Land Use

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/16/2026

Municipal land use planning is the process of assessing current conditions in a community, envisioning a desired future, and charting a course toward that future. It involves multiple stakeholders, including property and business owners, elected and appointed municipal officials, renters, and even visitors. Planning encompasses many activities, including adopting town plans and municipal bylaws, capital budgeting, development review, and enforcement. Plans are implemented using regulatory tools such as zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations.

The Vermont Legislature first provided municipalities the opportunity to undertake local land use planning in the 1920s; see Title 24, Chapter 117(opens in a new tab), which contains the municipal planning and development laws. Since then, the Legislature has passed extensive enabling legislation that allows communities to conduct a wide range of activities related to local land use planning and regulation.

Act 47

Most recently, the Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act (Acts 47 (opens in a new tab) and 81(opens in a new tab), 2023) amends Title 24, Act 250, and other laws related to land use planning and development regulations. Its purpose is to encourage increased housing development. For more information, please visit the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) website with resources that provide more information on the HOME Act(opens in a new tab).

Roles & Responsibilities

Municipal land use planning and administration involves various town officials. Most municipal officials have distinct roles that are delineated both by statute and by

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/16/2026

function. Within the local land use system, there are legislative, quasi-judicial, and administrative functions. Depending on the town's structure, the following players are typically involved in municipal land use administration: the administrative officer ("zoning administrator"), planning commission, appropriate municipal panel (development review board, or zoning board of adjustment and planning commission), and the legislative body. Some municipalities have a robust professional planning staff, if the demand requires it and the resources exist to support the positions. Other municipalities are supported entirely by the efforts of their part-time volunteer community. Regional planning commissions exist to support both.

Resources

We are excited to announce that the Zoning Administrator Handbook is updated as of May 2025! Partners at Regional Planning Commissions and Vermont state agencies are working to update the remaining resources and have moved them to the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies(opens in a new tab) webpage.

Disclaimer: This resource was created by Municipal Assistance Center attorneys but it is only intended to provide information and it does **NOT** constitute legal advice. Readers with specific legal questions are encouraged to contact an attorney. The use or downloading of this resource does **NOT** create an attorney-client relationship and will not be treated in a confidential manner.

If you have additional questions about this resource, please contact a MAC attorney by using the Ask a Question button to submit them.

Ask a Question(opens in a new tab)

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/16/2026