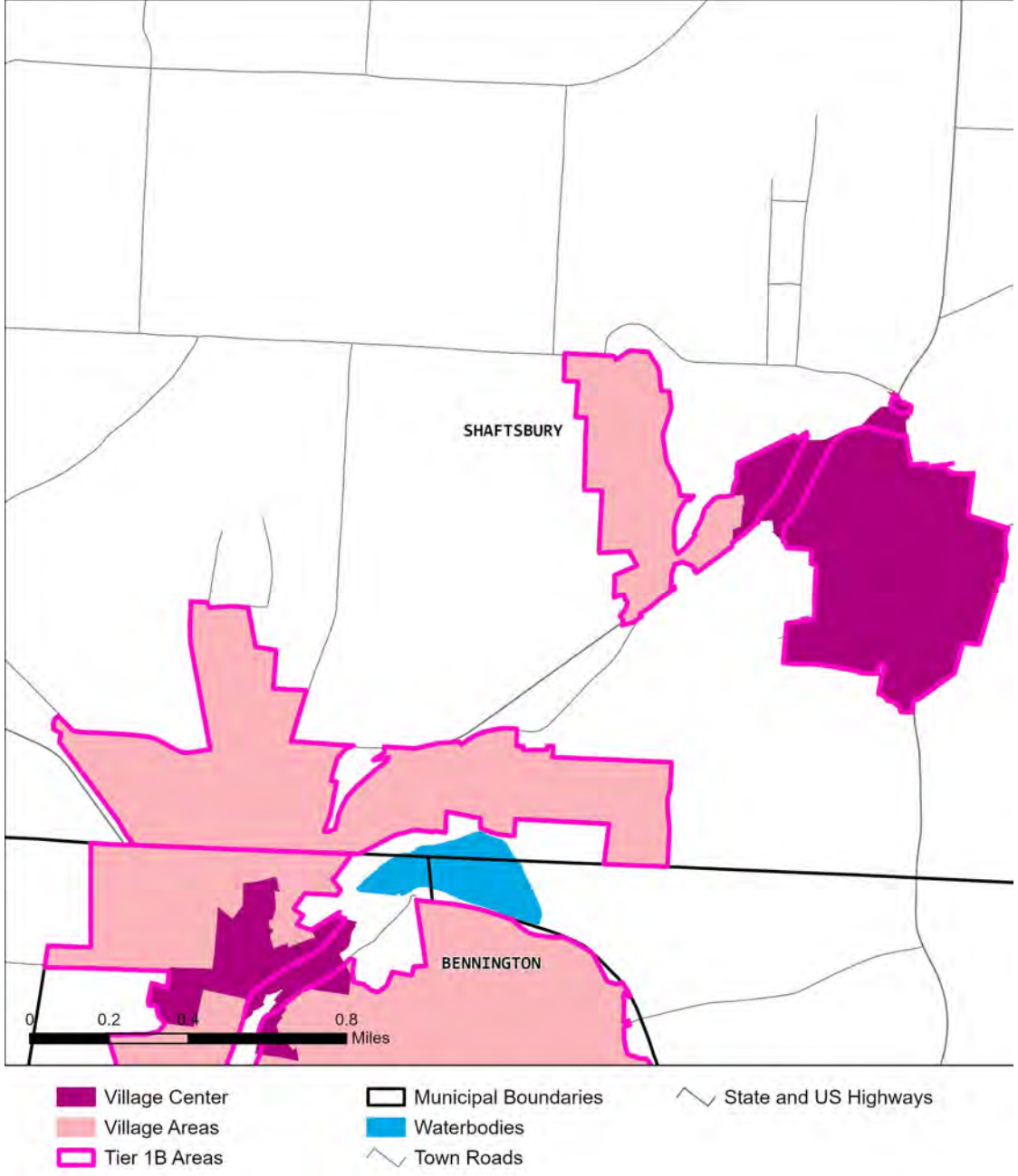
North Bennington

- Legacy village center
- National Register historic districts and multiple listed buildings
- Presence of flood plain and river corridor
- Public water and/or wastewater service throughout
- All eligible areas included



Shaftsbury

- Legacy village center
- Many homes greater than 50 years old
- Presence of flood plain or river corridor
- Water throughout, small areas with public sewer
- Includes Village Area associated with North Bennington Village Center
- Excludes Center Shaftsbury Village Center (north of image)



Housing Targets Methodology

- Finalize FLU mapping
- Use 2030 lower and upper for main target
- Assign fraction of overall target to each FLU area type per substantial majority requirement
- Assign fraction of target to municipality by its percentage of total FLU area in the category
- Municipal target constitutes the sum of these fractions

FLU CATEGORIES	Housing Target %
Downtown Centers	20.0%
Village Centers	10.0%
Planned Growth Areas	30.0%
Village Areas	15.0%
Transition Areas	7.0%
Enterprise	0.0%
Resource-Based Recreation Area	0.0%
Rural - General	14.0%
Rural - Agricultural and Forestry	3.0%
Rural - Conservation	1.0%
TOTAL	**100%**

Housing Targets: Example

ARLINGTON							
Category	**Acreage**	**% of Total - Local**	**% of Total - Regional**	**Homes Needed Upper**	**Homes Needed Lower**	**2050 Homes Needed Lower**	**2050 Homes Needed Upper**
Rural - Agricultural and Forestry	11,750.98	43.52%	11.50%	8	5	15	30
Rural - Conservation	12,287.61	45.51%	5.55%	1	1	2	5
Rural - General	2,060.91	7.63%	6.77%	21	14	42	84
Village Centers	170.18	0.63%	6.97%	15	10	31	62
Enterprise	203.59	0.75%	12.78%	0	0	0	0
Village Areas	374.91	1.39%	12.24%	40	27	82	162
Transition Areas	151.25	0.56%	9.44%	14	10	30	58
Grand Total	26,999.44	1.00	0.65	**99**	**66**	**204**	**401**

Housing Targets Methodology 2

- Same process applied to unit type, size, and ownership
- For non-primary 2050 target types, uses 2050 (Lower)
  - Logic: Expectation of decreasing fractional share of statewide production due to infrastructure constraints (wastewater) and region's disproportionate COVID increase

Table 9: 2050 Targets by Unit Size

2050 Target By Unit Size	0-1 Bedroom	2 BR	3 BR	4BR	5+BR	Total
Arlington	125	53	20	6	0	204
Bennington	1435	449	210	10	0	2104
Dorset	172	73	28	7	0	280
Glastenbury	4	2	1	1	0	8
Landgrove	21	10	4	2	0	37
Manchester Center	338	130	53	8	0	529
Manchester Village	85	29	13	3	0	130
North Bennington	120	35	17	0	0	172
Old Bennington	13	4	2	0	0	19
Peru	62	24	10	4	0	101
Pownal	221	90	35	6	0	352
Rupert	38	16	6	3	0	63
Sandgate	19	11	4	3	0	37
Shaftsbury	160	66	27	13	0	266
Stamford	35	19	7	6	0	66
Sunderland	50	22	8	5	0	85
Woodford	17	9	3	3	0	32
TOTAL	2914	1040	448	81	0	4483

Housing Targets: Results

Table 7: Housing Targets by Town

Targets	Total Acres	% of Total Regional Acres	Homes Needed 2030 (Lower)	Homes Needed 2030 (Upper)	Homes Needed 2050 (Lower)	Homes Needed 2050 (Upper)
Arlington	26999.44	7.34%	45	72	204	401
Bennington	25629.82	6.97%	462	745	2104	4148
Dorset	30386.23	8.26%	62	99	280	552
Glastenbury	28402	7.72%	2	3	8	15
Landgrove	5698.96	1.55%	8	13	37	73
Manchester Center	24727.26	6.72%	116	188	529	1044
Manchester Village	2210.64	0.60%	29	46	130	256
North Bennington	1178.34	0.32%	38	61	172	338
Old Bennington	241.53	0.07%	4	7	19	37
Peru	24007.96	6.53%	22	36	101	199
Pownal	30100.56	8.18%	77	125	352	693
Rupert	28671.65	7.79%	14	22	63	125
Sandgate	27099.45	7.37%	8	13	37	72
Shaftsbury	27590.73	7.50%	58	94	266	525
Stamford	25334.22	6.89%	14	23	66	130
Sunderland	29168.5	7.93%	19	30	85	167
Woodford	30395.83	8.26%	7	11	32	63
TOTAL	367842.9	1	985	1588	4483	8836

Pre-App Feedback from the LURB

- Corrections including to **Public Facilities – Local Government** map
- Add cost estimates for **transportation improvement priorities**
- Edit **Implementation Matrix** to identify community priorities
- Expand on comparison of land use planning across **neighboring regions**
- Update **Planned Growth Area definition** per Act 152 (S. 325, enacted 2026)
- **Future Land Use Mapping**
  - Consider revisions to **South Dorset Village Center** (pending discussion with the LURB)
  - Change the **Town of Manchester's Village Center** to a Downtown
  - Expand **South Pownal Village Center** to the northwest and clean up eastern boundaries
  - Scale back **Sunderland Village Center** boundaries affected by flood hazard areas
  - Scale back **West Dorset Village Area** in rural zoning district
  - In **North Bennington** and **Arlington**, change Rural General areas to Transition/Infill when close to centers
  - Scale back **Pownal Center Village Area** at northeast
  - Scale back **Shaftsbury Village Area** along Twitchell Hill Road
  - In **Manchester Village**, map Longview Drive as Village Area

Energy plan feedback from PSD:

- Minor technical corrections
- Include additional mapping/context on grid constraints in the region.

Next Steps

- Solicit additional feedback from the public
- Make revisions based on feedback (agencies and public)
- Warn second public hearing
- Plan on adoption following second public hearing

Thank you!

Any questions?

BCRC