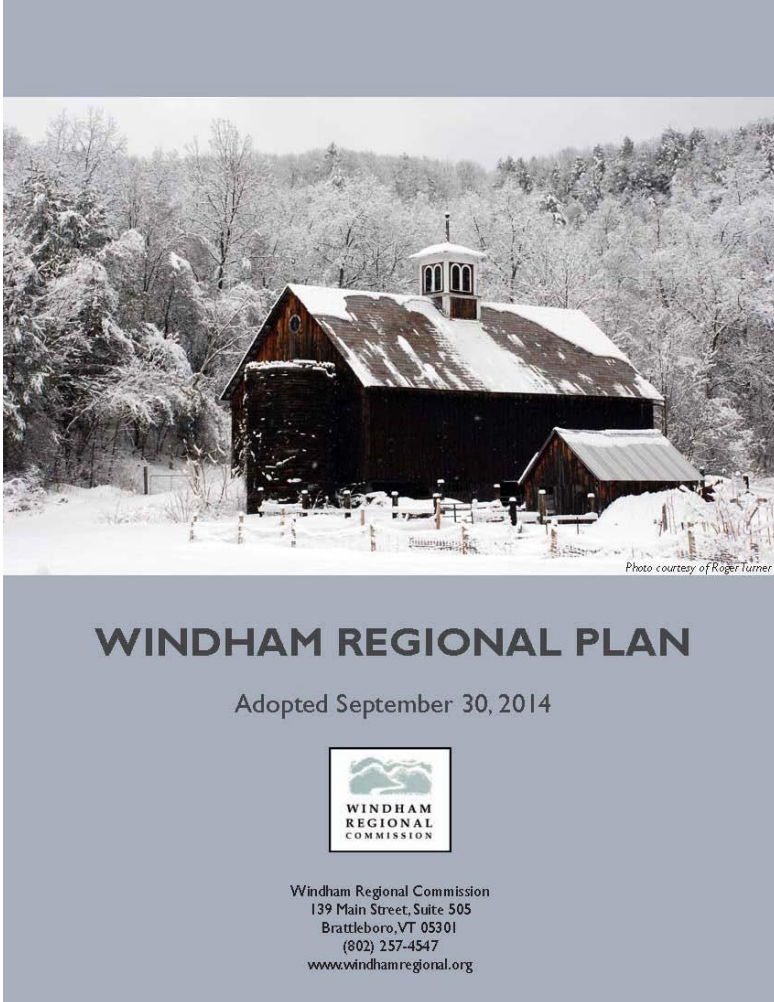




2026 Windham Regional Plan Update

WINDHAM REGIONAL COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

What is the Windham Regional Plan?



- **Last adopted by Commission on July 29, 2025**
- Provides policy guidance on growth and development in the region
- Resource for municipalities in their local planning efforts
- Establishes basis for WRC work program priorities
- Serves as a policy basis for WRC participation in reviewing Act 250 and Section 248 projects that are regionally significant
- Advisory only and not regulatory

2026 Regional Plan Update



- Act 181 passed in 2024 and makes major changes to Vermont's land use planning and regulatory requirements
- Required updates to Windham Regional Plan:
 - Consistent statewide future land use categories
 - Updated regional future land use map
 - Incorporation of regional and municipal housing targets
 - Consideration of environmental benefits and burdens

WRC Act 250 & Section 248 Review Process

- WRC has standing in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings just like municipalities
- WRC staff reviews applications and consults with Project Review Committee Chair on which ones to bring to Committee
- Project Review Committee determines whether a project is likely to have “**substantial regional impact**” in consultation with staff
- Project Review Committee bases its comments on whether project is consistent with Regional Plan and policies
- WRC does not support or oppose applications, only determines conformance with Regional Plan

Role of the Regional Plan in WRC engagement in Act 250 applications.

- The regional plan sets the standard by which the commission evaluates projects for Substantial Regional Impact.
- This determination influences how WRC engages in Act 250 applications.

Projects of **Substantial Regional Impact** are those that require regional resources, services, facilities, or that because of their size, location, or type will:

- Benefit the region as a whole;
- Be necessary to the well-being of the region;
- Be responsible for impacts to regional resources, services or facilities;
- Be located outside the region but affect it in some manner;
- Affect more than one town;
- Continue to cause ongoing concern to the region or its communities; or
- Have cumulative regional impacts as the result of multiple projects or ongoing development.

What Requires an Act 250 Permit?

- Commercial or industrial development on 1 acre of land or more (towns with no zoning & subdivision) or 10 acres of land (towns with zoning & subdivision)
 - Farming, logging, and forestry are exempt
- Construction of 10+ housing units within 5 miles and within 5 year period
- Subdivision creating 10+ lots within 5 miles and within 5 year period in towns with zoning & subdivision or 6+ lots in towns without zoning & subdivision
- Municipal or state projects on 10+ acres of land
- Construction of any type above the elevation of 2,500 feet
- Resource extraction
- Telecommunication facilities unless regulated by PUC

Regional Plan and Town Plan Compatibility



- Towns may request WRC review and approve their Town Plans
- WRC must find that a Town Plan is “compatible” with the Regional Plan
- Town Plan must not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the Regional Plan

Project Schedule

- Full Commission Review of First Draft of Regional Plan: April 28th
- Draft Plan Submitted to Land Use Review Board: June 5th
- LURB Review Comments Received: August 14th
- Public Hearings on First Draft: August 18th and September 21st
-  • **Full Commission Review of Second Draft: September 29th**
- Public Hearing on Second Draft: early November
- Full Commission Considers Adoption of Plan: November 10th
- Plan Submitted to Land Use Review Board for Approval: by November 25th
- **Act 181 Requires Plans to be Adopted by RPCs by December 31st, 2026**

Potential Implications if WRC Misses Adoption Deadline

- Loss of State Designation Program benefits for municipalities
- Loss of eligibility for Tier 1B or Tier 1A status for municipalities
- Loss of Regional Plan standing in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings
- Potential impact on core grant funding received from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Potential impact on WRC's ability to approve Town Plans, which provides municipalities eligibility for certain State grants

LURB Review Comments

- Additional information on existing child care services and address child care financing, infrastructure, and business assistance
 - Addressed in Chapter 10 – Educational, Cultural, and Recreational Resources
- Provide list of regional transportation priority projects
 - Addressed in Chapter 5 – Transportation
- Provide additional information on archaeological resources, why they are important, and related considerations
 - Addressed in Chapter 10 – Educational, Cultural, and Recreational Resources

LURB Review Comments

- Provide additional information scenic resources
 - Additional information added to Chapter 4 – Natural Resources. WRC has not identified regionally significant scenic roads, waterways and views
- Provide additional information on outstanding water resources
 - Additional information added to Chapter 4 – Natural Resources
- Analysis of environmental benefits and burdens within EJ census tracts as compared to region as a whole
 - Addressed in Appendix A
- Additional information on outreach efforts to disadvantaged populations
 - Addressed in Chapter 1 – Introduction

LURB Review Comments

- Future Land Use Map updates to several Village Center, Planned Growth Area, and Village Areas
 - Brattleboro: Some Planned Growth Areas changed to Transition and Infill
 - Putney: Landmark College included in Planned Growth Area; Village Area on Kimball Hill changed to PGA
 - Westminster: Village Areas changed to Rural General or Village Center
 - Rockingham: Modifications to PGA and Village Areas around Bellows Falls; portion changed to Transition and Infill
 - Grafton/Rockingham: Cambridgeport changed to Hamlet from Village Center
 - Winhall: Bondville Village Area changed to Village Center
 - Weston: Portion of Village Area changed to Village Center

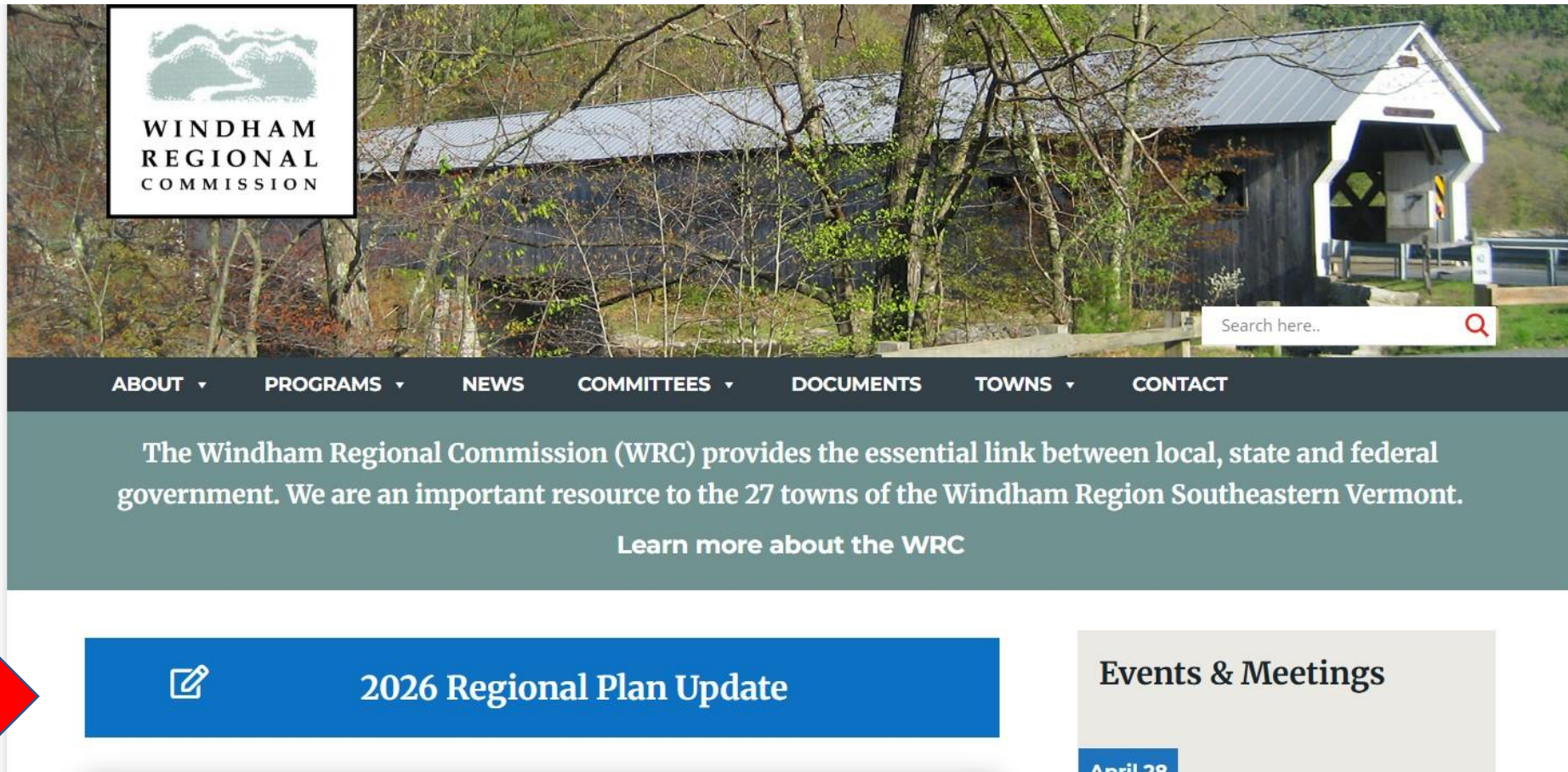
LURB Review Comments

- Mandatory policies and plan language unless documentation on consistency with statutory planning goals, compatibility with town plans, and clear basis for use within scope of regional planning authority
 - Policies in Chapter 3 (Land Use) and Chapter 8 (Housing) updated to use advisory language
 - A few additional revisions are needed in Chapter 3 (Land Use) to replace “must” with “should”
- Advisory Comments
 - Largely related to requesting additional information or clarification
 - Primarily in Land Use, Natural Resources, Community Utilities & Facilities, and Housing Chapters
 - Not all advisory comments addressed

Public Comments Summary

- Requested changes to Future Land Use Map from Grafton, Readsboro, and Winhall
 - Addressed in Regional Future Land Use map to the extent changes were consistent with statute and supported by Land Use Review Board
- Comments on energy storage facilities from Putney Planning Commission Chair
 - Addressed in Chapter 7 – Energy
- Comments on several policies from Brattleboro Planning Director
 - Addressed in Land Use, Housing, Community Utilities and Facilities, Transportation, and Natural Resources Chapters

2026 Regional Plan Updates



Next Steps

- Full Commission votes to proceed to a public hearing on the second draft of the Regional Plan update
- WRC staff will schedule public hearing for early November
- 30 day notice of public hearing will be sent to the Selectboard Chair for each town, state agencies, and the LURB
- Full Commission is scheduled to consider adoption of plan on November 10th