



**Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs  
Economic Development Legislation**

*March 3, 2017*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the committee's draft legislation on economic development. VLCT is committed to assuring that each of our unique cities and towns are vibrant attractive places where people want to live, work, play and raise families and can afford to do so. Our communities need to provide opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship and inclusion. We are working to provide municipal officials the tools they need to grow their local economies because that is essential to their survival.

The fact that you have passed Tax Increment Financing legislation is tremendous for those towns that have the capacity to undertake that complex effort and we will support the TIF legislation throughout the session. We do think it is necessary to think about how we might provide amenities such as wastewater and broadband in communities that are not served today as those are two infrastructure engines of growth in the twenty first century.

I will testify on Sections C. 6, D. 1 and 2, D. 3, D.5, D. 8, and J.5.

C. 6. We support the inclusion of buffer zones in the calculation of agricultural land for the purposes of the Use Value Program. If we are to improve the water quality of our lakes, it is imperative that buffer zones are maintained between agricultural fields and the banks of rivers and lakes. The benefits of such practices will accrue not only to the farmer but also to all users of the waters into which agricultural stormwater would discharge.

D. 1 and 2. We support the clarification under the New Town Center Development District designation that publicly owned structures or facilities devoted to community use may be part of the New Town Center Development District. We believe that D.2, which provides for an Act 250 umbrella permit to be sufficient if its conditions are to be followed and if the host municipality with a plan and bylaws in effect, has issued zoning permits for the proposed improvements.

We also support the notion that in towns and cities with professional capacity, municipal review of a project pursuant to zoning bylaws should be sufficient and Act 250 review on top of that is redundant.

D. 3 While we support the notion of an enterprise zone, we urge you to include a requirement that a proposed enterprise zone be consistent with the adopted municipal plan and bylaws.

D. 5 We believe that it would be useful to retain the definition of an “existing settlement” (10 V.S.A. 6001 (16) (A)). It was a hard fought battle to come up with a compromise definition that includes not only designated centers but also those existing thickly settled areas with municipal infrastructure – those areas that you would hope could accommodate growth, infill and redevelopment. While you may not want to restrict growth outside of existing settlements, you might want to encourage it inside existing settlements, particularly those with wastewater capacity.

D. 8 We urge you to delete this section. We have worked with the House Energy and Technology Committee to extend the sunset on Public Service Board jurisdiction over telecommunications siting to July 1, 2010, which will give all time to evaluate siting in light of the new telecommunications plan due in 2017 and once there is a meaningful body of experience with changes that were made to Section 248a just last year.

J.5 We believe it will be very helpful for the new Department of Economic Development to focus on economic development throughout the state, across sectors and among all levels of government. Although it would be a tall order, it would be helpful to create a direct collaboration with the Agency of Natural Resources to support the evaluation of that permitting system for efficiency in terms of permitting timeframes, effectiveness, coordination around water quality requirements in particular and reduced redundancy in reviews.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues.

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