

CCRPC Formal Staff & PAC Review – 2016 Charlotte Town Plan  
September 14, 2016 PAC Meeting

**Staff Review of the 2016 Charlotte Town Plan**  
**Emily Nosse-Leirer, CCRPC Planner**  
**September 14, 2016**

---

The Town of Charlotte has requested, per 24 V.S.A §4350, that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1) approve its 2016 Town Plan; and (2) confirm its planning process.

This draft 2016 Charlotte Town Plan is a full rewrite. The 2008 Charlotte Town Plan was readopted in 2013 with some changes, and then amended on March 1, 2016 to include a consideration of Village Designation and a revised energy section. This plan is intended to be presented to voters for adoption on Town Meeting Day, March 7, 2017.

CCRPC staff has completed this formal review of the Draft 2016 Charlotte Town Plan in advance of the Charlotte Selectboard's public hearing on it, which was warned and will be held on September 29, 2016.

Following the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission's (CCRPC's) *Guidelines and Standards for Confirmation of Municipal Planning Processes and Approval of Municipal Plans (2013)* and the statutory requirements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, I have reviewed the draft 2016 Charlotte Town Plan to determine whether it is:

- Consistent with the general goals of §4302;
- Consistent with the specific goals of §4302;
- Contains the required elements of §4382;
- Compatible with the 2013 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan* (per §4350); and
- Compatible with approved plans of other municipalities (per §4350).

Additionally, I have reviewed the planning process requirements of §4350.

Staff Review Findings and Comments

1. The 2016 Charlotte Town Plan is consistent with all of the general goals of §4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
2. The 2016 Charlotte Town Plan is consistent with the specific goals of §4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
3. The 2016 Charlotte Town Plan contains the required elements of §4382. See the attached Appendix A submittl that describes compliance with these required elements.
4. The 2016 Charlotte Town Plan is generally compatible with the planning areas, goals and strategies of the 2013 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan*.

CCRPC Formal Staff & PAC Review – 2016 Charlotte Town Plan  
September 14, 2016 PAC Meeting

5. The 2016 Charlotte Town Plan is compatible with the municipal plans for Shelburne, Hinesburg, Monkton and Ferrisburgh.
6. Charlotte has a planning process in place that is sufficient for an approved plan. In addition, Charlotte has provided information about their planning budget and CCRPC finds that Charlotte is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning.

Additional Comments/Questions:

CCRPC staff reviewed the 2012 Charlotte Town Plan in 2012 when it was adopted, and reviewed plan amendments in 2013, when the town added an economic development section. With the understanding that this plan is in the final stages of development, staff comments are limited only to issues that might affect the plan's ability to be approved by the CCRPC board.

**While Staff does not find that any changes are necessary for approval and confirmation of the process by the CCRPC, the following recommendations are offered to improve the efficacy of plan implementation:**

1. Historical and Cultural Resources Strategy #1 states that the Town intends to apply for village designation for both the West Charlotte and East Charlotte Village Areas. Act 59, which took effect in July 2013, requires that communities applying for any state designated center have a confirmed planning process and a municipal plan that has been approved by the regional planning commission and includes the following:
  - a. A description of how the proposed Village Centers would support the plan's land use and other goals, and
  - b. Maps showing the proposed designated Village Centers boundaries.Because applying for Village Center designations for two communities is one of the identified strategies of the plan, staff highly recommends adding those two items before the plan is adopted. Upon request, CCRPC can provide an example of brief language and maps that will meet the Act 59 requirements.
2. The plan makes many mentions of "Areas of High Public Value," which is a combination of multiple natural, scenic and historic resources. This grouping allows these features to be succinctly referenced throughout the plan, but the full list of features included as "Areas of High Public Value" is not clear. Is Policy 4 of the Utilities, Facilities and Services section the full list (page 1-34)? If yes, it would be useful to define it earlier in the plan, as AHPVs are mentioned several times in earlier sections, including Land Use, without definition. Additionally, on the maps, features that are included as "Areas of High Public Value" are not specified. Indicating which features in the legend are Areas of High Public Value may make the maps more useful to the user.
3. In Section 3.8 (page 3-11), the plan states that "it is the Planning Commission's responsibility to develop, maintain, review and revise the plan at least every five years." While the town is free to create a new plan every five years, it is worth noting that as of July 1, 2016, state law requires a re-adoption every eight years rather than every five.
4. The plan does a great job listing areas that should be protected during future development, which provides a strong foundation for the Town's land use policies and regulations. Energy Strategy #2 states that "the Town will review new projects using Site Plan Review Standards as identified in the Charlotte Land Use Regulations" (Page 1-47).

**CCRPC Formal Staff & PAC Review – 2016 Charlotte Town Plan  
September 14, 2016 PAC Meeting**

While these standards can provide a good list of what the town values and chooses to advocate for during PSB proceedings, CCRPC staff recommend that towns avoid direct reference to zoning regulations (with the exception of setbacks) during PSB proceedings and instead directly reference plan policies, such as those listed beginning on Page 1-46. (However, the review of energy siting is in a state of flux due to the recent signing of Act 174, and may change over the next few months.)

Proposed Motion & Next Steps:

**PROPOSED MOTION:** The PAC finds that the draft 2016 Charlotte Town Plan, as submitted, meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC approval, and that the municipality's planning process meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC confirmation.

Upon notification that the Plan has been adopted by the municipality, CCRPC staff will review the plan, and any information relevant to the confirmation process, for changes. If staff determines that changes are substantive, those changes will be forwarded to the PAC for review. Otherwise the PAC recommends that the Plan, and the municipal planning process, should be forwarded to the CCRPC Board for approval.