



TOWN OF SUNDERLAND, VERMONT
104 Mountain View Road, Sunderland, Vermont 05250

May 22, 2023

Proposed Amendment

In support of attaining a state Village Center designation, the Sunderland Planning Commission proposes the following amendment to the Sunderland Town Plan.

Insert on page 8, between the first paragraph and *Economic Development Policy*:

“The mixed-use corridor along Route 7A is a particularly important area in Sunderland, containing the town’s “main Street” and representing an area of historic significance that most closely resembles a village center. Streetscape enhancements and other infrastructure investments, improvements to existing buildings and historic structures, and potential infill development would reinforce this area as an important community center and hub of economic activity. Vermont’s Village Center designation program helps to focus financial and other resources on such areas, making it easier for both the town and private property owners to implement projects that protect historic assets while making the area look, feel, and function as a vibrant village.”

Add to the end of *Economic Development Actions*:

- The Town should pursue a state Village Center designation for an area along Route 7A, also including properties extending along Hill Farm Road to Sunderland Church and Ira Allen Cemetery. Upon obtaining the designation, the Town should seek opportunities to access funding for public improvements, such as those identified in this section, and support compatible private investments in the designated area.

Planning Commission Report

Pursuant to 24 VSA §4384, the Planning Commission offers the following report:

1. Probable impacts on traffic in the proposed designated area will be minimal over time. The Village Center designation is unlikely to result in significant pressure for new development along this corridor in Sunderland. Rather, the designation is expected to incentivize reinvestment in currently underutilized commercial properties and historic homesteads, as well as protection of important local landmarks such as the Sunderland Union Church and Ira Allen Cemetery. Similarly, the designation is unlikely to change overall land use within the area. The area is expected to retain a mix of commercial, residential, and institutional uses.

2. The proposed designation will likely result in long-term positive contributions to the municipal tax base without pressure for increases in municipal services.
3. There are vacant parcels within the proposed designated area that would be available for infill development at moderate densities that would reflect the current overall land use pattern of the area.
4. This area of Sunderland is that which is most suitable for the Village Center designation in that it contains the highest concentration of commercial uses in the town and includes institutional uses such as the church and cemetery as well as homesteads of historic importance to the community.
5. Extending from the Ira Allen Cemetery and capturing the Sunderland Union Church, the Ira Allen House, the Equinox Mountain toll road, and retail and other commercial uses and buildings, the extent of the proposed designated area encompasses a mix of uses that is most appropriate for a traditional village, including commercial, recreational, residential, and community oriented institutional and municipal uses.

The Village Center designation will provide access to the following incentives for the Town of Sunderland and private property owners within the area:

- State technical assistance to support local revitalization and planning efforts.
- Tax credits for improvements and rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- Tax credits for building code improvements.
- Priority consideration for state programs, including planning grants, community development grants, infrastructure funding, historic preservation grants, and bike and pedestrian enhancement grants among others.

In summary, access to these programs can encourage revitalization of underutilized commercial buildings and of historic homesteads, as well as protection of important local landmarks. Such revitalization would expand the municipal tax base without taxing municipal services. The designation would also help to preserve public open space within the area and lead to pedestrian oriented enhancements to the streetscape.