

1 S.96

2 Introduced by Senator Ram

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Government; conservation and development; municipal and regional
6 planning; land use; State Planning Office

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a study
8 committee to propose an entity that would coordinate State, regional, and local
9 planning.

10 An act relating to the State Planning Office

11 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

12 Sec. 1. PURPOSE

13 The purpose of this act to is to develop a recommendation for reviving and
14 modernizing the State Planning Office to oversee and coordinate at every level
15 of government;

16 (1) the prioritization of areas of investment into Vermont's economy and
17 people, aligned with climate goals and environmental sustainability;

18 (2) community engagement, equity, and language access in government
19 operations;

20 (3) long-term emergency and disaster preparedness and recovery;

1 (4) standardized data collection and management; and

2 (5) intergovernmental communications and coordination.

3 Sec. 2. STATE PLANNING; STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT

4 (a) Creation. There is created the State Planning Office Study Committee
5 to develop a recommendation for an entity to oversee and coordinate planning
6 at every level of government.

7 (b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following
8 members:

9 (1) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from
10 the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

11 (2) three current members of the Senate, not all from the same political
12 party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

13 (3) the following members who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the
14 House:

15 (A) one member from the business community;

16 (B) one member representing persons with disabilities; and

17 (C) one youth member; and

18 (4) the following members appointed by the Committee on Committees:

19 (A) one member of an environmental organization;

20 (B) one member with land use planning experience;

21 (C) one member from a racial equity organization; and

1 (D) one member representing a regional development corporation.

2 (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study the need for a single
3 entity to oversee and coordinate planning across all levels of government,
4 including the following:

5 (1) whether the State Planning Office should be housed within the
6 Executive Branch or be an independent body;

7 (2) what the duties of the Office should be;

8 (3) how the Office will be funded;

9 (4) how to ensure equity while growing Vermont's economy in a
10 sustainable, climate-focused manner;

11 (5) whether any existing State programs should be housed within the
12 Office; and

13 (6) how to better standardize regional and local government
14 coordination, support, and communication.

15 (d) Assistance. For purposes of scheduling meetings and preparing
16 recommended legislation, the Committee shall have the assistance of the
17 Office of Legislative Operations and the Office of Legislative Counsel.

18 (e) Report.

19 (1) On or before December 15, 2021, the Committee shall report to the
20 General Assembly with its findings and a draft bill creating the Office
21 proposed.

1 (2) The Committee shall receive input on the State Planning Office from
2 at least the following entities:

3 (A) the Vermont Chief Performance Officer;

4 (B) the Agency of Commerce and Community Development;

5 (C) the Agency of Digital Services;

6 (D) the Department of Public Service;

7 (E) the Agency of Transportation;

8 (F) the Director of Racial Equity or designee;

9 (G) one or more representatives from the regional planning
10 commissions;

11 (H) the Vermont Planners Association; and

12 (I) the Director of the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.

13 (3) In studying the issues with creating the State Planning Office, the
14 Committee shall review:

15 (A) the State's existing environmental management plans, climate
16 change mitigation plans, economic development plans, and workforce
17 development plans;

18 (B) the regional planning system and how it may interact with the
19 State Planning Office;

20 (C) the municipal and regional planning grant system and evaluate
21 whether it should be administered by the Office;

1 (D) best practices for community engagement that the Office may
2 need to incorporate into its work;

3 (E) current data collection practices within the State agencies and
4 recommendations for developing common standards;

5 (F) the duties and responsibilities of the prior State Planning Office;
6 and

7 (G) models from other states.

8 (f) Meetings.

9 (1) The Office of Legislative Counsel shall call the first meeting of the
10 Committee to occur on or before July 1, 2021.

11 (2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the
12 first meeting.

13 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

14 (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on December 31, 2021.

15 (5) The Committee shall meet at least five times and take testimony
16 from a variety of stakeholders, including from those with experience in state
17 land use planning, regional planning, municipal planning, economic planning,
18 or strategic planning.

19 (6) The Committee may investigate models used in other states to
20 determine if any would be applicable to Vermont.

1 (g) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during
2 adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee
3 shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses
4 pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than five meetings. These payments
5 shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

6 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

7 This act shall take effect on passage.