



TOWN MEETING 2024
QUESTIONS and ANSWERS
Town Plan 2024

Town of Essex
February 2, 2024

1. What is a town plan?

The Town Plan is a visionary, guiding document that sets goals for the Town for the next 8 years. Once adopted, a town plan is used to implement and update zoning and subdivision regulations, seek grants, develop a capital plan and budget, and set work plans for municipal departments, boards, commissions, and committees.

2. Why is there a question on voting for the Town Plan on the ballot?

The Town of Essex requires that a town plan receive approval by Australian ballot from Town voters. State statute also requires one public hearing be held by the Planning Commission followed by two public hearings by the Selectboard. Those public hearings were in November and December in 2023 and January 2024.

3. What happens if the voters approve the Town Plan?

The 2024 Town Plan will go into effect at the time of approval. The Plan provides direction for implementation of the Town's vision and goals of the Selectboard, Town staff, and boards and committees. An adopted Town Plan will allow the Town to apply for most state grants, adopt impact fees, continue to operate its capital plan and budget, apply for state designations through the state designation program, amend zoning, subdivision and flood hazard regulations, and implement any new regulations.

4. What happens if the voters don't approve the Town Plan?

The 2016 Town Plan will expire in March 2024. A town plan is necessary to for the Town to apply for most state grants, adopt new and amend existing impact fees, continue to operate its capital plan and budget, apply for a state designation through the state designation program, and adopt any new tools or amend any existing tools enabled by an adopted town plan. This includes zoning, subdivision, and flood hazard regulations.

5. How was the Town Plan written?

Work on the 2024 Town Plan began in the summer of 2022. At the start of the process, the Planning Commission decided to work with the other Town boards and committees on developing this Town Plan. As a result, various working together groups wrote the different sections of the Plan.

The Essex community took many opportunities to weigh in on the vision and direction of the Town Plan. In January 2023, the “Town Plan Working Group” – consisting of Planning Commissioner Joshua Knox and members from many of the other Town boards and committees – held listening sessions throughout Essex with residents and businesspeople. They came together to offer their thoughts on what the Town of Essex can be, and ways in which to continue building a community that is connected, diverse, inclusive, sustainable, and a joy to live in. This vision served as the direction for the 2024 Town Plan, including the action items that direct how the vision is implemented.

6. Where can I read the Town Plan?

The Town Plan can be viewed on the Town Plan page of the Town website: <https://www.essexvt.org/1140/Town-Plan-2024>. Print copies of the Town Plan are available to view at the Essex Free Library and the Town Clerk’s Office. The Town Plan webpage contains more background information about the Plan.

7. Will there be opportunities to learn about or discuss the Town Plan before I vote?

Yes. The Selectboard is holding a Town Meeting preview on Monday, Feb. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction. There will also be an Informational Hearing about Town Meeting ballot items on Monday, March 4 at 7:30 p.m. at Essex Middle School, 60 Founders Rd., Essex.

Additionally, Community Development staff is available to answer questions about the Town Plan. Visit the Town Offices between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (appointments recommended), call 802-878-1343, or email ksonnick@essex.org.

8. When and where do residents vote on whether or not to approve the 2024 Town Plan?

Voting will occur by Australian ballot at the polls, which will be open on Tuesday, March 5 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Essex Middle School, 60 Founders Road, Essex.

Voters can also request an early ballot. Early voting will start February 14. The last day to request an early ballot is 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 4.

Voters may visit the Town Offices at 81 Main St., Essex Junction to vote in the office, pick up a ballot to take home, or to request that a ballot be mailed.

Ballots can also be requested to be mailed by emailing clerk@essex.org; calling 802-879-0413, option 6; or requesting online at <https://mvp.vermont.gov/> Please allow sufficient time for mailing and returning the ballot.

In order to be counted, ballots must be received before the polls close on Town Meeting Day on March 5 (7 p.m.). Voters returning ballots on Town Meeting Day must deliver their ballot directly to the polling place at Essex Middle School.

A secure drop box will be available at the Town Offices for returning ballots after hours or on weekends up until 6:00 a.m. the morning of March 5.