

Report of Committee of Conference

S.127

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The Committee of Conference, to which were referred the disagreeing votes of the two Houses upon Senate Bill, entitled:

S.127. An act relating to housing and housing development.

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the House recede from its proposal of amendment and that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Vermont Rental Housing Improvement Program * * *

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 699 is amended to read:

§ 699. VERMONT RENTAL HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

(a) Creation of Program.

* * *

(5)(A) The Department may cooperate with and subgrant funds to State agencies and governmental subdivisions and public and private organizations in order to carry out the purposes of this ~~subsection~~ section.

(B) Solely with regards to actions undertaken pursuant to this subdivision (5), entities carrying out the provisions of this section, including grantees, subgrantees, and contractors of the State, shall be exempt from the provisions of 8 V.S.A. chapter 73 (licensed lenders, mortgage brokers, mortgage loan originators, sales finance companies, and loan solicitation companies).

* * *

(d) Program requirements applicable to grants and forgivable loans.

(1)(A) A grant or loan shall not exceed:

~~(i) \$70,000.00 per unit, for rehabilitation or creation of an eligible rental housing unit meeting the applicable building accessibility requirements under the Vermont Access Rules; or~~

~~(ii) \$50,000.00 per unit, for rehabilitation or creation of any other eligible rental housing unit. Up to an additional \$20,000.00 per unit may be made available for specific elements that collectively bring the unit to the visitable standard outlined in the rules adopted by the Vermont Access Board.~~

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(e) Program requirements applicable to grants and five-year forgivable loans. For a grant or five-year forgivable loan awarded through the Program, the following requirements apply for a minimum period of five years:

(1) A landlord shall coordinate with nonprofit housing partners and local ~~coordinated-entry~~ homelessness service organizations approved by the Department to identify potential tenants.

(2)(A) Except as provided in subdivision (2)(B) of this subsection ~~subdivision (e)(2)~~, a landlord shall lease the unit to a household that is:

(i) exiting homelessness, including any individual under 25 years of age who secures housing through a master lease held by a youth service provider on behalf of individuals under 25 years of age;

(ii) actively working with an immigrant or refugee resettlement program; ~~or~~

(iii) composed of at least one individual with a disability who receives or is eligible approved to receive Medicaid-funded home- and community-based home- and community-based services or Social Security Disability Insurance;

(iv) displaced due to a natural disaster; or

(v) with approval from the Department in writing, an organization that will hold a master lease that explicitly states the unit will be used in service of the populations described in this subsection (e).

* * *

(4)(A) A landlord may convert a grant to a forgivable loan upon approval of the Department and the housing organization that approved the grant.

(B) A landlord who converts a grant to a forgivable loan shall receive a ~~10-percent~~ prorated credit for loan forgiveness for each year in which the landlord participates in the Program.

(f) Requirements applicable to 10-year forgivable loans. For a 10-year forgivable loan awarded through the Program, the following requirements apply for a minimum period of 10 years:

(1) ~~A landlord shall coordinate with nonprofit housing partners and local coordinated-entry organizations to identify potential tenants~~ The total cost of rent for the unit, including utilities not covered by rent payments, shall not exceed the applicable fair market rent established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, except that a landlord may accept a housing voucher that exceeds fair market rent, if available.

~~(2)(A) Except as provided in subdivision (2)(B) of this subsection (f), a landlord shall lease the unit to a household that is:~~

~~(i) exiting homelessness, including any individual under 25 years of age who secures housing through a master lease held by a youth service provider on behalf of individuals under 25 years of age;~~

~~(ii) actively working with an immigrant or refugee resettlement program; or~~

~~(iii) composed of at least one individual with a disability who is eligible to receive Medicaid-funded home and community-based services.~~

~~(B) If, upon petition of the landlord, the Department or the housing organization that issued the grant determines that a household under subdivision (2)(A) of this subsection (f) is not available to lease the unit, then the landlord shall lease the unit:~~

~~(i) to a household with an income equal to or less than 80 percent of area median income; or~~

~~(ii) if such a household is unavailable, to another household with the approval of the Department or housing organization.~~

~~(3)(A) A landlord shall accept any housing vouchers that are available to pay all, or a portion of, the tenant's rent and utilities.~~

~~(B) If no housing voucher or federal or State subsidy is available, the cost of rent for the unit, including utilities not covered by rent payments, shall not exceed the applicable fair market rent established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.~~

~~(4)(3) The Department shall forgive 10 percent of the a prorated amount of a forgivable loan for each year a landlord participates in the loan program.~~

(g) Minimum funding for grants and five-year forgivable loans.

(1) Annually, the Department shall establish a minimum allocation of funding set aside to be used for five-year grants or forgivable loans to serve eligible households pursuant to subsection (e) of this section. Remaining funds may be used for either five-year grants or forgivable loans or 10-year forgivable loans pursuant to subsection (f) of this section. The set aside shall be a minimum of 30 percent of funds disbursed annually.

(2) The Department shall consult with the Agency of Human Services to evaluate factors in establishing the amount of the set aside, including:

(A) the availability of housing vouchers;

(B) the current need for housing for eligible households;

(C) the ability and desire of landlords to house eligible households;

(D) the support services available for landlords; and

(E) the prior uptake and success rates for participating landlords.

(3) The Department shall coordinate with the local Coordinated Entry Lead Agencies and Homeownership Centers to direct referrals for those individuals or families prioritized to be housed pursuant to the five-year grants or forgivable loans.

(4) Funds from the set aside not utilized after nine months shall become available for 10-year forgivable loans.

(5) The Department shall annually publish the amount of the set aside on its website.

* * *

(i) Creation of the Vermont Rental Housing Improvement Program Fund. Funds repaid or returned to the Department from forgivable loans or grants funded by the Program shall return to the Vermont Rental Housing Improvement Fund to be used for Program expenditures and administrative costs at the discretion of the Department.

(j) Annual report. Annually, the Department shall submit a report to the House Committees on Human Services and on General and Housing and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs regarding the following:

(1) separately, the number of units funded and the number of units rehabilitated through grants, through a five-year forgivable loan, and through a 10-year forgivable loan;

(2) for grants and five-year forgivable loans, for the first year after the expiration of the lease requirements outlined in subdivision (e)(2)(A) of this section, whether the unit is still occupied by a tenant who meets the qualifications of that subdivision;

(3) for each program, for the first year after the expiration of the applicable lease requirements outlined in this section, the amount of rent charged by the landlord and how that rent compares to fair market rent established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and

(4) the rate of turnover for tenants housed utilizing grants or five-year forgivable loans and 10-year forgivable loans separately.

* * * MHIR * * *

Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. § 700 is added to read:

§ 700. VERMONT MANUFACTURED HOME IMPROVEMENT AND
REPAIR PROGRAM

(a) There is created within the Department of Housing and Community Development the Manufactured Home Improvement and Repair Program. The Department shall design and implement the Program to award funding to statewide or regional nonprofit housing organizations, or both, to provide financial assistance or awards to manufactured homeowners and manufactured home park owners to improve existing homes, incentivize new slab placement for prospective homeowners, and incentivize park improvements for infill of more homes.

(b) The following projects are eligible for funding through the Program:

(1) The Department may award up to \$20,000.00 to owners of manufactured housing communities to complete small-scale capital needs to help infill vacant lots with homes, including disposal of abandoned homes, lot grading and preparation, the siting and upgrading of electrical boxes, enhancing E-911 safety issues, transporting homes out of flood zones, and improving individual septic systems. Costs awarded under this subdivision may also cover legal fees and marketing to help make it easier for home-seekers to find vacant lots around the State.

(2) The Department may award funding to manufactured homeowners for which the home is their primary residence to address habitability and accessibility issues to bring the home into compliance with safe living conditions.

(3) The Department may award up to \$15,000.00 per grant to a homeowner to pay for a foundation or federal Department of Housing and Urban Development-approved slab, site preparation, skirting, tie-downs, and utility connections on vacant lots within a manufactured home community.

(c) The Department may adopt rules, policies, and guidelines to aid in enacting the Program.

* * * Vermont Infrastructure Sustainability Fund * * *

Sec. 3. 24 V.S.A. chapter 119, subchapter 6 is amended to read:

Subchapter 6. Special Funds

* * *

§ 4686. VERMONT INFRASTRUCTURE SUSTAINABILITY FUND

(a) Creation. There is created the Vermont Infrastructure Sustainability Fund within the Vermont Bond Bank.

(b) Purpose. The purpose of the Fund is to provide capital to extend and increase capacity of water and sewer service and other public infrastructure in municipalities where lack of extension or capacity is a barrier to housing development.

(c) Administration. The Vermont Bond Bank may administer the Fund in coordination with and support from other State agencies, government component parts, and quasi-governmental agencies.

(d) Program parameters.

(1) The Vermont Bond Bank, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, shall develop program guidelines to effectively implement the Fund.

(2) The program shall provide low-interest loans or purchase bonds from municipalities to expand infrastructure capacity. Eligible activities include:

(A) preliminary engineering and planning;

(B) engineering design and bid specifications;

(C) construction for municipal water and wastewater systems;

(D) transportation investments, including those required by municipal regulation, the municipality's official map, designation requirements, or other planning or engineering identifying complete streets and transportation and transit related improvements, including improvements to existing streets; and

(E) other eligible activities as determined by the guidelines produced by the Vermont Bond Bank in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development.

(e) Application requirements. Eligible project applications shall demonstrate:

(1) the project will create reserve capacity necessary for new housing unit development;

(2) the project has a direct link to housing unit production; and

(3) the municipality has a commitment to own and operate the project throughout its useful life.

(f) Application criteria. In addition to any criteria developed in the program guidelines, project applications shall be evaluated using the following criteria:

(1) whether there is a direct connection to proposed or in-progress housing development with demonstrable progress toward regional housing targets;

(2) whether the project is an expansion of an existing system;

(3) the proximity to a designated area;

(4) the project readiness and estimated time until the need for financing;
(5) the demonstration of financing for project completion or completion of a project component; and

(6) the relative need of the community per the housing targets established by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

(g) Award terms. The Vermont Bond Bank, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, shall establish award terms that may include:

(1) the maximum loan or bond amount;

(2) the maximum term of the loan or bond amount;

(3) the time by which amortization shall commence;

(4) the maximum interest rate;

(5) whether the loan is eligible for forgiveness and to what percentage or amount;

(6) the necessary security for the loan or bond; and

(7) any additional covenants required to further secure the loan or bond.

(h) Revolving fund.

(1) Any funds repaid or returned from the Infrastructure Sustainability Fund shall be deposited into the Fund and used to continue the program established in this section.

(2) The Bank may use the funds in conjunction with other Bank programs to accomplish the policy objectives outlined in this section.

* * * VHFA Rental Housing Revolving Loan Program * * *

Sec. 4. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 47, Sec. 38 is amended to read:

Sec. 38. RENTAL HOUSING REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM

(a) Creation; administration. The Vermont Housing Finance Agency shall design and implement a Rental Housing Revolving Loan Program and shall create and administer a revolving loan fund to provide subsidized loans for rental housing developments that serve middle-income households.

(b) Loans; eligibility; criteria.

* * *

(7) The Agency shall use one or more legal mechanisms to ensure that:

(A) a subsidized unit remains affordable to a household earning the applicable percent of area median income for the longer of:

(i) seven years; or

(ii) full repayment of the loan plus three years; and

(B) during the affordability period determined pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (7), the annual increase in rent for a subsidized unit does not exceed three percent or an amount otherwise authorized by the Agency.

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* * * Housing and Residential Services Planning Committee * * *

Sec. 5. STATE HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES PLANNING

COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the State Housing and Residential Services Planning Committee to generate a State plan to develop housing for individuals with developmental disabilities.

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

(1) one current member of the House of Representatives, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(2) one current member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(3) the Secretary of Human Services or designee;

(4) the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living or designee;

(5) the Commissioner of Housing and Community Development or designee;

(6) the State Treasurer or designee;

(7) one member, appointed by the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative;

(8) the Executive Director of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council;

(9) one member, appointed by Green Mountain Self-Advocates;

(10) one member, appointed by Vermont Care Partners;

(11) one member, appointed by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board; and

(12) one member, appointed by the Associated General Contractors of Vermont.

(c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall create an actionable plan to develop housing for individuals with developmental disabilities that reflects the diversity of needs expressed by those individuals and their families, including individuals with high-support needs who require 24-hour care and those with specific communication needs. The plan shall include:

(1) a schedule for the creation of at least 600 additional units of service-supported housing;

(2) the number and description of the support needs of individuals with developmental disabilities anticipated to be served annually;

(3) anticipated funding needs; and

(4) recommendations for changes in State laws or policies that are obstacles to the development of housing needed by individuals with Medicaid-funded home- and community-based services.

(d) Assistance.

(1) The Committee shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Housing and Community Development.

(2) Upon request of the Committee, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall provide an analysis of the current state of housing in Vermont for individuals with development disabilities and, to the extent available, an analysis of the level of community support needed for these individuals.

(e) Report. On or before November 15, 2025, the Committee shall submit a written report to the House Committees on General and Housing and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Health and Welfare with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Human Services shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before July 15, 2025.

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

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

(4) The Committee shall cease to exist on November 30, 2025.

(g)(1) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A.

§ 23 for not more than six meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

(2) Members of the Committee who are not otherwise compensated for their time shall be entitled to per diem compensation as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department of Housing and Community Development for that purpose.

(h) Intent to appropriate. Notwithstanding subdivision (g)(2) of this section, per diems for the cost of attending meetings shall only be available in the event an appropriation is made in fiscal year 2026 from the General Fund to the Department of Housing and Community Development for that purpose.

* * * Tax Department Housing Data Access * * *

Sec. 6. 32 V.S.A. § 5404 is amended to read:

§ 5404. DETERMINATION OF EDUCATION PROPERTY TAX GRAND
LIST

* * *

(b) Annually, on or before August 15, the clerk of a municipality, or the supervisor of an unorganized town or gore, shall transmit to the Director in an electronic or other format as prescribed by the Director: education and municipal grand list data, including exemption information and grand list abstracts; tax rates; an extract of the assessor database also referred to as a Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system or Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal database; and the total amount of taxes assessed in the town or unorganized town or gore. The data transmitted shall identify each parcel by a parcel identification number assigned under a numbering system prescribed by the Director. Municipalities may continue to use existing numbering systems in addition to, but not in substitution for, the parcel identification system prescribed by the Director. If changes or additions to the grand list are made by the listers or other officials authorized to do so after such abstract has been so transmitted, such clerks shall forthwith certify the same to the Director.

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* * * Landlord Certificate * * *

Sec. 7. REPEAL; ACT 181 PROSPECTIVE LANDLORD CERTIFICATE
CHANGES

2024 Acts and Resolves No. 181, Secs. 98 (landlord certificate amendments) and 114(5) (effective date of landlord certificate amendments) are repealed.

Sec. 8. 32 V.S.A. § 6069 is amended to read:

§ 6069. LANDLORD CERTIFICATE

* * *

(b) The owner of each rental property shall, on or before January 31 of each year, furnish a certificate of rent to the Department of Taxes.

(c) A certificate under this section shall be in a form prescribed by the Commissioner and shall include the following:

(1) the name of the ~~each~~ renter;

(2) the address and ~~any property tax parcel identification number of the homestead, the information required under subsection (f) of this section, the School Property Account Number of the rental property;~~

(3) the name of the owner or landlord of the rental property;

(4) the phone number, email address, and mailing address of the owner or landlord of the rental property, as available;

(5) the type or types of rental units on the rental property;

(6) the number of rental units on the rental property;

(7) the number of ADA-accessible units on the rental property; and

(8) any additional information that the Commissioner determines is appropriate.

* * *

~~(f) Annually on or before October 31, the Department shall prepare and make available to a member of the public upon request a database in the form of a sortable spreadsheet that contains the following information for each rental unit for which the Department received a certificate pursuant to this section:~~

~~(1) name of owner or landlord;~~

~~(2) mailing address of landlord;~~

~~(3) location of rental unit;~~

~~(4) type of rental unit;~~

~~(5) number of units in building; and~~

~~(6) School Property Account Number.~~ Annually on or before December 15, the Department shall submit a report on the aggregated data collected under this section to the House Committee on General and Housing and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

* * * Land Bank Report * * *

Sec. 9. DHCD LAND BANK REPORT

(a) On or before November 1, 2026, the Department of Housing and Community Development shall issue a report to the House Committee on General and Housing and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs outlining a legal framework for implementation of a State land bank. The report shall include proposed legislative language specific to:

- (1) the creation and ongoing administration of a statewide land bank;
- (2) the authorization of regional or municipal land banks; and
- (3) the identification of funding proposals to support the establishment and sustainability of each separate model.

(b) The report shall include an analysis on which option, the creation of a statewide land bank or the authorization of regional or municipal land banks, best serves the interest of Vermont communities, including rural communities.

(c) On or before January 15, 2026, the Department of Housing and Community Development shall provide a written update to the House Committee on General and Housing and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on progress made, including a preliminary assessment of the information required in the final report.

* * * Housing and Public Accommodations Protections * * *

Sec. 10. 9 V.S.A. § 4456a is amended to read:

§ 4456a. RESIDENTIAL RENTAL APPLICATION FEES; PROHIBITED

(a) A landlord or a landlord's agent shall not charge an application fee to any individual in order to apply to enter into a rental agreement for a residential dwelling unit. This section subsection shall not be construed to prohibit a person from charging a fee to a person in order to apply to rent commercial or nonresidential property.

(b)(1) In order to conduct a background or credit check, a landlord shall accept any of the following:

- (A) an original or a copy of any unexpired form of government-issued identification;
- (B) an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number; or
- (C) a Social Security number.

(2) A landlord or a landlord's agent shall not require a Social Security number for the completion of a residential rental application or refuse to accept an application due to the lack of a Social Security number.

Sec. 11. 9 V.S.A. § 4501 is amended to read:

§ 4501. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(12)(A) “Harass” means to engage in unwelcome conduct that detracts from, undermines, or interferes with a person’s:

(i) use of a place of public accommodation or any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, or privileges of a place of public accommodation because of the person’s race, creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or

(ii) terms, conditions, privileges, or protections in the sale or rental of a dwelling or other real estate, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with a dwelling or other real estate, because of the person’s race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability, or because the person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because the person is a recipient of public assistance, or because the person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

* * *

Sec. 12. 9 V.S.A. § 4502 is amended to read:

§ 4502. PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

(a) An owner or operator of a place of public accommodation or an agent or employee of such owner or operator shall not, because of the race, creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person, refuse, withhold from, or deny to that person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of the place of public accommodation.

* * *

Sec. 13. 9 V.S.A. § 4503 is amended to read:

§ 4503. UNFAIR HOUSING PRACTICES

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person:

(1) To refuse to sell or rent, or refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling or other real estate to any person because of the race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a

dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(2) To discriminate against, or to harass, any person in the terms, conditions, privileges, and protections of the sale or rental of a dwelling or other real estate, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with a dwelling or other real estate, because of the race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(3) To make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling or other real estate that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(4) To represent to any person because of the race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking, that any dwelling or other real estate is not available for inspection, sale, or rental when the dwelling or real estate is in fact so available.

* * *

(6) To discriminate against any person in the making or purchasing of loans or providing other financial assistance for real-estate-related transactions or in the selling, brokering, or appraising of residential real property, because of the race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(7) To engage in blockbusting practices, for profit, which may include inducing or attempting to induce a person to sell or rent a dwelling by representations regarding the entry into the neighborhood of a person or

persons of a particular race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(8) To deny any person access to or membership or participation in any multiple listing service, real estate brokers' organization, or other service, organization, or facility relating to the business of selling or renting dwellings, or to discriminate against any person in the terms or conditions of such access, membership, or participation, on account of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or disability of a person, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

* * *

(12) To discriminate in land use decisions or in the permitting of housing because of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, disability, the presence of one or more minor children, income, or because of the receipt of public assistance, or because a person is a victim of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking, except as otherwise provided by law.

* * *

(d) If required by federal law, the verification of immigration status or differential treatment on the basis of citizenship or immigration status shall not constitute a violation of subsection (a) of this section with respect to the sale and rental of dwellings.

(e) For purposes of subdivision (a)(6) of this section, it shall not constitute unlawful discrimination for a lender to consider a credit applicant's immigration status to the extent such status has bearing on the lender's rights and remedies regarding loan repayment and further provided such consideration is consistent with any applicable federal law or regulation.

* * * LURB Study * * *

Sec. 14. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 181, Sec. 11a is amended to read:

Sec. 11a. ACT 250 APPEALS STUDY

(a) On or before ~~January 15, 2026~~ November 15, 2025, the Land Use Review Board shall issue a report evaluating whether to transfer appeals of permit decisions and jurisdictional opinions issued pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 to the Land Use Review Board or whether they should remain at

the Environmental Division of the Superior Court. The Board shall convene a stakeholder group that at a minimum shall be composed of a representative of environmental interests, attorneys that practice environmental and development law in Vermont, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, the Land Access and Opportunity Board, the Office of Racial Equity, the Vermont Association of Realtors, a representative of ~~non-profit~~ nonprofit housing development interests, a representative of for-profit housing development interests, a representative of commercial development interests, an engineer with experience in development, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Agency of Natural Resources in preparing the report. The Board shall provide notice of the stakeholder meetings on its website and each meeting shall provide time for public comment.

(b) The report shall at minimum recommend:

(1) whether to allow consolidation of appeals at the Board, or with the Environmental Division of the Superior Court, and how, including what resources the Board would need, if transferred to the Board, appeals of permit decisions issued under 24 V.S.A. chapter 117 and the Agency of Natural Resources can be consolidated with Act 250 appeals;

(2) how to prioritize and expedite the adjudication of appeals related to housing projects, including the use of hearing officers to expedite appeals and the setting of timelines for processing of housing appeals;

(3) procedural rules to govern the Board's administration of Act 250 and the adjudication of appeals of Act 250 decisions. These rules shall include procedures to create a firewall and eliminate any potential for conflicts with the Board managing appeals and issuing permit decisions and jurisdictional opinions; and

(4) other actions the Board should take to promote the efficient and effective adjudication of appeals, including any procedural improvements to the Act 250 permitting process and jurisdictional opinion appeals.

(c) The report shall be submitted to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committee on Environment ~~and Energy~~.

* * * Brownfields * * *

Sec. 15. 10 V.S.A. § 6604c is amended to read:

§ 6604c. MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SOILS

(a) Management of development soils. Notwithstanding any other requirements of this chapter to the contrary, development soils may be

managed at a location permitted pursuant to an insignificant waste event approval authorization issued pursuant to the Solid Waste Management Rules that contains, at a minimum, the following:

(1) the development soils are generated from a hazardous materials site managed pursuant to a corrective action plan or a soil management plan approved by the Secretary;

(2) the development soils have been tested for arsenic, lead, and polyaromatic hydrocarbons pursuant to a monitoring plan approved by the Secretary that ensures that the soils do not leach above groundwater enforcement standards;

(3) the location where the soils are managed is appropriate for the amount and type of material being managed;

(4) the soils are capped in a manner approved by the Secretary;

(5) any activity that may disturb the development soils at the permitted location shall be conducted pursuant to a soil management plan approved by the Secretary; and

(6) the permittee files a record notice of where the soils are managed in the land records.

* * *

Sec. 16. REPORT ON THE STATUS OF MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SOILS

(a) As part of the biennial report to the House Committee on Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy under 10 V.S.A. § 6604(c), the Secretary of Natural Resources shall report on the status of the management of development soils in the State under 10 V.S.A. § 6604c. The report shall include:

(1) the number of insignificant waste event approval authorizations issued by the Secretary in the previous two years for the management of development soils;

(2) the number of certified categorical solid waste facilities operating in the State for the management of development soils;

(3) a summary of how the majority of development soils in the State are being managed;

(4) an estimate of the cost to manage development soils, depending on management method; and

(5) any additional information the Secretary determines relevant to the management of development soils in the State.

(b) As used in this section, “development soil” has the same meaning as in 10 V.S.A. § 6602(39).

Sec. 17. 10 V.S.A. § 6641 is amended to read:

§ 6641. BROWNFIELD PROPERTY CLEANUP PROGRAM; CREATION;
POWERS

(a) There is created the Brownfield Property Cleanup Program to enable certain interested parties to request the assistance of the Secretary to review and oversee work plans for investigating, abating, removing, remediating, and monitoring a property in exchange for protection from certain liabilities under section 6615 of this title. The Program shall be administered by the Secretary who shall:

* * *

(c) When conducting any review required by this subchapter, the Secretary shall prioritize the review of remediation at a site that contains housing or that is planned for the construction or rehabilitation of single-family or multi-family housing.

Sec. 18. BROWNFIELDS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT; REPORT

On or before November 1, 2025, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall report to the House Committees on Environment and on General and Housing and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Natural Resources and Energy with proposals to make the Program established pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 159, subchapter 3 (brownfields reuse and liability limitation) substantially more efficient. At a minimum, the report shall include both of the following:

(1) A survey of stakeholders in the brownfields program to identify areas that present challenges to the redevelopment of contaminated properties, with a focus on redevelopment for housing. The Secretary shall provide recommendations to resolve these challenges.

(2) An analysis of strengths and weaknesses of implementing a licensed site professional program within the State. The Secretary shall make a recommendation on whether such a program should be implemented. If the Secretary recommends implementation, the report shall include any changes to statute or budget needed to implement this program.

Sec. 19. FISCAL YEAR 2026 ENVIRONMENTAL CONTINGENCY FUND
DISBURSEMENT FOR BROWNFIELDS

In fiscal year 2026, the Secretary of Natural Resources is authorized to disburse up to \$2,000,000.00 from the Environmental Contingency Fund for the assessment, planning, and cleanup of brownfields sites.

* * * Tax Increment Financing * * *

Sec. 20. 24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 7 is added to read:

Subchapter 7. Community and Housing Infrastructure Program

§ 1906. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Affordable housing” has the same meaning as in section § 4303 of this title.

(2) “Affordable housing development” means a housing development of which at least 15 percent of the units are affordable housing units. Affordable units shall be subject to covenants or restrictions that preserve their affordability until all indebtedness for the housing infrastructure project of which the housing development is part has been retired.

(3) “Brownfield” means a property on which the presence or potential presence of a hazardous material, pollutant, or contaminant complicates the expansion, development, redevelopment, or reuse of the property.

(4) “Committed” means pledged and appropriated for the purpose of the current and future payment of financing and related costs.

(5) “Developer” means the person undertaking to construct a housing development.

(6) “Financing” means debt, including principal, interest, and any fees or charges directly related to that debt, incurred by a sponsor, or other instruments or borrowing used by a sponsor, to pay for a housing infrastructure project and, in the case of a sponsor that is a municipality, authorized by the municipality pursuant to section 1910a of this subchapter.

(7) “Housing development” means the construction, rehabilitation, or renovation of any building on a housing development site approved under this subchapter.

(8) “Housing development site” means the parcel or parcels encompassing a housing development as authorized by a municipality pursuant to section 1908 of this subchapter.

(9) “Housing infrastructure agreement” means a legally binding agreement to finance and develop a housing infrastructure project and to construct a housing development among a municipality, a developer, and, if applicable, a third-party sponsor.

(10) “Housing infrastructure project” means one or more improvements authorized by a municipality pursuant to section 1908 of this subchapter.

(11) “Improvements” means:

(A) the installation, construction, or reconstruction of infrastructure that will serve a public good and fulfill the purpose stated in section 1907 of this subchapter; and

(B) the funding of debt service interest payments for a period of up to four years, beginning on the date on which the debt is first incurred.

(12) “Legislative body” means the mayor and alderboard, the city council, the selectboard, and the president and trustees of an incorporated village, as appropriate.

(13) “Lifetime education property tax increment retention” means the total education property tax increment to be retained for a housing infrastructure project across its lifetime.

(14) “Moderate-income housing” means housing for which the total annual cost of renting or ownership, as applicable, does not exceed 30 percent of the gross annual income of a household at 150 percent of the highest of the following:

(A) the county median income, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development;

(B) the standard metropolitan statistical area median income if the municipality is located in such an area, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; or

(C) the statewide median income, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(15) “Moderate-income housing development” means a housing development of which at least 25 percent of the units are moderate-income housing units. Moderate-income units shall be subject to covenants or restrictions that preserve their affordability until all indebtedness for the housing infrastructure project of which the housing development is part has been retired.

(16) “Municipality” means a city, town, or incorporated village.

(17) “Original taxable value” means the total valuation as determined in accordance with 32 V.S.A. chapter 129 of all taxable real property located within a housing development site as of its creation date, provided that no parcel within the housing development site shall be divided or bisected.

(18) “Related costs” means expenses incurred and paid by a municipality, exclusive of the actual cost of constructing and financing improvements, that are directly related to the creation and implementation of the municipality’s housing infrastructure project, including reimbursement of sums previously advanced by the municipality for those purposes. Related costs may include direct municipal expenses such as departmental or personnel

costs related to creating or administering the housing infrastructure project to the extent they are paid from the tax increment realized from municipal and not education taxes and using only that portion of the municipal increment above the percentage required for servicing debt as determined in accordance with section 1910c of this subchapter.

(19) “Sponsor” means the person undertaking to finance a housing infrastructure project. Any of a municipality, a developer, or an independent agency that meets State lending standards may serve as a sponsor for a housing infrastructure project.

§ 1907. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program is to encourage the development of new primary residences for households of low and moderate income across both rural and urban areas of all Vermont counties that would not be created but for the infrastructure improvements funded by the Program.

§ 1908. CREATION OF HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SITE

(a) The legislative body of a municipality may create within its jurisdiction a housing infrastructure project, which shall consist of improvements that stimulate the development of housing, and a housing development site, which shall consist of the parcel or parcels on which a housing development is installed or constructed.

(b) To create a housing infrastructure project and housing development site, a municipality, in coordination with stakeholders, shall:

(1) develop a housing development plan, including:

(A) a description of the proposed housing infrastructure project, the proposed housing development, and the proposed housing development site;

(B) identification of a sponsor;

(C) a tax increment financing plan meeting the standards of subsection 1910(h) of this subchapter;

(D) a pro forma projection of expected costs of the proposed housing infrastructure project;

(E) a projection of the tax increment to be generated by the proposed housing development;

(F) a development schedule that includes a list, a cost estimate, and a schedule for the proposed housing infrastructure project and the proposed housing development; and

(G) a determination that the proposed housing development furthers the purpose of section 1907 of this subchapter;

(2) develop a plan describing the housing development site by its boundaries and the properties therein, entitled “Proposed Housing Development Site (municipal name), Vermont”;

(3) hold one or more public hearings, after public notice, on the proposed housing infrastructure project, including the plans developed pursuant to this subsection; and

(4) adopt by act of the legislative body of the municipality the plan developed under subdivision (2) of this subsection, which shall be recorded with the municipal clerk and lister or assessor.

(c) The creation of a housing development site shall occur at 12:01 a.m. on April 1 of the calendar year in which the Vermont Economic Progress Council approves the use of tax increment financing for the housing infrastructure project pursuant to section 1910 of this subchapter.

§ 1909. HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE AGREEMENT

(a) The housing infrastructure agreement for a housing infrastructure project shall:

(1) clearly identify the sponsor for the housing infrastructure project;

(2) clearly identify the developer and the housing development for the housing development site;

(3) obligate the tax increments retained pursuant to section 1910c of this subchapter for not more than the financing and related costs for the housing infrastructure project;

(4) provide that any housing unit within the housing development be offered exclusively as a primary residence until all indebtedness for the housing infrastructure project of which the housing development is part has been retired, provided that this condition shall be satisfied by biennially providing a landlord certificate or homestead declaration; and

(5) provide for performance assurances to reasonably secure the obligations of all parties under the housing infrastructure agreement.

(b) A municipality shall provide notice of the terms of the housing infrastructure agreement for the municipality’s housing infrastructure project to the legal voters of the municipality and shall provide the same information as set forth in subsection 1910a(e) of this subchapter.

§ 1910. HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT APPLICATION;

VERMONT ECONOMIC PROGRESS COUNCIL

(a) Application. A municipality, upon approval of its legislative body, may apply to the Vermont Economic Progress Council to use tax increment financing for a housing infrastructure project.

(b) But-for test. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall review each application other than those for which the housing development is an affordable housing development to determine whether the infrastructure improvements proposed to serve the housing development site and the proposed housing development would not have occurred as proposed in the application or would have occurred in a significantly different and less desirable manner than as proposed in the application but for the proposed utilization of the incremental tax revenues.

(c) Process requirements. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall review a municipality's housing infrastructure project application to determine whether the municipality has:

(1) created a housing infrastructure project and housing development site pursuant to section 1908 of this subchapter;

(2) executed a housing infrastructure agreement for the housing infrastructure project that adheres to the standards of section 1909 of this subchapter with a developer and, if the municipality is not financing the housing infrastructure project itself, a sponsor; and

(3) approved or pledged to use incremental municipal tax revenues for the housing infrastructure project in the proportion provided for municipal tax revenues in section 1910c of this subchapter.

(d) Project criteria. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall review a municipality's housing infrastructure project application to determine whether:

(1) at least 60 percent of the floor area of the projected housing development is dedicated to housing; or

(2) the projected housing development meaningfully addresses the purpose of section 1907 of this subchapter.

(e) Affordability criterion. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall review a municipality's housing infrastructure project application to determine whether the projected housing development is an affordable housing development or a moderate-income housing development for purposes of the increased education property tax increment retention percentage under section 1910c of this subchapter.

(f) Tax increment financing plan. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall approve a municipality's tax increment financing plan prior to a sponsor's incurrence of debt for the housing infrastructure project, including, if the sponsor is a municipality, prior to a public vote to pledge the credit of the municipality under section 1910a of this subchapter. The tax increment financing plan shall include:

- (1) a statement of costs and sources of revenue;
- (2) estimates of assessed values within the housing development site;
- (3) the portion of those assessed values to be applied to the housing infrastructure project;
- (4) the resulting tax increments in each year of the financial plan and the lifetime education property tax increment retention;
- (5) the amount of bonded indebtedness or other financing to be incurred;
- (6) other sources of financing and anticipated revenues; and
- (7) the duration of the financial plan.

(g) Approval. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall approve or deny an application submitted pursuant to this section not later than 90 days following the site visit conducted as part of the application's review. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall only approve tax increment financing for applications:

- (1) that meet the process requirements, either of the project criteria of this section, and, for an application for which the housing development is not an affordable housing development, the but-for test;
- (2) for which the Council has approved the tax increment financing plan; and
- (3) that are submitted on or before December 31, 2035.

(h) Limit. The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall not annually approve more than \$200,000,000.00 in aggregate lifetime education property tax increment retention.

§ 1910a. INDEBTEDNESS

(a) A municipality approved for tax increment financing under section 1910 of this subchapter may incur indebtedness against revenues of the housing development site at any time during a period of up to five years following the creation of the housing development site. The Vermont Economic Progress Council may extend this debt incursion period by up to three years.

(b) Notwithstanding any provision of any municipal charter, each instance of borrowing by a municipality to finance or otherwise pay for a housing infrastructure project shall occur only after the legal voters of the municipality, by a majority vote of all voters present and voting on the question at a special or annual municipal meeting duly warned for the purpose, authorize the legislative body to pledge the credit of the municipality, borrow, or otherwise secure the debt for the specific purposes so warned.

(c) Any indebtedness incurred under this section may be retired over any period authorized by the legislative body of the municipality.

(d) The housing development site shall continue until the date and hour the indebtedness is retired or, if no debt is incurred, the debt incursion period ends.

(e) A municipal legislative body shall provide information to the public prior to the public vote required under subsection (b) of this section. This information shall include the amount and types of debt and related costs to be incurred, including principal, interest, and fees; terms of the debt; the housing infrastructure project to be financed; the housing development projected to occur because of the housing infrastructure project; and notice to the voters that if the tax increment received by the municipality from any property tax source is insufficient to pay the principal and interest on the debt in any year, the municipality shall remain liable for the full payment of the principal and interest for the term of the indebtedness. If interfund loans within the municipality are used, the information must also include documentation of the terms and conditions of the loan.

(f) If interfund loans within the municipality are used as the method of financing, no interest shall be charged.

(g) The use of a bond anticipation note shall not be considered a first incurrence of debt pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

§ 1910b. ORIGINAL TAXABLE VALUE; TAX INCREMENT

(a) As of the date the housing development site is created, the lister or assessor for the municipality shall certify the original taxable value and shall certify to the legislative body in each year thereafter during the life of the housing development site the amount by which the total valuation as determined in accordance with 32 V.S.A. chapter 129 of all taxable real property within the housing development site has increased or decreased relative to the original taxable value.

(b) Annually throughout the life of the housing development site, the lister or assessor shall include not more than the original taxable value of the real property in the assessed valuation upon which the treasurer computes the rates of all taxes levied by the municipality and every other taxing district in which the housing development site is situated, but the treasurer shall extend all rates

so determined against the entire assessed valuation of real property for that year.

(c) Annually throughout the life of the housing development site, a municipality shall remit not less than the aggregate education property tax due on the original taxable value to the Education Fund.

(d) Annually throughout the life of the housing development site, the municipality shall hold apart, rather than remit to the taxing districts, that proportion of all taxes paid that year on the real property within the housing development site that the excess valuation bears to the total assessed valuation. The amount held apart each year is the “tax increment” for that year. The tax increment shall only be used for financing and related costs.

(e) Not more than the percentages established pursuant to section 1910c of this subchapter of the municipal and State education tax increments received with respect to the housing development site and committed for the payment for financing for improvements and related costs shall be segregated by the municipality in a special tax increment financing account and in its official books and records until all capital indebtedness incurred for the housing infrastructure project has been fully paid. The final payment shall be reported to the treasurer, who shall thereafter include the entire assessed valuation of the housing development site in the assessed valuations upon which the municipal and other tax rates are computed and extended, and thereafter no taxes from the housing development site shall be deposited in the special tax increment financing account.

(f) Notwithstanding any charter provision or other provision, all property taxes assessed within a housing development site shall be subject to the provisions of this section. Special assessments levied under chapter 76A or 87 of this title or under a municipal charter shall not be considered property taxes for the purpose of this section if the proceeds are used exclusively for operating expenses related to properties within the housing development site and not for improvements within the housing development site.

§ 1910c. USE OF TAX INCREMENT; RETENTION PERIOD

(a) Uses of tax increments. A municipality may apply tax increments retained pursuant to this subchapter to debt incurred within the period permitted under section 1910a of this subchapter, to related costs, and to the direct payment of the cost of a housing infrastructure project. A municipality may provide tax increment to a sponsor only upon receipt of an invoice for payment of the financing, and the sponsor shall confirm to the municipality once the tax increment has been applied to the financing. Any direct payment shall be subject to the same public vote provisions of section 1910a of this subchapter as apply to debt.

(b) Education property tax increment.

(1) For a housing infrastructure project that does not satisfy the affordability criterion of section 1910 of this subchapter, up to 75 percent of the education property tax increment may be retained for up to 20 years, beginning the first year in which debt is incurred for the housing infrastructure project.

(2) For a housing infrastructure project that satisfies the affordability criterion of section 1910 of this subchapter, up to 85 percent of the education property tax increment may be retained for up to 20 years, beginning the first year in which debt is incurred for the housing infrastructure project.

(3) Upon incurring the first debt, a municipality shall notify the Department of Taxes and the Vermont Economic Progress Council of the beginning of the retention period of the education property tax increment.

(c) Municipal property tax increment. Not less than 85 percent of the municipal property tax increment may be retained, beginning the first year in which debt is incurred for the housing infrastructure project.

(d) Excess tax increment.

(1) Of the municipal and education property tax increments received in any tax year that exceed the amounts committed for the payment of the financing and related costs for a housing infrastructure project, equal portions of each increment may be retained for the following purposes:

(A) to prepay principal and interest on the financing;

(B) to place in a special tax increment financing account required pursuant to subsection 1910b(e) of this subchapter and use for future financing payments; or

(C) to use for defeasance of the financing.

(2) Any remaining portion of the excess education property tax increment shall be distributed to the Education Fund. Any remaining portion of the excess municipal property tax increment shall be distributed to the city, town, or village budget in the proportion that each budget bears to the combined total of the budgets unless otherwise negotiated by the city, town, or village.

(e) Adjustment of percentage. During the 10th year following the creation of a housing development site, the municipality shall submit an updated tax increment financing plan to the Vermont Economic Progress Council that shall include adjustments and updates of appropriate data and information sufficient for the Vermont Economic Progress Council to determine, based on tax increment financing debt actually incurred and the history of increment generated during the first 10 years, whether the percentages approved under

this section should be continued or adjusted to a lower percentage to be retained for the remaining duration of the retention period and still provide sufficient municipal and education increment to service the remaining debt.

§ 1910d. INFORMATION REPORTING

(a) A municipality with an active housing infrastructure project shall:

(1) develop a system, segregated for the housing infrastructure project, to identify, collect, and maintain all data and information necessary to fulfill the reporting requirements of this section;

(2) provide timely notification to the Department of Taxes and the Vermont Economic Progress Council of any housing infrastructure project debt, public vote, or vote by the municipal legislative body immediately following the debt incurrence or public vote on a form prescribed by the Council, including copies of public notices, agendas, minutes, vote tally, and a copy of the information provided to the public pursuant to subsection 1910a(e) of this subchapter; and

(3) annually on or before February 15, submit on a form prescribed by the Vermont Economic Progress Council an annual report to the Council and the Department of Taxes, including the information required by subdivision (2) of this subsection if not previously submitted, the information required for annual audit under section 1910e of this subchapter, and any information required by the Council or the Department of Taxes for the report required pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Annually on or before April 1, the Vermont Economic Progress Council and the Department of Taxes shall submit a report to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Finance and the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General and Housing, and on Ways and Means that provides the aggregate lifetime education property tax increment retention approved that year, describes common reasons applicants to the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program fail to secure approval for tax increment financing, and includes for each housing infrastructure project approved pursuant to this subchapter the following:

(1) the date of approval;

(2) a description of the housing infrastructure project;

(3) the original taxable value of the housing development site;

(4) the scope and value of projected and actual improvements and developments in the housing development site, including the number of housing units created;

(5) the sale prices for initial offerings of any housing units;

(6) the number and types of housing units for which a permit is being pursued under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 (State land use and development plans) and, for each applicable housing development, the current stage of the permitting process;

(7) projected and actual incremental revenue amounts;

(8) the allocation of incremental revenue, including the amount allocated to related costs;

(9) projected and actual financing; and

(10) an evaluation of the amount of public funds flowing to private ownership or usage.

(c) On or before January 15, 2035, the Vermont Economic Progress Council shall submit a report to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Finance and the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General and Housing, and on Ways and Means evaluating the success of the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program in achieving its purpose, as stated in section 1907 of this chapter, including by identifying the amount and kinds of housing produced through the Program and by determining whether housing development pursued through the Program meets the project criteria of section 1910 of this chapter.

§ 1910e. AUDITING

Annually on or before April 1 until the year following the end of the period for retention of education property tax increment, a municipality with a housing infrastructure project approved under this subchapter shall ensure that the special tax increment financing account required by section 1910b of this subchapter is subject to the annual audit prescribed in section 1681 or 1690 of this title and submit a copy to the Vermont Economic Progress Council. If an account is subject only to the audit under section 1681 of this title, the Council shall ensure a process is in place to subject the account to an independent audit. Procedures for the audit must include verification of the original taxable value and annual and total municipal and education property tax increments generated, expenditures for financing and related costs, and current balance.

§ 1910f. RULEMAKING; GUIDANCE

(a) Authority to adopt rules and guidance.

(1) The Vermont Economic Progress Council may adopt rules that are reasonably necessary to implement this subchapter.

(2) The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall issue guidance to implement this subchapter on or before November 15, 2025. Upon issuance, the Vermont Economic Progress Council shall publicly post and submit to the

Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Finance and the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General and Housing, and on Ways and Means any guidance documents.

(b) Authority to issue decisions.

(1) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, after reasonable notice to a municipality and an opportunity for a hearing, may issue decisions to a municipality on questions and inquiries concerning the administration of housing infrastructure projects, statutes, rules, noncompliance with this subchapter, and any instances of noncompliance identified in audit reports conducted pursuant to section 1910e of this subchapter.

(2) The Vermont Economic Progress Council shall prepare recommendations for the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development prior to any decision issued pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. The Council may prepare recommendations in consultation with the Commissioner of Taxes, the Attorney General, and the State Treasurer. In preparing recommendations, the Council shall provide a municipality with a reasonable opportunity to submit written information in support of its position.

(3) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall review the recommendations of the Council and issue a final written decision on each matter within 60 days following receipt of the recommendations. The Secretary may permit an appeal to be taken by any party to a Superior Court for determination of questions of law in the same manner as the Supreme Court may by rule provide for appeals before final judgment from a Superior Court before issuing a final decision.

(c) Remedy for noncompliance. If the Secretary issues a decision under subsection (b) of this section that includes a finding of noncompliance and that noncompliance has resulted in the improper reduction in the amount due the Education Fund, the Secretary, unless and until the Secretary is satisfied that there is no longer any such failure to comply, shall request that the State Treasurer bill the municipality for the total identified underpayment. The amount of the underpayment shall be due from the municipality upon receipt of the bill. If the municipality does not pay the underpayment amount within 60 days, the amount may be withheld from any funds otherwise payable by the State to the municipality or a school district in the municipality or of which the municipality is a member.

(d) Referral; Attorney General. In lieu of or in addition to any action authorized in subsection (c) of this section, the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or the State Treasurer may refer the matter to the

Office of the Attorney General with a recommendation that an appropriate civil action be initiated.

(e) Appeal; hearing officer. A hearing that is held pursuant to this section shall be subject to the provisions of 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 relating to contested cases. The hearing shall be conducted by the Secretary or by a hearing officer appointed by the Secretary. If a hearing is conducted by a hearing officer, the hearing officer shall have all authority to conduct the hearing that is provided for in the applicable contested case provisions of 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, including issuing findings of fact, hearing evidence, and compelling, by subpoena, the attendance and testimony of witnesses.

Sec. 21. 32 V.S.A. § 3325 is amended to read:

§ 3325. VERMONT ECONOMIC PROGRESS COUNCIL

(a) Creation. The Vermont Economic Progress Council is created to exercise the authority and perform the duties assigned to it, including its authority and duties relating to:

(1) the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive Program pursuant to subchapter 2 of this chapter; ~~and~~

(2) tax increment financing districts pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 5 and section 5404a of this title; and

(3) the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 7.

(b) Membership.

(1) The Council shall have 11 voting members:

(A) nine residents of the State appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate who are knowledgeable and experienced in the subjects of community development and planning, education funding requirements, economic development, State fiscal affairs, property taxation, or entrepreneurial ventures and represent diverse geographical areas of the State and municipalities of various sizes;

(B) one member of the Vermont House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

(C) one member of the Vermont Senate appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees.

(2)(A) The Council shall have two regional members from each region of the State, one appointed by the regional development corporation of the region and one appointed by the regional planning commission of the region.

(B) A regional member shall be a nonvoting member and shall serve during consideration by the Council of an application from ~~his or her~~ the member's region.

(3) Exclusively for purposes of reviewing and approving housing infrastructure project applications under the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program, the Council shall additionally have three nonvoting members:

(A) the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency or designee;

(B) the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board or designee; and

(C) the Commissioner of Housing and Community Development or designee.

* * *

(g) Decisions not subject to review. A decision of the Council to approve or deny an application under subchapter 2 of this chapter, ~~or to approve or deny a tax increment financing district pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 5 and section 5404a of this title, or to approve or deny a housing infrastructure project pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 7~~ is an administrative decision that is not subject to the contested case hearing requirements under 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 and is not subject to judicial review.

Sec. 22. COMMUNITY AND HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE

PROGRAM; VERMONT ECONOMIC PROGRESS COUNCIL;

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SITE; REPORT

On or before December 15, 2025, the Vermont Economic Progress Council shall report to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Finance and the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General and Housing, and on Ways and Means on considerations for amending the definition of "housing development site" under 24 V.S.A. §§ 1906 and 1908 to support the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program, including a recommendation on whether to include immediately contiguous parcels in the definition.

* * * Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms * * *

Sec. 23. 9 V.S.A. chapter 77 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 77. SMOKE ~~DETECTORS~~ ALARMS AND CARBON MONOXIDE ~~DETECTORS~~ ALARMS

§ 2881. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(2) “Smoke ~~detector~~ alarm” means a device that detects visible or invisible particles of combustion and sounds a warning alarm, is operated from a power supply within the unit or wired to it from an outside source, and is approved or listed for the purpose by Underwriters Laboratory or by another nationally recognized independent testing laboratory.

(3) “Carbon monoxide ~~detector~~ alarm” means a device with an assembly that incorporates a sensor control component and an alarm notification that detects elevations in carbon monoxide levels and sounds a warning alarm, is operated from a power supply within the unit or wired to it from an outside source, and is approved or listed for the purpose by Underwriters Laboratory or by another nationally recognized independent testing laboratory.

§ 2882. INSTALLATION

(a) A person who constructs a single-family dwelling shall install ~~photoelectric-only-type~~ photoelectric-type or UL 217 compliant smoke ~~detectors~~ alarms in the vicinity of any bedrooms and on each level of the dwelling, and one or more carbon monoxide ~~detectors~~ alarms in the vicinity of any bedrooms in the dwelling in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. In a dwelling provided with electrical power, ~~detectors~~ alarms shall be powered by the electrical service in the building and by battery.

(b) Any single-family dwelling when transferred by sale or exchange shall contain ~~photoelectric-only-type~~ photoelectric-type or UL 217 compliant smoke ~~detectors~~ alarms in the vicinity of any bedrooms and on each level of the dwelling installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions and one or more carbon monoxide ~~detectors~~ alarms installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. A single-family dwelling constructed before January 1, 1994 may contain smoke ~~detectors~~ alarms powered by the electrical service in the building or by battery, or by a combination of both. In a single-family dwelling newly constructed after January 1, 1994 that is provided with electrical power, smoke ~~detectors~~ alarms shall be powered by the electrical service in the building and by battery. In a single-family dwelling newly constructed after July 1, 2005 that is provided with electrical power, carbon monoxide ~~detectors~~ alarms shall be powered by the electrical service in the building and by battery.

(c) Nothing in this section shall require an owner or occupant of a single-family dwelling to maintain or use a smoke ~~detector~~ alarm or a carbon monoxide ~~detector~~ alarm after installation.

§ 2883. REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER OF DWELLING

(a) The seller of a single-family dwelling, including one constructed for first occupancy, whether the transfer is by sale or exchange, shall certify to the buyer at the closing of the transaction that the dwelling is provided with ~~photoelectric-only-type~~ photoelectric-type or UL 217 compliant smoke detectors ~~alarms~~ and carbon monoxide detectors ~~alarms~~ in accordance with this chapter. This certification shall be signed and dated by the seller.

(b) If the buyer notifies the seller within 10 days by certified mail from the date of conveyance of the dwelling that the dwelling lacks any ~~photoelectric-only-type~~ photoelectric-type or UL 217 compliant smoke detectors ~~alarms~~, or any carbon monoxide detectors ~~alarms~~, or that any detector ~~alarm~~ is not operable, the seller shall comply with this chapter within 10 days after notification.

* * *

Sec. 24. 20 V.S.A. § 2731 is amended to read:

§ 2731. RULES; INSPECTIONS; VARIANCES

* * *

(j) ~~Detectors~~ Alarms. Rules adopted under this section shall require that information written, approved, and distributed by the Commissioner on the type, placement, and installation of ~~photoelectric~~ photoelectric-type or UL 217 compliant smoke detectors ~~alarms~~ and carbon monoxide detectors ~~alarms~~ be conspicuously posted in the retail sales area where the detectors ~~alarms~~ are sold.

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* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 25. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that Sec. 4 (Rental Housing Revolving Loan Program), Sec. 7 (repeal; Act 181 prospective landlord certificate changes), and this section shall take effect on passage.

SEN. ALISON CLARKSON

SEN. KESHA RAM HINSDALE

SEN. CHRISTOPHER P. MATTOS

Committee on the part of the Senate

REP. MARC. B. MIHALY

REP. CHARLES A. KIMBELL

REP. MICHAEL J. MARCOTTE

Committee on the part of the House