

Summary and Narrative

SECTION 1: APPLICATION SUMMARY**APPLICANT:**

1. Applicant Municipality (or lead applicant if applying as a consortium)

Town of Fairfield

2. What is your most recent town plan adoption date?

5/26/2015 (mm/dd/yyyy) N/A

3. Please identify the state designation(s) which the municipality currently possesses:

Village Center

Downtown

Neighborhood Development Area

Growth Center

New Town Center

CONFIRMATION:

4. Is the planning process in your municipality confirmed by your regional planning commission?*

Yes

No

a. If not, is your municipality in the process of being confirmed on or before the application deadline (September 30, 2017)?

Yes

No

b. If not, is this application for a municipal plan that will be submitted to the regional planning commission for approval, which is necessary for confirmation?

Yes

No

c. Has your municipality voted at an annual or special meeting to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning purposes?

Yes

No

CONSORTIUM:

5. Is this a consortium project?*

Yes

No

a. If yes, please identify the participating municipalities. *All participating municipalities must have a confirmed planning process by the application due date, September 30, 2017, and must submit a resolution signed by their legislative body.*

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SECTION 2: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

6. Please identify the project type:

Zoning and Subdivision Bylaw

a. If other, specify:

7. Project Title: Name the project as concisely as possible.

The project title will be used in the grant agreement and program announcements, if this grant is funded.

(Examples: Unified Bylaw Update, Village Revitalization Plan, Sewer Line Mapping.)

Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw Revision

8. Project Description:

Provide a very brief summary of what the project will accomplish and produce.

This description of main project outcomes will be used in MPG program marketing materials if this grant is funded. See examples in Show Help section in the upper right corner of the page.

The Fairfield Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw will be significantly revised. Through extensive public input, Fairfield will devise regulations that will promote housing and promote compact, walkable development within its villages.

9. What are the primary issues your community is trying to address?

Describe both the immediate concerns and the larger, enduring issues that the community wishes to resolve through the grant project.

Fairfield is a rural town located in the middle of Franklin County with a population of 1,181 (2010 Census). Fairfield is geographically one of the largest municipalities in the state. It contains both a high density of farms and Vermont Land Trust has purchased the development rights of 7,514 acres in the community. Fairfield also includes environmentally and ecologically important areas like Fairfield Pond and Fairfield Swamp Wildlife Management Area. The majority of the town is included in the Northwest Region's "Agricultural Resources Area" and "Conservation & Forest Resource" Planning Areas.

Fairfield has historically used progressive techniques in its planning and zoning to discourage strip development and focus growth in strategic areas within the Town. This includes the use of a permit allocation system meant to restrict the number of residential units permitted in Fairfield per year (which has since expired) and the adoption of a Growth Management Plan. However, as the Town Plan notes, land fragmentation is still a problem in Fairfield:

Of properties classified as year-round residential in the 2013 Grand List, 260 lots were 6 acres or more in size accounting for more than 9,000 acres (25% of the town's listed land area). There were 260 year-round residential lots less than 10 acres in size, for a total of around 527 acres (1% of the town's land area). While it is likely that many large-lot residential properties include working lands or open space, the trend towards greater fragmentation of the town's land base is a concern

The Villages of Fairfield and East Fairfield remain the centers of economic activity in the town. The Town Plan's vision includes the encouragement of "small-scale enterprises" in the villages to offer basic goods and services to town residents that currently do not exist. However, the rate of residential and commercial growth in the

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villages to meet this vision hasn't occurred. The Town has recently taken steps to address development in the village that have been unrelated to zoning regulation. This includes the completion of a Wastewater Evaluation Study for both village centers and a scoping study for sidewalks in each village (a sidewalk is slated for construction in Fairfield Center on VT 36 in the summer of 2017).

The proposed project is the next step that Fairfield needs to take to encourage development in the village centers. Fairfield is interested in exploring what can be done through regulatory means to promote growth in these areas while ensure that such growth is of "appropriate in scale and character" per the Town Plan. Public support for this type of project is believed to be high considering public comments received during the 2010 and 2015 Town Plan adoption process (including a survey).

Completion of an "Issues and Actions Report" in 2017, with the assistance of Northwest Regional Planning Commission, noted that Fairfield can take several steps to better regulate and promote appropriately scaled growth in the village centers through the Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw. The Issues and Actions Report also revealed that Fairfield can take additional steps to generally make the Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw more user-friendly and easier for citizens, developers, and board members to understand. Despite the progressive and comprehensive land use planning undertaken by Fairfield in the past, the Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw has not been comprehensively reviewed and updated since the early 2000s. Fairfield seeks to have a bylaw that is of equal quality to its current Town Plan.

Continued economic health for the Town lies in village development, but also in the protection of its agricultural and forest resource base, principally dairy and sugaring. The proposed project will attempt to adjust the Town's Development Regulations to best support these rural assets while concurrently supporting the growth of its village centers.

10. How will the proposed project address the identified issues?

Include specific actions proposed to address the concerns. Describe both what the project will produce (outputs) and what the project will accomplish and how it will make a difference (outcomes).

The primary output will be new regulations that do a better job of implementing the goals and policies of the Town Plan and that are in better alignment with State Planning Goals, most notably the goal to ensure compact development surrounded by rural countryside.

To prepare for the proposed project, the Fairfield Planning Commission completed an Issues and Actions Report for the Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw. This report focused on issues of concern in the current bylaw that will need to be addressed as a part of the proposed project. Many of the identified issues deal directly with land development in the village areas. This includes the lack of site plan standards and standards for stormwater management in Fairfield. This report will serve as a guidance document that the Planning Commission can continue to use as it completes the proposed project.

The following specific tasks will be completed as a part of the proposed project. The proposed project will include several tasks that will achieve the primary output. Each task is listed below with a specific description of how it will contribute to the project's outcomes:

Output 1: Existing Conditions Report. The Consultant will work with the Planning Commission to complete an assessment of the existing conditions in each village. This will consist of a walking tour of each village. Photos and observations from this walking tour will then be synthesized with the results of a "table top" exercise that will assess existing land uses, structure sizes, parcel sizes, frontage measurements, and setback measurements, to create a final report the summarizes existing conditions. Outcomes: The report will provide the community with a common basis for understanding the current land use form in the village. It will allow the Planning Commission to prioritize what features in the village should be preserved, evolved, or transformed. The report

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will likely contain recommended actions for site plan standards.

Output 2: Revised Zoning District Boundaries/Zoning Map. The Consultant will work with the Planning Commission to compare the zoning map to the future land use map in the Town Plan. This may result in changes to the zoning district boundaries, particularly for the two village zoning districts. Outcome: The community will have a zoning map that does not conflict with the future land use map in the Town Plan.

Output 3: Village Site Plan Standards. The Consultant will work with the Planning Commission to develop site plan standards for the village zoning districts. These standards will be primarily based on the findings of the Existing Conditions Report. Outcome: The community will have standards for development in the village that meet's the community's vision for future land use. These standards will be incorporated into the revised Fairfield Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw.

Output 4: Revised Fairfield Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw. The consultant will update the Town's Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw based on the Town Plan, Issues and Actions Report, Existing Conditions Report, and input from the Planning Commission and the community. Outcome: The community will have new standards for regulating development with less impact on the town's agricultural, forest and natural resources.

11. How will the proposed project engage the public and community partners?

Describe citizen participation activities and outreach intended to educate and involve the public in planning as well as any coordination and cooperation with relevant local and/or regional organizations.

The Subdivision and Zoning Bylaws affects future development in Fairfield and impact all property owners and residents of the Town. It is very important to the Planning Commission that the public engagement plan incorporate different opportunities in an effort to reach different population cohorts. The goal of public outreach during this project will be to present transparent information on potential changes and obtain feedback. In addition to holding two public forums specifically designed to gather public input, the public engagement plan for this project includes the following components:

Press Release to Local Newspapers: At the beginning of the project, a press release will be developed for the project and it will be sent to local newspapers. Press releases will be repeated at key times throughout the project, such as before the two public forums and when drafts are available for review.

School Newsletter: At the beginning of the project, a press release will be developed for the project and it will be posted in the School's newsletter. Press releases to the school newsletter will be repeated at key times throughout the project, such as before the two public forums and when drafts are available for review.

Front Porch Forum Postings: At the beginning of the project, a press release will be developed for the project and it will be posted on front porch forum. Front porch forum postings will be repeated at key times throughout the project, such as before the two public forums and when drafts are available for review.

Project Website: A project page on the municipal website will be created that will provide community members with information on the project, documents for review and a means for asking questions and providing comments. Postings on the website will be repeated at key times throughout the project, such as before the community forum and when drafts are available for review.

Town Meeting: Planning Commissioners will attend Town Meeting in 2018 at the beginning of the project, and in 2019 towards the end of the project, to provide a brief presentation and/or have a booth set up with information on the project, as appropriate.

a. Approximately how many people do you aim to engage in the project, including local board members and

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people who complete surveys?

50

b. List the organizations you will coordinate with including other municipal boards and commissions:

Selectboard

Planning Commission

Zoning Board of Adjustment

12. How will the project further the goals of your municipal plan?

Explain how the project implements the ideas and actions set forth within the municipal plan. Insert municipal plan excerpts that demonstrate the linkage between the project and the plan. (For consortium projects provide municipal plan linkage information, including excerpts, for all member towns.) If extra space is needed, please upload your response to this question as an attachment, but do not attach the municipal plan itself. For municipal plan updates, describe specific policies or aspects of the current or latest plan that need revision in order to address the issue(s) identified above.

The proposed project is focused on revising the Town's Subdivision and Zoning Bylaw to best support these rural assets while concurrently supporting the growth of its village centers. The Fairfield Town Plan enthusiastically supports the focus of the proposed project. This can be most prominently see in the Town Plan Vision Statement. Seven parts of the nine-part Vision Statement pertain directly to land use planning and the importance of having a community with development centered in areas of compact development (Fairfield Center and East Fairfield) surrounded by rural countryside. The proposed project will create regulations that will directly lead toward the fulfillment of this Vision Statement. The Vision Statement, and other excerpts from the Town Plan, are attached.

The "Tomorrow" section of the Fairfield Town Plan contains several sections that pertain directly to the goals of the proposed project. This includes a subsection that explains the history, intent, and importance of Fairfield's permit allocation system (pages 58-59). Another subsection on "Village Character" (pages 61-62) succinctly says that "Fairfield wants to guide development to its two existing villages in a manner that maintains their character as small, traditional New England village centers." This is the key tenet of the proposed project.

The "Future Land Use Planning Areas and Policies" subsection of the plan further reinforces the Town Plan's intent of focusing future growth in compact centers. The Land Use Planning Area map (page 63) will serve to guide the proposed project and the conversation regarding zoning district boundaries, particularly for the village district. The boundaries for the Village Planning Area in the Town Plan are based on existing land use restrictions in the area (soil suitability, conserved lands, etc.) and are smaller than the boundaries of the existing Village Zoning District.

The Village Planning Area contains goals and policies that directly support growth and walkability (pages 64-65). Conversely, the goals and policies of the Agricultural Planning Area and the Recreation and Conservation Planning Area are concentrated on maintaining these lands for agriculture and natural resources respectively.

13. How does your project further the statewide planning goals? *Discuss whether and how your project furthers any of the FY18 MPG priorities for meeting the statewide planning goals. The priorities are listed in the FY18 Competitive Criteria. If none of the priorities apply to your project, please indicate "not applicable".*

The proposed project will directly further the statewide planning goals for bylaw updates that promote "compact,

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walkable development.” To further this goal, the proposed project will revise the village districts to be smaller and more focused on the existing core of each village. This will reinforce the need to develop in a compact manner connected to existing infrastructure (including the sidewalk that will be constructed in Fairfield Center in 2018). Fairfield Center and East Fairfield are both state designated village centers.

The proposed project will focus on ensuring that future development provides pedestrian access throughout the villages. It will also focus on creating site plan standards. These standards will allow the Town better regulate the physical design of property within the villages to match the desired character of each village. These standards may include flexible setbacks standards, parking standards, stormwater management standards, and landscaping standards. The current bylaws, while allowing for relatively dense development in the village, do not contain standards that allow Fairfield to sufficiently regulate the design of individual properties in a way that will ensure consistency with the existing character of each village.

In addition, the proposed project will further promote compact, walkable development by disincentivizing growth in the more rural, agricultural areas in the community. The Fairfield Town Plan notes that fragmentation of rural areas of Fairfield continues to be a concern. To address fragmentation, Fairfield will look at updating standards for minimum lot size and residential density in the rural zoning districts. Fairfield may also consider the mandatory use of Planned Unit Developments in rural land use districts to further conservation-related goals in the Town Plan. Current lot size and density standards in the bylaw may be considered to be in conflict with conservation-related goals in the Town Plan because they do not sufficiently limit forest fragmentation and parcelization of agricultural land.

14. If you received an MPG last year, discuss any relationship to this application and your capacity to simultaneously complete both grant projects.

N/A

15. How does your project relate to any existing state designated downtown, village center, neighborhood development area, growth center or new town center?

The proposed project directly relates and supports two existing state designated village centers. The proposed project will create regulations that will require future development, within and adjacent to the designated village centers, to be designed to meet the desired character of each village (small lots that are integrated with the “public space”). Future village development will be designed to meet community and statewide goals related to walkability and compact centers. The long terms goals of the proposed project are to make the village centers a more attractive place for local businesses to locate and for the community to congregate while creating a stable commercial tax base.

SECTION 3: MUNICIPAL RESOLUTION

Please print and complete the municipal resolution available online. If this is a consortium application, each participating municipality must complete a resolution designating the same Municipal/Authorizing Official and Administrator. Please note that only the names of individuals who have registered for an online account in the grants management system will appear in the dropdown menus.

Municipal/Authorizing Official:

Gavin Ryan

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Title Selectboard Vice Chair

Alternate Municipal/Authorizing Official:

Gene Archambault

Title Selectboard Clerk

Grant Administrator:

Alisha Larocque

Title Zoning Administrator

Upload Completed Municipal Resolution*

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/208483-FairfieldResolutionFY18.pdf

Mailed to DHCD