



**Regional Planning & Act 181 Overview**  
**Senate Committee on Economic**  
**Development, Housing and General Affairs**

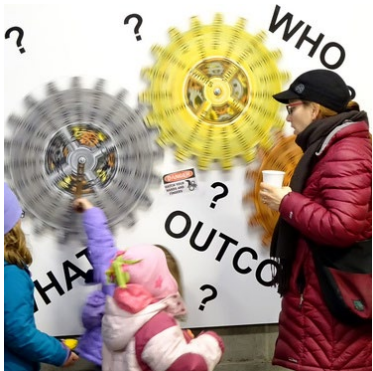
Charlie Baker & Catherine Dimitruk, VAPDA  
February 4, 2025



# Outline

1. Introduction to RPCs
2. Accountability
3. Funding
4. RPC roles in Act 181 processes





**Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) provide staff support and technical assistance to towns and the State.**



In the absence of county government, RPCs play a critical role in connecting communities with federal and state programs and dollars as well as a forum for towns to discuss and provide services jointly.

RPCs are political subdivisions of the State of Vermont, uniquely positioned to **provide broad services to every Vermont municipality.**



**TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING**



**LAND USE  
PLANNING**



**AND TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE IN  
ALL AREAS**



**WATER  
QUALITY**



**HAZARD MITIGATION &  
PREPAREDNESS**



**HOUSING**



**BROWNFIELD  
ASSESSMENT &  
REMEDIAATION**

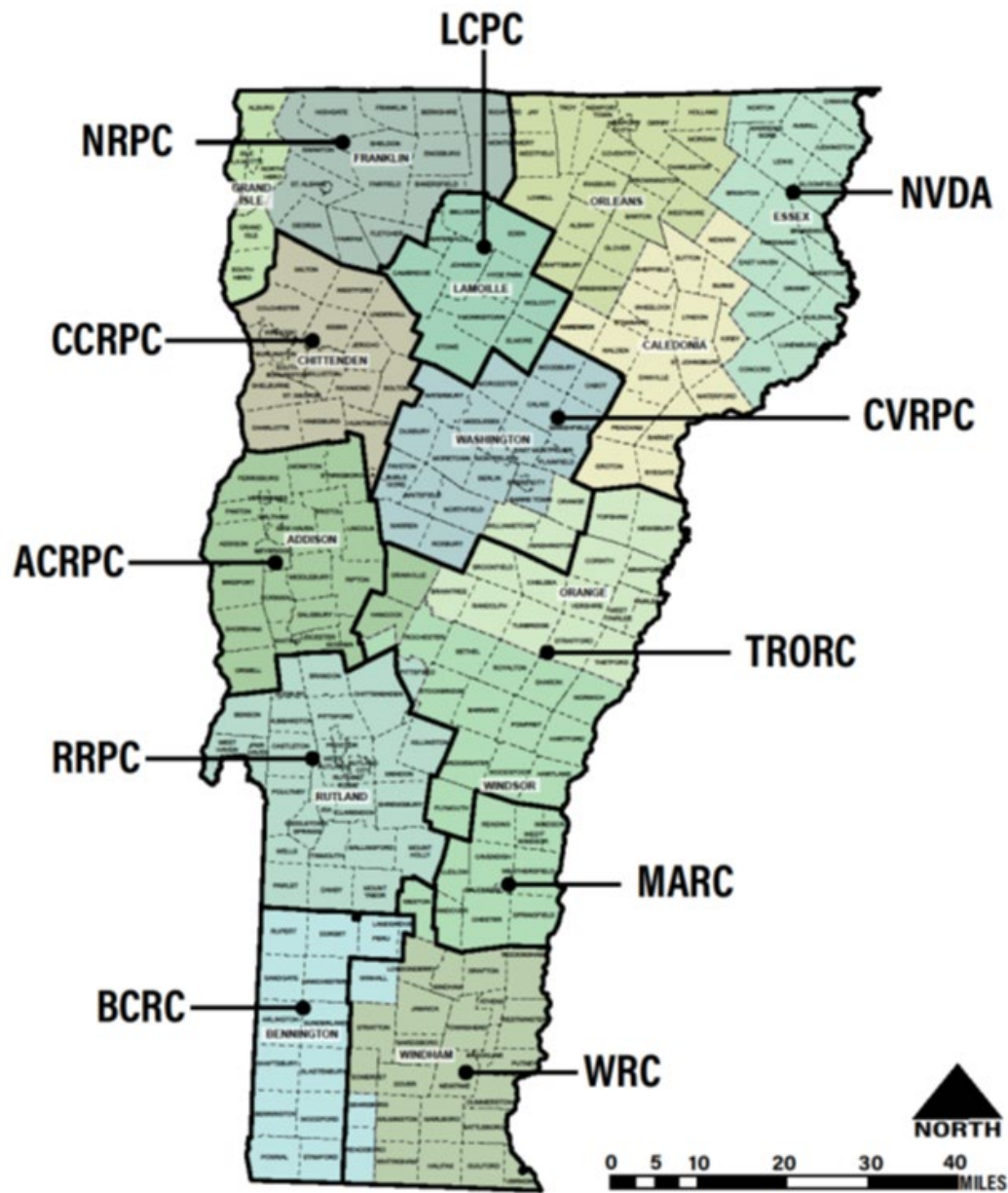


**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**



**ENERGY  
PLANNING**





**STATE OF VERMONT  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS**

# Quick Facts / FY24 Highlights



Vermont has **11** RPCs and **135** staff serving all 282 Vermont's towns (237), cities (10), villages (35), plus gores.



In FY24, **113** communities received grant writing assistance from their RPCs, reducing the burden on limited town staff & providing funding for locally needed projects.



Visit [VAPDA.org](http://VAPDA.org) for more information about each RPC in VT



# Governance



**Towns appoint representatives to each RPC Board. RPCs work for member towns.**



**RPC Boards approve budgets and set policy and program priorities, including regional plans.**



**Executive Committees of each RPC board are responsible for the oversight of the Executive Director.**



**Each RPC has committees to assist the RPC Board. Typical are Transportation, Permit/Regulatory, Regional Plan, Clean Water, Brownfield, etc.**

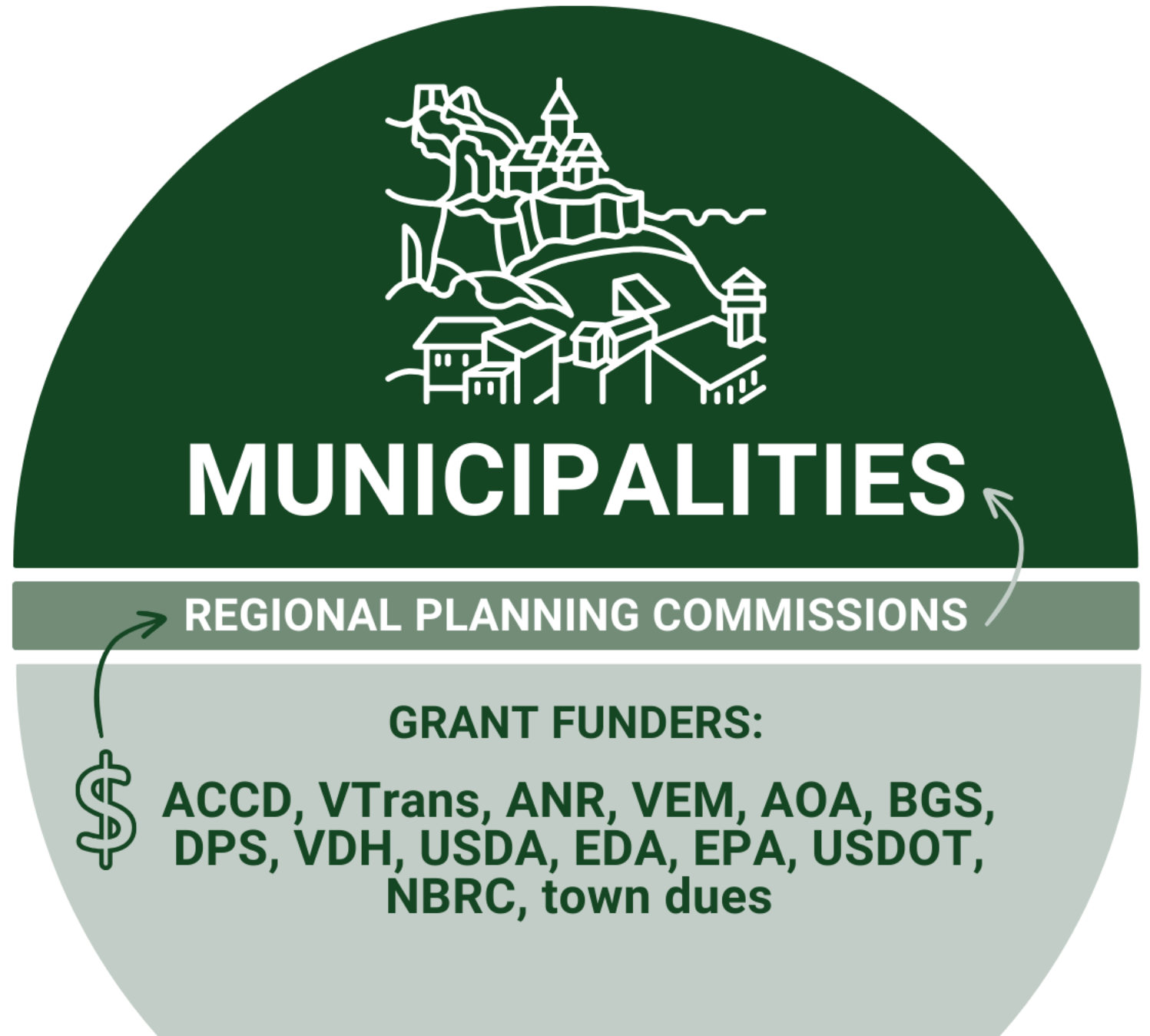


# Funding



RPCs have no general tax revenue. All revenue comes from state and federal grants with limited town dues.

RPCs operate as public sector consulting staff for member towns and state agencies – every hour of work gets billed to specific performance agreements.





# Economic and Community Development



**126** towns received economic development assistance from their RPCs in FY24, strengthening local economies.

Strong local economies arise from comprehensive land-use planning and united development efforts.

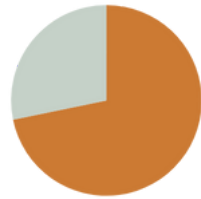
RPCs help build town infrastructure and guide development patterns to provide the foundation and public support for private economic development.



Working with the small rural Town of Albany and a motivated group of local citizens, NVDA assisted the Town to develop their first ever Town Plan and create a Designated Village Center. Then, utilizing VT Tax Credits and NVDA EPA Assessment funds, a long vacant and blighted former gas station was transformed into the new Albany General Store – now a vibrant community hub.



# Planning and Zoning



In FY24, RPCs provided **188** towns with planning and bylaw assistance.

Maintaining clear and up-to-date plans and bylaws creates a strong, guiding vision for communities. This clear vision ensures smooth permitting at state and local levels and supports housing and job growth.



240 municipalities have municipal plans  
207 municipalities have zoning bylaws  
37 municipalities only have flood bylaws  
17 municipalities have no bylaws



# Housing



In FY24, RPCs provided **94** towns with assistance to increase housing.

Some of these efforts were to update zoning to support increased densities in our centers.

Others were to provide guidance to property owners on ADUs and other infill housing.



Rutland RPC produced a Housing Resource Guide combining 50 resources from 15 organizations into a single, accessible document. It helps users with project management, funding, permit compliance, and more by providing toolkits, data, and online resources.



# Housing

To produce more housing, more state policy changes are needed:



1. Making more funding/financing available to towns and/or developers for infrastructure and housing.
2. The risk from permit appeals needs to be reduced, especially in Tier 1B Act 250 exemption areas.
3. Review other state permits beyond Act 250 (DEC, SHPO, etc.) to see how they should be modified to support housing & job growth.



# 2024 Housing/Act 250 bill (Act 181) Implementation

1. Interim exemptions are in place. See map.
2. RPCs developed regional plan future land use guidance 12/2024 and provided training with NRB and DHCD.
3. It's critical to align town, regional, and state plans and permitting to support housing and job growth.
4. RPCs are on schedule for all 11 regional plans to be updated by December 2026:



2025 Summer - NVDA  
2025 Fall - CVRPC, NRPC  
2026 Spring - ACRPC, BCRC, RRPC, WRC,  
CCRPC, LCPC  
2026 Summer - MARC  
2026 Fall - TRORC

# Four Planning Systems Come Together

## **ACT 250 PERMITTING**

Jurisdiction is converted to place based jurisdiction. The Land Use Review Board (LURB) will review and approve all regional plans, including new future land use maps, new state designations, and new requests for Tier 1A and Tier 1B status.

## **STATE DESIGNATION PROGRAMS**

are restructured. Current and new state-designated areas are integrated into regional future land use maps. The new Community Investment Board approves incentives and benefits to designated areas.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING**

Act 181 directs all of the state's 11 Regional Planning Commissions to create new regional plans with consistent future land use maps.

## **MUNICIPAL PLANNING**

Municipalities are working with the RPCs to implement these changes.

**VT'S LAND USE  
PLANNING &  
REGULATORY  
FRAMEWORK**



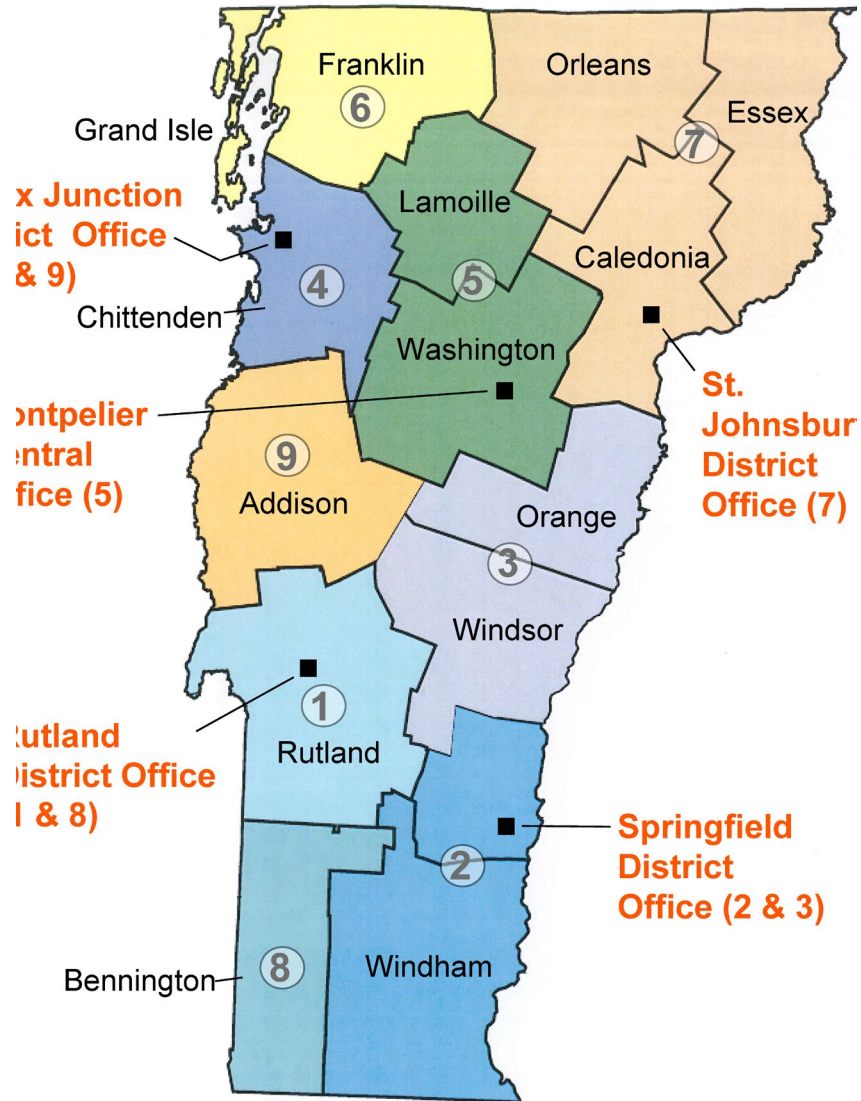
# Here and Now

## *Wait, what is Act 250?*

Vermont's land use and development law, enacted in 1970 at a time when Vermont was undergoing significant housing development pressure.

## *(10VSA Chapter 151)*

- Public, quasi-judicial process
- 9 District Environmental Commissions
- Permit required for In municipalities with zoning >10 acres, 10 housing units, 10 lot subdivision, or resource extraction activities
- Development or subdivision must meet 10 criteria that address concerns for the environment, quality of life, and Vermont's unique character





# New Regional Plan Requirements

## Local and Regional Planning Goals (24 V.S.A. 4302)

- Accommodate a substantial majority of housing needed to reach housing targets in areas planned for growth
- To equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens

## Regional Planning

- Equitable engagement which provides opportunities for meaningful participation

## Regional Plan Elements (24 V.S.A. 4382)

- Changes to Natural Resource Element
- Future Land Use Element
- 10 consistent land use categories

# Housing Targets

- Regional Housing Targets were released January 2025
- Each RPC will break these down into Municipal Housing Targets
- Municipal Housing Targets need to be incorporated into Municipal Plans going forward

**Total additional home targets, 2025-2030 and 2025-2050**

Region	2025-2030		2025-2050	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Addison County	1,296	1,978	4,103	8,088
Bennington County	1,453	2,188	4,483	8,836
Central Vermont	2,540	3,864	8,045	15,856
Chittenden County	7,301	10,537	15,783	47,407
Lamoille County	1,387	1,959	3,359	6,621
Mount Ascutney (Southwest)	1,207	1,781	3,750	7,391
Northeastern Vermont	2,836	4,193	9,014	17,768
Northwestern Vermont	2,144	3,249	6,755	13,315
Rutland Regional	2,707	4,065	8,100	15,965
Two Rivers Ottauquechee	2,424	3,640	7,692	15,162
Windham Regional	2,571	3,730	7,933	15,635
<b>Vermont</b>	<b>27,867</b>	<b>41,185</b>	<b>79,018</b>	<b>172,044</b>

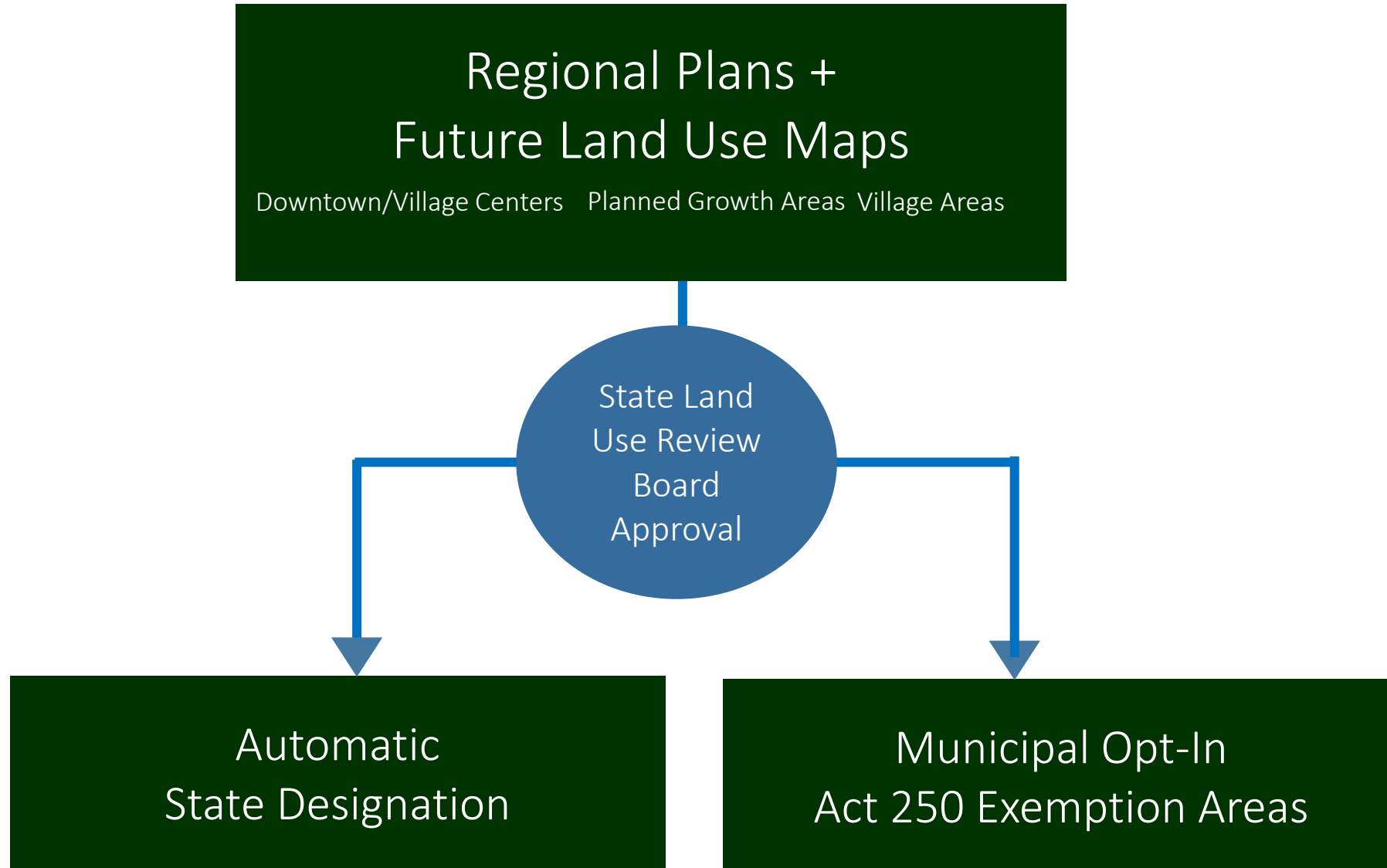
2025-2030: "Lower" assume VT year-round households increase at the 2016-2019 average annual rate of 1.02%. "Higher" assume the 2019-2022 rate of 1.77%.

2025-2050: "Lower" based on population projection. "Higher" assume VT year-round households increase at the long-term annual average rate of 1.4%.

All targets include additional projected year-round households plus homes needed to normalize vacancy rates, eliminate homelessness, replace destroyed homes, and provide a margin to address Vermont's 15% seasonal home rate.











# Regional Plan Approvals



# The New Framework

## Land Use Plans / Designation & Investment / Act 250 Regulation

								
<b>Regional Plan Future Land Use Categories</b>	Downtown Center	Village Center	Planned Growth Area	Village Area	Transition (optional)	Enterprise	Resource-Based Recreation	Rural Hamlet General Ag/Forest Conservation
<b>State Designation / Community Investment</b>	Center		Neighborhood					
<b>Act 250</b>	Tier 2: Status Quo			Tier 1a: Full Exemption – ‘consistent with’ FLU		Tier 1b: Partial Exemption		Tier 3

**Tier 3 subject to rulemaking; not derived from regional maps.**

This table represents land use, designation, and Act 250 jurisdiction categories, not land area acreage or percentage of land area.

# Three Tiers for Act 250 Jurisdiction

*Derived from regional plan future land use categories, except Tier 3*

## Tier 1

### Tier 1A

*Full Act 250  
Exemption*

- Municipal application
- LURB review
- Guidelines by January 1, 2026
- Specific requirements

### Tier 1B

*50 units or fewer of  
housing Exempt*

- Methodology by December 31, 2024
- Municipal requested
- RPC mapped
- LURB review
- Specific requirements

## Tier 2

*Act 250 Status  
Quo*

- All areas not 1A, 1B, or Tier 3
- Road rule July 1, 2026

## Tier 3

*Expanded  
jurisdiction to be  
established by  
Board rules  
February 1,  
2026*

- Not based on regional maps
- Road rule July 1, 2026







# Consistent Future Land Use Areas

## Act 181 Section 49

- ✓ Downtown/Village Centers
- ✓ Planned Growth Areas
- ✓ Village Areas
- ✓ Transition/Infill Area (optional)
- ✓ Resource-Based Recreation Areas
- ✓ Enterprise
- ✓ Hamlet
- ✓ Rural – General
- ✓ Rural - Agricultural and Forestry
- ✓ Rural - Conservation



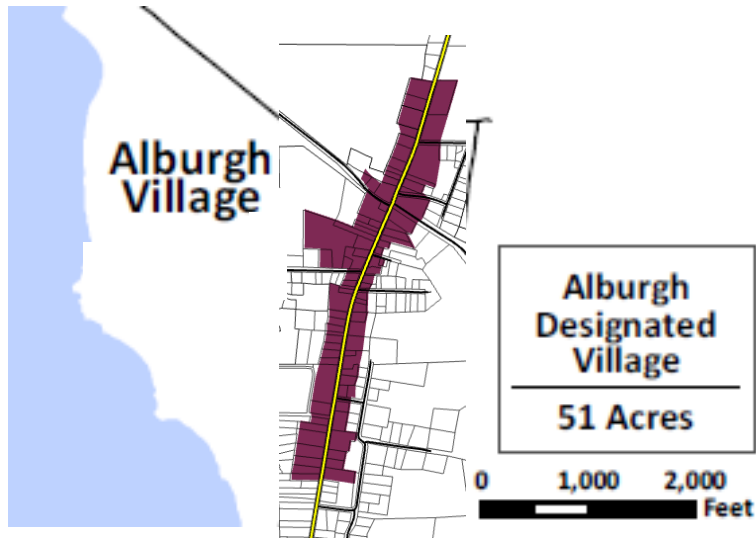
## Downtown Centers and Village Centers

Concentrated areas of growth. Village centers have no requirements for municipal plans, zoning, subdivision or infrastructure.

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## Planned Growth Areas

Requirements: zoning, subdivision, public water and/or wastewater, and Complete Streets.



## Village Areas

Requirements: zoning, subdivision, and public water or sewer, or suitable soils.

Eligible for Tier 1B with municipal 'opt in' and adequate staff.

# New State Designations

## CENTERS:

Downtown Centers and Village Centers

Step 1: Beginner, Starter Village

Step 2: Intermediate, Growing Village

Step 3: Advances, Downtowns, Main Street Program

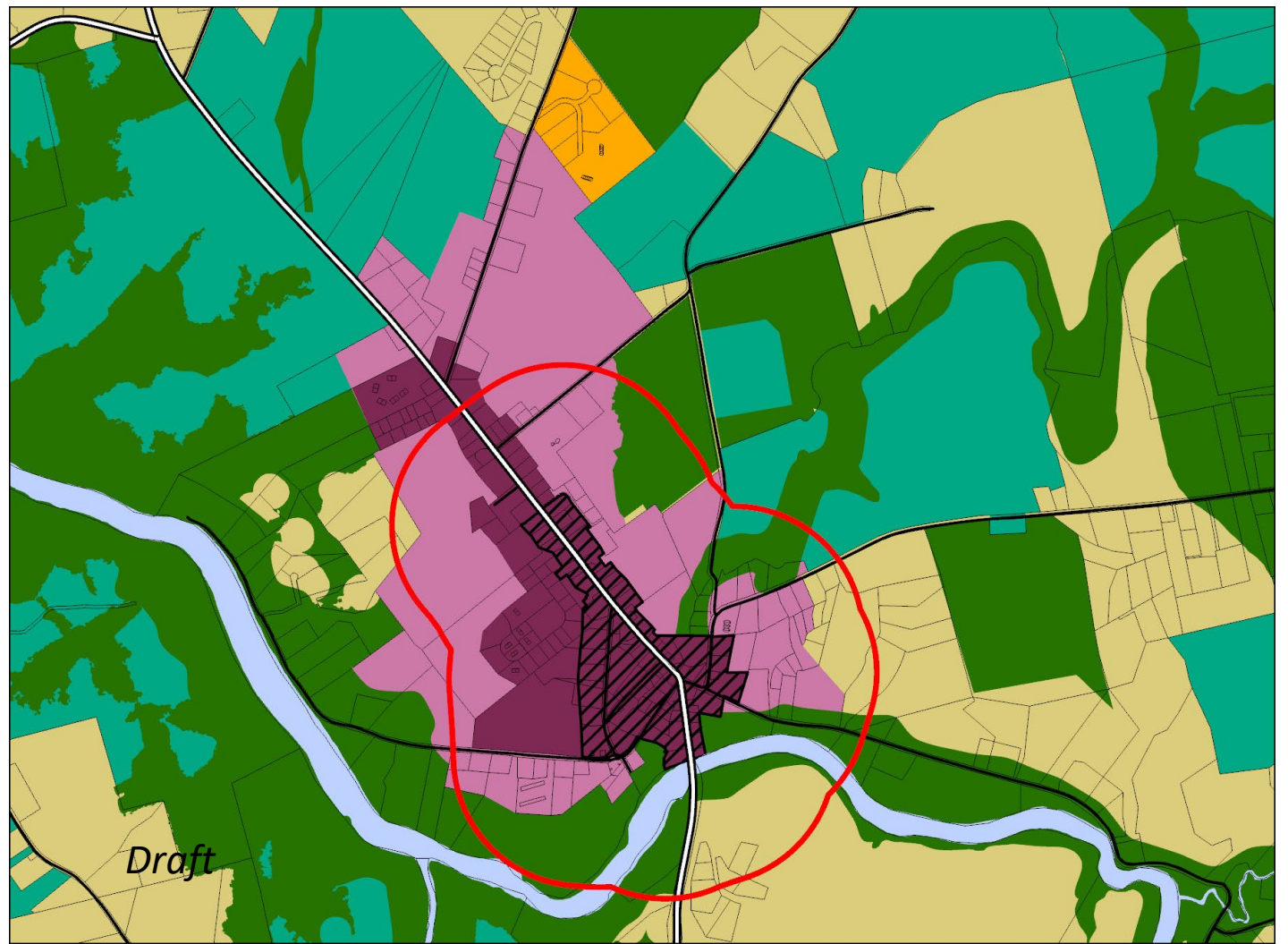
## NEIGHBORHOODS:

Planned Growth Areas and Village Areas



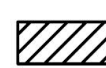


# Future Land Use Scenario



Draft

## Future Land Use Areas



Existing Village Center Designation



Interim Act 250 Exemption Area

Village Center

Planned Growth Area

Transitional Area

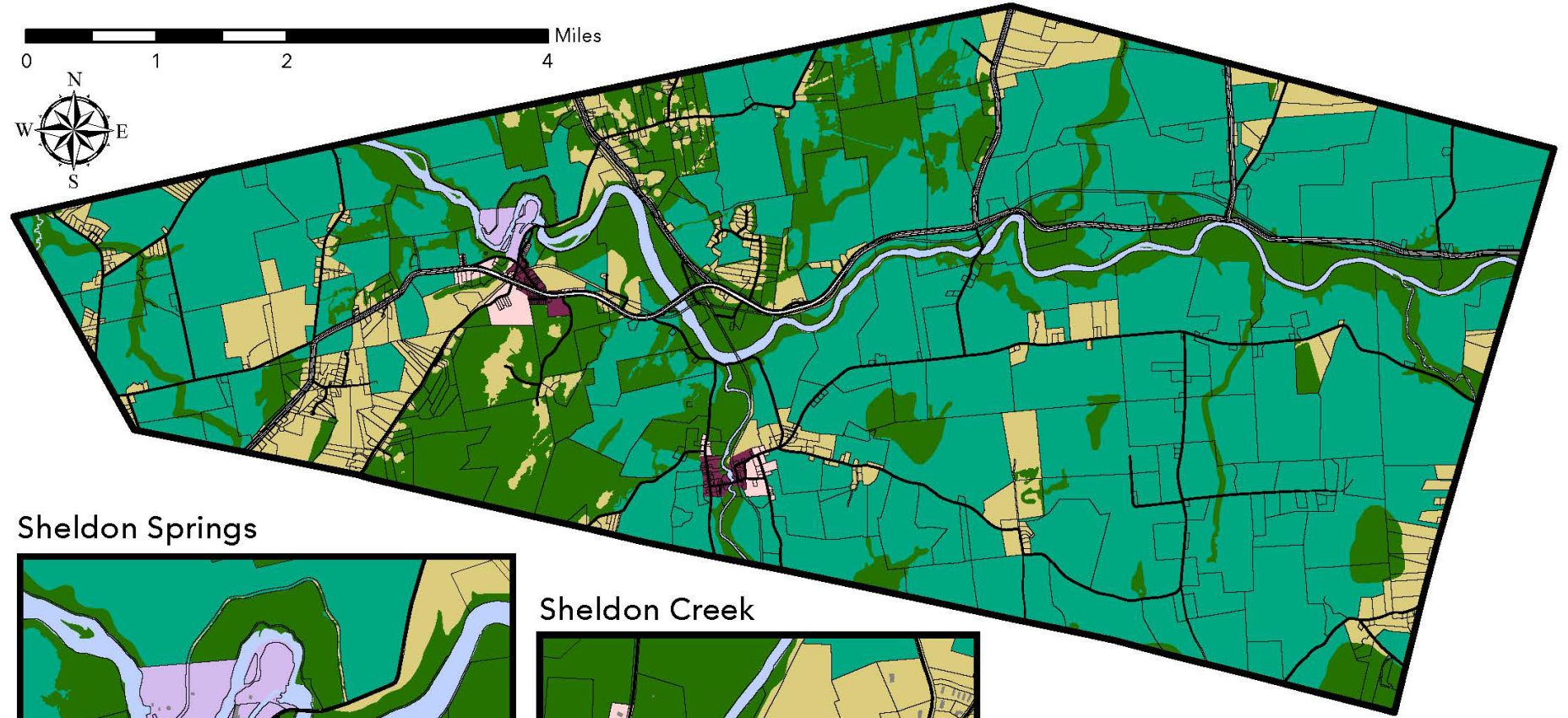
Rural Conservation

Rural Agriculture and Forestry

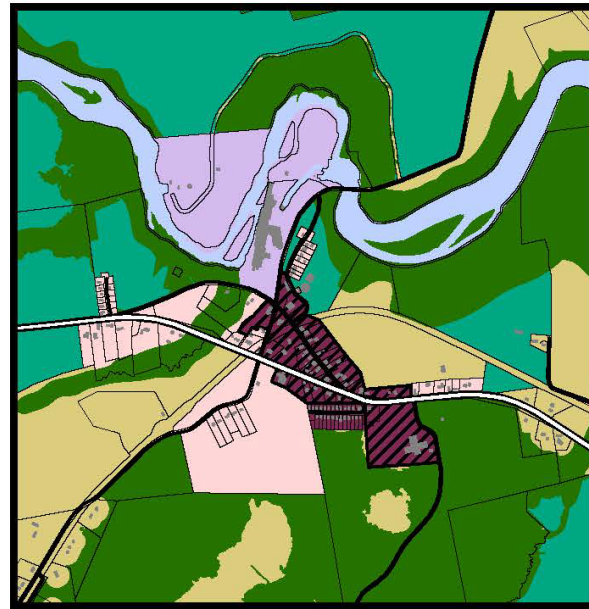
Rural General

# NRPC Draft Future Land Use - Sheldon

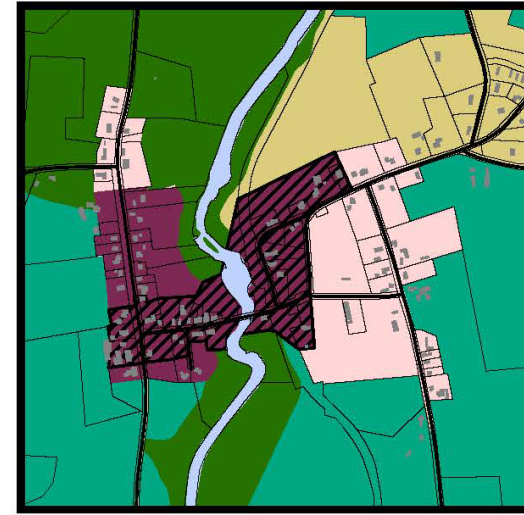
## Future Land Use Scenario



### Sheldon Springs



### Sheldon Creek



 Existing Village Center Designation

### Future Land Use Areas

-  Village Center
-  Village Area
-  Enterprise Area
-  Rural Conservation
-  Rural Agriculture and Forestry
-  Rural General



Vermont Coordinate System  
Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.  
For planning purposes only.

Prepared by:  
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www.nrpcvt.com  
January 2025.

Location:  
z:/nrpc-gis/projects/nrpc/regionalplan/  
regionalplan2025/futurelanduse2025.aprx

# Northwest Regional Planning Commission Regional Plan Update Timeline

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*Level of participation*



	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<b><i>Stakeholder</i></b>	Public	Public	Municipal Officials	Municipal Officials	Municipal Officials
<b><i>Activities</i></b>	Flyer, Website, and Press	Open Houses, Comment Box	Meet with Planning Commissions to review housing targets & FLU maps. (Selectboards as requested)		Selectboard make decision on Act 250 exemptions.
<b><i>Timing</i></b>	Winter 2025	Spring 2025	Winter-Spring 2025		Summer 2025

# Northwest RPC Engagement Plan

# General RPC Regional Plan Schedule

**2025 Summer – NVDA**

**2025 Fall - CVRPC, NRPC**

**2026 Spring - ACRPC, BCRC, RRPC, WRC, CCRPC, LCPC**

**2026 Summer – MARC**

**2026 Fall - TRORC**



**Thank you!**

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For more information, visit: **VAPDA.org**