CHIP Project Readiness:

Sketch Plans

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When is a proposed housing development ready for discussion with a municipality about using CHIP as a financing tool? When the developer has a sketch plan. Sketch plans demonstrate a developer has committed time and resources to a project, which indicates a degree of seriousness about the project. This resource helps you understand what a sketch plan is, how it is used, and typical elements included on sketch plans in Vermont.

What is a sketch plan?

A sketch plan is an early drawing that shows the basic idea for a project. It is not a final design. Instead, it gives a simple picture of what might be built and how the pieces could fit together. A sketch plan usually shows things like where buildings might go, where people and cars would travel, and how the project connects to the land around it.

Sketch plans are used to share ideas, ask questions, and gather feedback before detailed work begins. This early step helps everyone spot possible problems, such as traffic concerns, natural resource impacts, or historic features, before the project becomes expensive to change.

Because a sketch plan is only a starting point, it does not include full engineering or final budgets. Any cost estimates at this stage are rough. They can be used with a high level CHIP increment calculator, but they should not be used for a final CHIP application.

Some Vermont communities require sketch plans as part of their development review process, while others do not. Sketch plans are not legally binding. They simply help start a good conversation.

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What information do Vermont municipalities usually request?

Most towns ask for **basic information**, such as:

- Tax map and parcel number
- Project or subdivision name
- Site address
- A short statement about:
    - How the project fits local plans and zoning
    - How the land is currently used
    - Any easements or zoning districts
    - Any existing or proposed restrictions on the land
    - The names and addresses of the property owner and nearby landowners

They also ask for **simple drawings** (with a scale and north arrow) that show:

- Where the site is located in relation to nearby roads and the nearest intersection
- Natural features on the land, such as forests, streams, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, large trees, wildlife habitat, or historic or archaeological resources (Much of this information can be found using the Vermont ANR Natural Resources Atlas.)
- Physical features, such as buildings, roads, driveways, parking areas, utilities, fences, sidewalks, and lighting
- Lot layout, basic dimensions, and easements
- Required setbacks from property lines, roads, and water features
- Approximate boundaries of the land to be developed and all contiguous land of the owner(s) of record.

Some towns also ask for a description of any off-site improvements that may be needed, such as traffic changes.

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By starting with a sketch plan, municipalities and developers can work together early in the CHIP process, share ideas openly, and build a clearer path forward. This early collaboration helps create projects that fit the community's goals, protect important resources, and support thoughtful, well-planned growth.

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