

A PRIMER ON PLANNING FOR PREVENTION



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MORRISVILLE DISTRICT OFFICE
PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS INITIATIVE**

In collaboration with Healthy Lamoille Valley
Developed by Lamoille County Planning Commission

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Introduction

In 2013, the Morrisville District Health Office received grant funding as part of the “Partnership for Success” project. Partnership for Success (PFS) is a federally funded program to decrease state-wide substance abuse rates. Specific Lamoille Valley PFS goals include:

- ⇒ Increase state, regional, and community capacity to prevent underage drinking and prescription drug use.
- ⇒ Reduce underage and binge drinking among persons aged 12 to 20.
- ⇒ Reduce prescription drug misuse and abuse among persons aged 12 to 25.

This tool provides sample alcohol policy and bylaw language for municipalities. The purpose is not to restrict municipalities in fostering economic opportunities through establishments that produce, serve, distribute, or sell alcoholic products but to provide and enhance substance abuse prevention and early intervention for Vermont youth, leading to reductions in alcohol misuse.

The development of this Primer has opened community discussions about municipal roles in alcohol prevention, specifically, the role that municipal planning and regulation can have on alcohol use. In developing this Primer, outreach was conducted to gather Vermont-specific examples employing similar techniques. Collecting examples proved difficult as this is a new

aspect of the Vermont municipal planning process. In lieu of local examples to adapt, research was conducted of other communities’ municipal plans across the United States and Canada.

Consider the following: According to the 2013 Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 39% of Lamoille County students in 9-12th grades drank alcohol in the past 30 days. Of these students, 61% report that someone gave them the alcohol or they gave someone money to buy it for them. In the same survey, 18% of youth responded that they had drunk alcohol prior to their 13th birthdays. These numbers are all higher than state averages for the same age groups.

Because addressing substance misuse in municipal plans and regulations is an emerging field, this primer may inspire municipal officials and volunteer planning commissions. Any community member interested in prevention planning and addressing substance misuse may find creative ways to utilize the ideas presented. Substance misuse and addiction affect all of Vermont and collectively, we can address the problems and identify solutions. While this guide uses Lamoille County as an example, it is intended to be adapted to other Vermont counties, regions, or municipalities. It is our belief that nothing has been developed like this before; therefore, it is a living document that can be adapted as research evolves, communities develop, behaviors change, and tools and strategies demonstrate effectiveness.

Partnership for Success Initiative is a coalition of the following partners:

VT Department of Health—Morrisville District Office
Healthy Lamoille Valley
Lamoille Family Center
Lamoille Restorative Center
Peoples Academy, Morrisville

Lamoille County Planning Commission
Local and Regional Law Enforcement
Johnson State College
Vermont Department of Liquor Control
Hazen Union School, Hardwick

Background: Prevention Policies for Planning

Culture impacts our community in many ways, from fashion trends to architectural styles. The culture of alcohol use is no different. Alcohol use is more socially accepted than any other drug. All too often alcohol use leads to alcohol abuse, which can lead to poor-decision making and risky behavior that can have long-term economic impacts on individuals and on the community. Those impacts are identified in the following pages.

There is a difference between legal age alcohol use and underage alcohol use. This Primer is focused on addressing underage drinking and alcohol abuse, and underage binge drinking.

When a culture “normalizes” the use of alcohol, by making it a regular and accepted part of the culture, the perception of harm from alcohol decreases. This is different from responsible alcohol consumption at home and in the community. An adolescent's perception of the normalized risks associated with substance use is an important determinant of whether he or she engages in substance use. For example, youths who perceive high risk of harm from using alcohol are less likely to use alcohol than youths who perceive low risk of harm.

People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at 21.¹

Imagine the impact of substance abuse on the local and regional community. The following pages provide a review of information and background on the impacts of alcohol abuse and risky behavior in a community.

This Primer is meant to serve as a tool to assist with municipal planning and action. It is not meant to be a prescriptive requirement but a tool to use when amending a municipal plan and a starting point for addressing substance misuse in Lamoille County and the greater Lamoille Valley.

There is not one stand-alone strategy that addresses substance abuse issues in our communities. Tackling the issue comprehensively is the only solution. As municipal officials, volunteer planners, regional partners, and private citizens, we have a collective responsibility to address substance abuse, and towns and municipalities are valuable partners in the process.

Vermont's Planning Statute

Vermont law states that municipalities *may* choose to *adopt* a municipal plan, although they are under no statutory requirement to do so. Duly adopted plans can be used to guide development and serve as evidence in Act 250 and Section 248 hearings, but only municipalities with approved plans are eligible for certain State programs. A community choosing to adopt a municipal plan must, at a minimum, include the twelve elements listed in Vermont's Municipal Planning Statute (Title 24, Chapter 117).

Economic Impacts of Alcohol Abuse

In recent years, Americans have shifted trends in alcohol and food consumption. Wine is now consumed more readily by Americans than at any other point in time. Economic growth has been sparked over “artisan” or “small-scale” or “local” food and drinks. Microbreweries, urban distilleries, and other niche alcohol markets have blossomed, much to the delight of foodies and property tax bases everywhere. These industries are not meant to be vilified by alcohol prevention efforts. The alcohol industry is at its height. However, there must be room in the discussion to address the abuse of craft, high-end, or small-scale products as well as the domestic beers, boxed wines, and “road sodas”, which often appeal to kids.

20% of Vermont’s State budget is spent on addiction and risky substance abuse²

Alcohol abuse is when moderate use turns to dangerous use – for youth and those under 21, it may be when a curious sip from your parents’ cocktail at an adult party turns to raiding their alcohol cabinet and drinking daily. It may be the prom night when excessive amounts of alcohol were consumed and poor choices were made. It may be drinking habits learned from parents. Whatever the reason, overconsumption of any substance can be detrimental to the health and welfare of a society. Underage substance abuse – of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and illicit drugs – has negative economic impacts. Underage substance abuse can result in adult substance abuse issues. Left untreated, substance abuse leads to greater economic impacts, including health care costs, decreased public safety, and impacts to the workforce and education system.

Consider: what impacts have you seen in your community because of substance abuse?

Employment

More and more, employers are feeling the impacts of unhealthy behaviors of employees, such as alcohol and drug use. Chronic health conditions that are becoming more prevalent in society, such as cancers and asthma, are often exacerbated by drug abuse. Alcohol abuse affects employees in three ways:

- 1) Employee’s own alcohol abuse
- 2) Impact on an employee from a co-worker
- 3) Employee affected by a friend or family member’s alcohol abuse

An employee affected by alcohol abuse may mean more days of missed work, a lessened ability to concentrate, poor customer service performance, and increased workplace accidents. Productivity of the workforce can be impacted by days of missed work, inability to work as scheduled, or poor physical and mental health. It may also lead to higher health insurance costs for the employer.

A less healthy population negatively impacts the competitive advantages of local businesses, reduces attractiveness to businesses locating in our region, and channels economic activity away from the local economy and into health care services.

Fact: Drinking too much, including binge drinking, cost the United States \$223.5 billion in 2006, or \$1.90 a drink, from losses in productivity, health care, crime, and other expenses.³

Health

Alcohol is a health issue. The largest share of spending on the consequences of addiction and risky substance use falls to the health care system. Health care costs consumed 18% of the United States' gross domestic product nationally in 2012⁴, and is estimated to grow to 30% of GDP or greater by 2040⁵. These costs threaten the vitality of our communities by consuming resources that could be invested elsewhere.

Addiction and abuse causes or contributes to more than 70 other conditions requiring medical care, including: cancer, lung disease, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, cirrhosis, pregnancy complications, and trauma. Fetal exposure to alcohol and other drugs causes developmental, neurological, and physical health problems.

For the uninsured, this means that the state or federal government is responsible for the cost of treatment. For the insured, this may mean an increase in health care premiums. It also distracts the medical profession from attending to patients in critical care.

Fact: In Lamoille County, the number of alcohol-related emergency department visits to Copley Hospital increased 30% from 2003 – 2012.⁶

Fact: In 2012, binge drinking was a risk factor related to half of the top 10 causes of death in Lamoille County, according to Copley Hospital.⁶

Public Safety

Alcohol is a public safety issue. Alcohol plays a major role in many motor vehicle crash fatalities, suicides, domestic violence situations, and unintentional injuries—increasing law enforcement costs. The density of alcohol outlets is linked to increased violence rates. The number and locations of alcohol outlets often leads to changing perceptions of safety and physical activity rates; in areas with more alcohol outlets, physical activity declines. As public safety calls increase, taxpayer rates increase.

Fact: Binge drinkers (those who consume 4 – 5 drinks in two hours) are 14 times more likely to drive while impaired than non-binge drinkers.³

Education

Alcohol is an education issue. Developmentally, a child's brain has not fully formed until the late-teens. Youth who engage in substance use tend to perform poorly in school, develop esteem issues, and engage in riskier behaviors. Substance use is associated with failure to complete high school or college.

Fact: Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are 4 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at 20.¹

Fact: In 2012, Vermont ranked #1 in the country for alcohol consumption among 12 – 17 year olds, with 17% of that age group self-reporting alcohol use in the past month.⁷

Vermont Prevention Model



The Vermont Prevention Model is a comprehensive approach to improving health and reducing disease. It addresses individual risk and protective factors but also the norms, beliefs, and social and economic systems that create the conditions for the occurrence of substance abuse. In order to have the greatest impact, multiple levels of the model must be addressed simultaneously with efforts directed specifically at the higher levels of community, organizations, policies, and systems. Figure 1 (next page) shows the Prevention Model and offers examples of strategies that are being implemented in the Lamoille Valley to address substance abuse in a comprehensive manner.

This Primer aims to address “Policies and Systems” strategies. The Vermont Prevention Model recognizes that although individuals are responsible for making healthy choices, behavior change may be more likely when the environment supports individual efforts. It takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to changing behaviors in order to be effective over the long term.

Levels of influence

Individual : Factors that influence behavior such as knowledge, attitudes and beliefs.

Strategies at this level of influence are designed to affect an individual’s behavior.

Examples of individual level strategies include:

Health education curricula, media literacy education, and educational campaigns that state drinking and driving is “uncool”

Relationships : Influence of personal relationships and interactions

Strategies at this level of influence promote social support through interactions with others including family members, peers, and friends.

Examples of relationship level strategies include:

Youth empowerment and peer education groups, parent education and family strengthening programs, group walking programs, mentoring programs, being a designated driver

Organizations : Norms, standards, and policies in institutions or establishments where people interact (schools, worksites, faith based organizations, social clubs and organizations for youth and adults).

Strategies at this level of influence are designed to affect multiple people through an organizational setting.

Examples of organizational-level strategies include:

Policies prohibiting tobacco use in schools and worksites, after school programs offering physical activity programs, worksite policies allowing flex time for physical activity or other wellness activities, health insurance premium reductions for those with fewer risk factors (e.g., non-smokers)

Community : The physical, social, and cultural environments where people live, work, and play.

Strategies at this level of influence are designed to affect behaviors through the physical environment, community groups, social service networks, and the activities of community coalitions and partnerships.

Examples of community-level strategies include:

A community tobacco coalition hosting a smoke free barbeque event, converting unused railways into recreation paths, developing bike paths

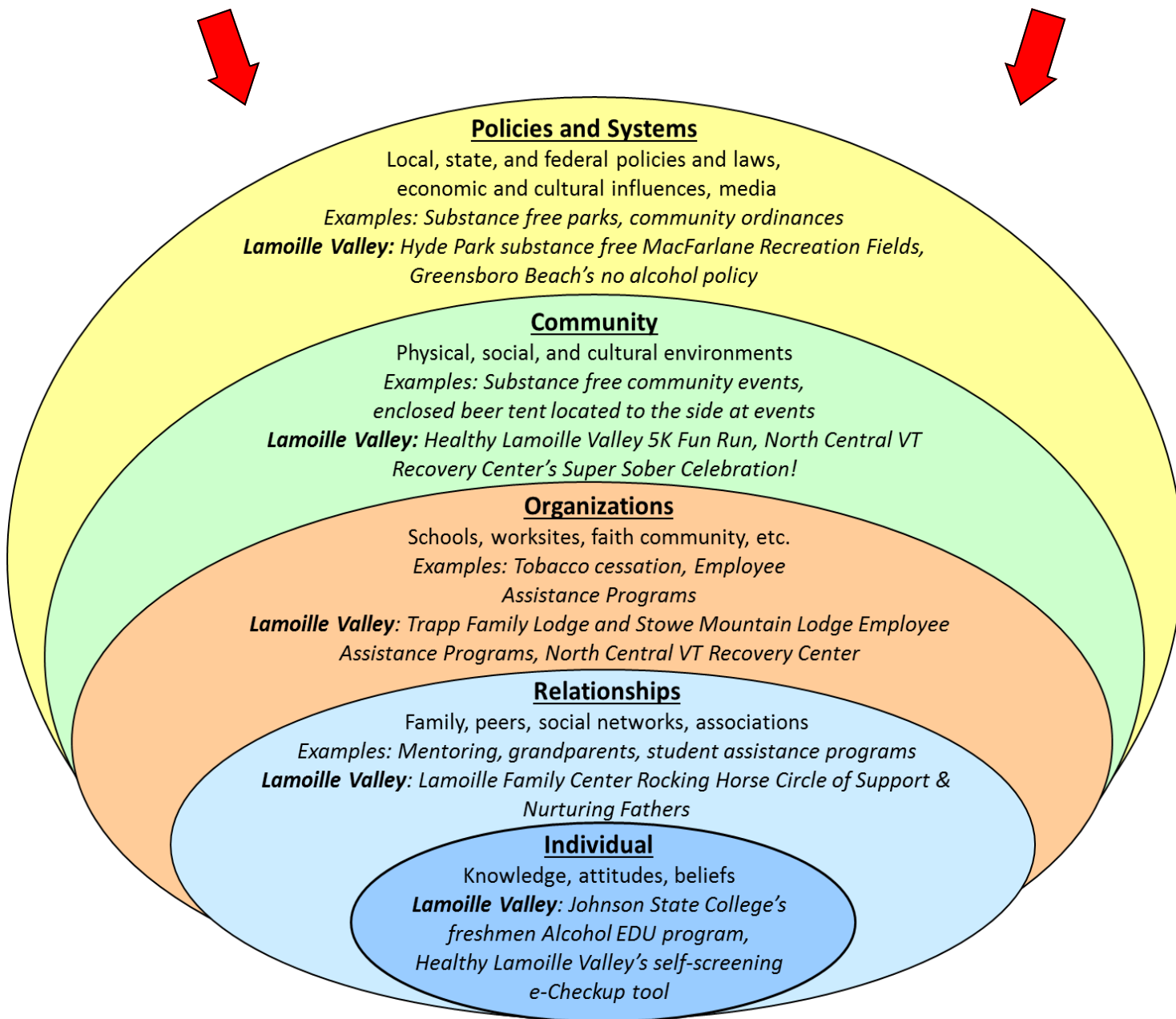
Policies and Systems : Local, state and federal policies; laws; economic influences; media messages and national trends that regulate or influence behavior.

Strategies at this level are designed to have wide-reaching impact through actions affecting entire populations.

Examples of policy and systems-level strategies include:

Media campaigns and marketing to promote public awareness and advocacy for change, public advocacy to ban the use of items that target the branding of alcohol companies to youth (e.g. free t-shirts), legislation to prohibit smoking in public places.

This Primer is focused on the “Policies and Systems” level of intervention. Most municipal planning prevention activities will fall under this same category.



The Vermont Prevention Model

The Prevention Model highlights levels of interventions, or change, to improve health. Substance abuse is a result of many factors and the different levels demonstrate the variety of means to tackle problems and highlight opportunities.

Of the Lamoille County students who drank alcohol in the past 30 days, 61% of those 9-12 graders report that someone gave them the alcohol or they gave someone money to buy it for them.

Policies and Systems Changes: Municipal Opportunities



The Vermont Prevention Model seeks to address substance misuse through individual behaviors up to the municipal level. This *Primer* is provided as a tool that municipal officials and volunteer boards can consider and use when amending municipal land use plans and regulations in light of substance abuse concerns. The ideas included in this *Primer* are not exhaustive. Some ideas may not be applicable to your community. They are ideas for consideration and inspiration and are meant to be adapted or tailored to meet the needs of your municipality.

Towns may adopt a variety of substance abuse prevention changes, such as:

- ⇒ Restricting alcohol related advertising placement;
- ⇒ Adopting policies or ordinances that limit consumption of alcohol in public places;
- ⇒ Prohibiting alcohol and tobacco use in public parks;
- ⇒ Limiting the location and density of alcohol outlets in concentrated areas;
- ⇒ Establishing a vision statement in municipal plans; and
- ⇒ Collaborating with community partners to address substance abuse prevention, substance abuse treatment, and enforcement of existing regulations.

The following pages include three focus areas: **1. Municipal plans**, **2. Regulatory activities**, and **3. Non-regulatory activities**.

In the section on **municipal plans**, a list of questions is provided for the planning commission to review as part of the plan preparation process. Municipal plans are a pre-implementation document and can express support for prevention planning and set the stage for initiatives, but cannot actually regulate prevention opportunities. The latter is in the realm of bylaws, which do not have the role of assessing needs and impediments. This section includes sample language that you can adapt for your community, make more specific for your town, or get the juices flowing so you can come up with your own goals, policies, and implementation strategies!

Policy options are divided into two specific areas: Goals and Policies. **Goals** are overarching principles used to guide decision making. **Policies** are used to enact the goals – they state an intention to address specific issues or problems. The policy is the direct link between the vision (goals) and action (implementation).

The **regulatory activities** section includes sample language and ideas for zoning bylaws as well as a list of alternative regulatory documents, such as local ordinances, that can be used to further prevention planning. The **non-regulatory activities** section provides an overview of other activities, measures, and tools to use to further prevention goals. Ultimately, there is no single solution, and no one approach to reducing substance misuse among youth or adults.

Municipal Plans

Vermont's Municipal Planning Process

The history of land use planning and regulation in the United States stems from the unmasking of public health conditions of New York City tenements at the turn of the 20th Century. Photographs of overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions prompted government officials to develop land use regulations in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Vermont's land use planning has occurred since the 1920's. It wasn't until 1968 that the Legislature enacted enabling legislation—which gives municipalities the authority to carry out certain municipal policymaking—which began with a list of the purposes planning and zoning should achieve: “It is the intent and purpose of this chapter to encourage the appropriate development of all lands in this State by the action of its constituent municipalities and regions, with the aid and assistance of the State, in a manner which will promote the public health...” (24 VSA 117 §4302a). In 1988, the Legislature adopted Act 200, what is today known as the Vermont Planning and Development Act, or Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes.

Towns and villages are not required to adopt a municipal plan but they are encouraged to do so through state incentives (see page 8). Municipal plans are often overseen by a planning commission, created by the legislative body of a municipality (e.g. selectboard or village trustees). Planning commissions are charged with bringing a long-term perspective to day-to-day decision-making. Planning commission members must always act in the public interest and put the general welfare of the community above personal interests.

Today's municipal planning issues have evolved. They still include addressing critical issues such as housing, transportation, utilities, and infrastructure such as wastewater. Public health issues that affect many municipalities are often overlooked, although the desire to address health issues through the built environment and through community development are burgeoning fields of science, health, and sociology.

The local plan is the place to name land use policies and community-oriented activities that will facilitate alcohol - free opportunities. The plan can call for ideas that allow more opportunities to provide substance free alternatives, such as Teen Nights, parks, bike paths, teen centers, or entertainment. Suggestions to revise zoning bylaws may include establishing density maximums, establishing a buffer between where alcohol can be sold in proximity to places such as schools and day cares, limit alcohol signage at convenience stores, or require a change in closing time for establishments where alcohol is more than 50% of sales.

Tip: Add an overarching vision statement in support of substance abuse prevention. The municipal plan might include a statement that one of the municipality's goals is to support efforts to reduce substance abuse through its municipal plan policies.

1. Preparing for a municipal plan update

Prior to writing the plan, assess what the current conditions are like in your municipality. For example, research relevant statistics and facts at the local, regional, or state levels about substance abuse or substance abuse related crimes. Take inventory of what your municipality has and identify gaps for improvement. The following suggestions provide brainstorming ideas to help inform your plan.

Make note of current rates of substance abuse identified in your municipality or Lamoille County. The Vermont Department of Health provides data and statistics on substance abuse for each service area. Review these numbers to see whether or not substance abuse rates are increasing, declining, or staying level.

Review recent self-reported figures on youth behaviors and substance abuse as reported at the supervisory union or county levels. The Youth Behavior Risk Survey is conducted every other year at schools across the United States. This is the largest youth survey and is a very important tool to measure the health of Vermont's youth. The survey asks about alcohol use, marijuana and other drug use, perceptions around behavior, youth assets, and demographics.

Assess the number of alcohol – free events and opportunities in your community. As you prepare to update the municipal plan, take inventory of how alcohol plays a role in your community. Make a list of all of the alcohol-free events offered in your community. List activities and opportunities for teens that are substance free. Take stock of the condition of municipal parks – do signs prohibit alcohol or tobacco consumption? Are the parks easily visible and accessible or are they shaded, neglected, or overgrown? Do schools post substance free signs or zones?

Review plan language to incorporate prevention. Review the current municipal plan and identify places to add language about alcohol and prevention. Consider developing a standalone Health and Wellness section or including prevention language as part of the land use, education, or economic development sections. Are there additional areas in the plan where policies could address substance use?

Take a fresh look at your community. As you travel through your town or village, take a look around you as if it was your first time there. What do you see? How heavily is alcohol promoted at stores and restaurants? Do you see beer cans and bottles littered along the road? Are people walking, biking, and playing outside? Is there a sense of safety and ownership of the community?



Research the number of alcohol- related crimes in your municipality. Contact with the Sheriff's Department or Vermont State Police could result in data on the number of alcohol – fueled crimes or vehicle accidents in town, as well as changes over time. These complaints will only reflect crimes that are reported, but this data is an indicator of alcohol abuse in an area.

Conduct a Health Impact Assessment. A Health Impact Assessment means considering health impacts in all policies and decisions. They are used before a decision is made to determine how to maximize positive health impacts and minimize negative ones for any project. Contact the VDH for more information.

Take a regional view. Substance abuse may be more a regional problem than a local one. Comparing a town to the surrounding region could also reveal any special or unique situations in that community. For all of the items listed above, a municipal plan should consider the regional situation as well as the town's and compare whenever possible.

Municipal Plan Goals and Policies— Sample Language

The following sample language may be modified to fit your municipality’s needs. These broad statements are intended to provide a starting point for tailoring goals to your community in order to reduce the risk of substance abuse. You may choose to modify them or create your own when revising your plan.

General Health and Wellness Policies

Ensure a safe community for all residents.

We encourage the highest level of personal health for everyone in our community through programs that encourage healthy lifestyles, reduce risks, and create access to quality health care regardless of age, income, or ability.

Enhance substance abuse prevention education for children, adults, and families.

Ensure that a comprehensive health care system exists and that the community is aware of the system.

Support efforts to create an outreach program to link community members to health providers.

Ensure that accessible and affordable alcohol treatment programs are available.

Provide diverse, meaningful programming with an emphasis on community health and wellness. Specifically target alcohol free, cross-generational activities for families, teens, and seniors.

Land Use Related Policies

We are committed to achieving sustainable land use practices that support a healthy year-round community and a thriving, vibrant visitor-based economy.

Seek to include parks, trails, and open space when considering future development within the community.

Encourage a diversity of economic opportunities to thrive in the community.

Encourage land use policies and zoning revisions that disperse alcohol outlets throughout the community to minimize oversaturation and locate them away from schools, daycares, and concentrations of youth.

Healthy Lifestyles Policies

Address the contributors to substance abuse through development of comprehensive programs and education about nutrition, physical activity, and access to healthy food.

Communication and Collaboration Policies

Improve coordination and communication with other groups providing prevention services, including local schools, law enforcement, and public health partners, to minimize programming conflicts or duplication and to maximize efficient and effective use of facilities as well as service delivery.

Strengthen coordination between public safety, schools, and non-profits to support education, awareness, and prevention programs.

Support partnerships to create year-round safety education and prevention programs, and secure funding, including expanded school programming.

Improve coordination and communication between the Planning Commission and Selectboard so that each Board’s planning is consistent with the others and with the overall goals expressed in this Plan.

Work with local and regional healthcare partners to develop, implement, and align community health priorities through a Community Health Assessment.

Encourage other towns in the area to participate in activities, uses, and funding for youth alcohol prevention.

Suggested Language for Goal Development

All community events shall be alcohol free.

The town shall work with public and private mental health practitioners to create an action plan that addresses youth issues, especially those with substance problems.

[Town] will create and maintain recreational facilities and opportunities for all community users — with special attention to the needs of handicapped, youth, elders, those with low incomes, and people from a variety of ethnic groups, who may not be current users.

Alcohol advertising shall be limited so that it is minimized to the public outside an establishment.

[Town] supports new economic growth. However, establishments that serve equal proportions of food to alcohol are encouraged over establishments only serving alcohol.

[Town] will participate in regional youth alcohol prevention groups that discourage underage alcohol consumption.

To support law enforcement coverage during community events or whenever alcohol is served.

LAMOILLE COUNTY EXAMPLES

Wolcott's school children should be provided with ample information pertinent to healthy living. [Wolcott Town Plan 2013]

Jeffersonville youth should be provided with opportunities to walk or bike to school, sound nutrition, and information pertinent to healthy living. [Village of Jeffersonville Municipal Plan 2014]

To highlight the important but often overlooked link between the built environment and health by providing an opportunity to evaluate the municipalities' planning and zoning objectives from a health perspective. [Morristown Municipal Plan, 2013]

To provide key design concepts to building a healthy community, offer policy suggestions for improving and supporting the health of residents and identify a vision for community wellness. [Morristown Municipal Plan, 2013]

To support citizen-led efforts aimed to improve the wellness of the community, including using this plan as a resource for grant writing opportunities. [Morristown Municipal Plan, 2013]

To fund health and wellness related infrastructure improvements equally with both private funding and municipal funding when feasible, including ongoing maintenance. [Morristown Municipal Plan, 2013]

Encourage and support community-led health campaigns to increase consumer awareness of healthy lifestyles. [Morristown Municipal Plan, 2013]

Municipal Plan Implementation—Sample Language

A municipal plan without recommendations for implementation is only as good as the intention behind it. Vermont’s Planning Statute even includes a required element: a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the plan.

Offering suggestions for implementation allows the Planning Commission the opportunity to prioritize implementation activities, identify potential partners to do the work, and establish a timeline to complete the implementation. There is room for creativity when identifying implementation activities. Consider: What needs to happen to achieve the goal? What are we as a community trying to change? Who will carry out the activity? What is the timeframe to accomplish the activity – 1 year? 5 years? 30 years out? Below is a list of implementation tool language to nurture prevention policies.

Suggested Implementation Tool Language

Education, Outreach, and Community

Foster greater inclusivity and participation in cultural events amongst the spectrum of community residents and visitors.

Make arts and culture, including live programming, visible in the community streetscapes and landscapes.

Support and encourage activities and community infrastructure, both social and physical, which enable and sustain healthy activities for a diverse audience.

Encourage recreational and cultural programs that support personal growth, enhance family relationships, and encourage civic involvement.

[Town] will model best practices related to promoting healthy communities at all municipal facilities and events (such as providing nutritious foods or ensuring events are alcohol free).

Create incentives for alcohol free, family friendly community events.

Explore expanding community policing and neighborhood watch programs.

Educate the community regarding the connection between improved child development and success in school and life.

Establish reliable funding to provide public safety operations to meet growing public needs and unfunded mandates related to public safety.

Educate the community about the importance of environmental and lifestyle risk factors, and provide free or low-cost programs to help reduce those risks.

Collaboration

Strengthen partnerships and communication between health care agencies and providers to enhance community health programming, cohesive case management, and electronic communication.

Continue collaboration and communication between the Town and District Health Office.

Collaborate with local, regional and state organizations that work with children and families to increase access to preventive care in all mental health areas for children.

Collaborate with local, regional, and state organizations to implement these policies.

Regulatory Activities

Restrict alcohol and tobacco use at public events and in public places.

Adopt an ordinance or establish all municipal parks as substance free.

Restrict the number and placement of alcohol outlets within the community.

Revise zoning bylaws to require XX distance between liquor outlets or establishments and community facilities, such as schools, day cares, public buildings, and parks.

Revise zoning bylaws and work with retailers to decrease alcohol promotions, such as signage.

Health Care Systems and Services

Ensure that residents of all ages and abilities have access to a comprehensive mental health and substance abuse system that addresses acute and chronic mental health needs.

Ensure that accessible and affordable mental health screening and treatment is available.

Create a seamless system of services for families to support their children's positive development from birth through school-age.

Determine and address the need for improved access to substance abuse recovery programs.

Promote the use of recovery support services to help people recover from addiction.

LAMOILLE COUNTY EXAMPLES

Develop a health and wellness committee of local residents. [Wolcott Town Plan 2013]

Wolcott should provide health and wellness education to townspeople as a chapter in the annual Town Report. [Wolcott Town Plan 2013]

Elementary School should continue to promote the district wide school wellness policy for students and teachers as developed by the Supervisory Union. [Wolcott Town Plan 2013; Village of Jeffersonville Municipal Plan 2014]

Jeffersonville supports investigating additional community wellness initiatives. [Village of Jeffersonville Municipal Plan 2014]

2. Regulatory Activities

The diversity of Lamoille County’s communities encourages a variety of regulatory options for substance abuse prevention. There is no “one size fits all” approach to zoning, ordinances, or other regulatory measures, so municipalities must look at options and alternatives for their community.

The ability of a municipality to adopt, amend, repeal, and enforce ordinances is granted by the State under 24 VSA § 1971. Zoning bylaws are enabled under Vermont’s Planning and Development Act (see inset box, below).

Vermont Statutes: Zoning Bylaws

24 VSA § 4411 concerns municipal zoning bylaws. This statute gives municipalities the authority to regulate land development in conformance with its adopted municipal plan.

Zoning bylaws may permit, prohibit, restrict, regulate, and determine land development, including:

- ◆ Specific land uses;
- ◆ Dimensions, locations, erection, construction, repair, maintenance, alteration, razing, removal, and use of structures;
- ◆ Areas and dimensions of land occupied by uses and structures, as well as open spaces;
- ◆ Timing or sequence of growth; and
- ◆ Uses within a river corridor and its buffer.

Tip: Make sure to define terminology to avoid confusion. Words such as “alcohol”, “malt beverage”, “liquor”, “possession”, “public place”, and “vinous beverage (wine)” should be defined within any ordinance or bylaw.

Defining establishments such as “alcohol outlet”, “bar”, “club”, “restaurant”, and “tavern” is advisable for zoning bylaws.

Fact:

In a recent survey, 74% of Lamoille County 9–12th graders think that it is easy to get alcohol.

MUNICIPAL REGULATORY TOOLS FOR PREVENTION

Bylaws

Tool	How it works	Sample Language	Pros	Cons
Conditional Use Approval	<p>“Conditional use” is a zoning tool that allows flexibility in administering the regulations. Conditional use allows a municipality to control certain uses which it deems detrimental to the community. If a use is not specifically identified as Permitted or Conditional, it is Prohibited. Conditional uses are then reviewed by the Appropriate Municipal Plan (Development Review Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment). This allows the Appropriate Municipal Panel to review proposals on a case-by-case basis and require certain standards and conditions in order to be approved.</p>	<p><i>Prohibit screening outdoor alcohol beverage consumption areas.</i></p>	<p>Underage drinkers and binge drinkers are visible to the public.</p>	<p>By reducing visibility of imbibers, consumption may increase because the perception is that no one is watching. Open viewing of alcohol consumption normalizes the activity.</p>
Conditional Use Approval		<p><i>Require a certain number of seats in an establishment that serves alcohol.</i></p>	<p>Limits the amount of customers consuming alcohol at a given time.</p>	<p>Politically difficult to pass.</p>
Conditional Use Approval		<p><i>Restrict sales of alcohol to patrons unless a meal is also ordered.</i></p>	<p>Reduces the amount of lingering while drinking, reduces effects of intoxication.</p>	<p>Difficult to enforce.</p>
Conditional Use Approval		<p><i>Limit bar service in favor of alcohol consumption only available by table service.</i></p>	<p>Encourages responsible alcohol consumption with meals as secondary to the meal, not as the primary activity.</p>	<p>Politically difficult to pass.</p>
Conditional Use Approval		<p><i>Establish hours of operation on an establishment.</i></p>	<p>Limits the hours available to purchase and consume alcohol.</p>	<p>Politically difficult to pass.</p>

<i>Bylaws, continued</i>					
Distance requirements between alcohol outlets and sensitive locations	Locate alcohol establishments, such as liquor outlets, bars, or taverns, far from where youth are likely to visit. Research has shown that increased youth exposure to alcohol, such as signage and advertising, leads to greater intention to drink, which leads to earlier initiation of drinking.	<i>Require 300 feet between alcohol outlets and sensitive locations, such as schools, hospitals, day care facilities, playgrounds, parks, alcohol treatment facilities, teen centers, and churches.</i>	Provides a buffer to what children see in places they are likely to frequent, as well as reducing youth access to alcohol by making it less prevalent in their immediate environment.	In compact village centers common throughout Lamoille County, it may not be feasible to separate uses based on number of feet.	
Alcohol Outlet Density	The increase in availability of alcohol leads to increased consumption of alcohol and violence, which has lasting impacts on public health and safety. Alcohol outlet density means the number of places that sell alcohol in a geographical area. Consider establishing a density requirement on the number of alcohol outlets, such as liquor stores, convenience stores selling alcohol for off-site consumption, bars, or breweries / distilleries, located in one area.	<i>New alcohol outlets will not be permitted within 300 feet of an existing alcohol outlet. [Note: "alcohol outlet" should be defined or municipality should select appropriate terminology that is defined in the bylaws.]</i>	It makes the ability to go from one alcohol outlet to the next more difficult.	In compact village centers, this may not be feasible to separate based on number of feet.	
Reduce Signage	Signs promoting or advertising alcohol consumption and sales influence youth behaviors about the consumption of alcohol. Consider prohibiting alcohol advertisements visible to the public or limiting the number of signs externally facing at convenience stores, grocery stores, and other retail establishments.	<i>No person may place any sign, poster, placard, device, graphic display, or other item that advertises alcoholic beverages or cigarettes in any publicly visible location. Exemption: when alcohol is part of the business name, such as "John Smith Winery".</i>	Reduces the prevalence of alcohol advertising and promotion.	May reduce the exposure of local businesses that manufacture sale of alcoholic beverages.	

Ordinances

Tool	How it works	Example	Pros	Cons
Standalone	A standalone alcohol ordinance may be adopted	<i>Example: Alcoholic Beverage Restrictions: An Ordinance for Use on Town Property, Town of Middlebury</i>	Clear, overarching policy	May be politically difficult to pass or enforce
Included in Code of Ordinances	Include alcohol / tobacco rules and prohibitions among the municipality's other ordinances	<i>Example: Alcoholic Beverages Control Ordinance, City of Brattleboro</i>	Streamlines the number of ordinances in the municipality	May be politically difficult to pass or enforce
Special Events or Park Restrictions	For municipally owned facilities, an agreement may be signed limiting the ability to furnish alcohol. Special use or special event permits may place restrictions on alcohol.	<i>Example: Town of Stowe includes provisions for restricting alcohol sales and consumption for special events. Stowe prohibits glass bottles at Memorial Park.</i>	Tailors alcohol language to specific events / activities. Holds users responsible for adhering to conditions. Standardized alcohol use in publicly owned spaces.	Only addresses alcohol at certain places and for certain users.

3. Non-Regulatory Activities



municipalities often engage in many non-regulatory activities that can have an effect on land use and prevention opportunities. While many activities to further prevention planning have been discussed above, below are questions to guide discussions and decision making for non-regulatory activities. Common examples that could be easily implemented and without regulations are included.

Are municipal events substance free? By designating all municipal and community events substance free unless by use of special permission, the municipality takes the lead on how alcohol use is “normalized” in the community. “Bring your own beverage” allowances at music events, fundraisers, or other special events or beer tents featured prominently at social events are all signals to youth that alcohol should be a part of public events.

Are municipal facilities substance free? Municipalities can set an example by designating all facilities substance free, including a buffer area from all doorways. For example, the area in front of doors to the town office may have a “No smoking within 100 feet” sign next to an ash can set 100 feet from the entrance. Parks that only allow alcohol use with use of a permit may reduce after-hours violence and crime, provided the rule is enforced.

Do municipal officials make regular use of educational and training opportunities? The Department of Liquor Control, parent organizations, and regional health and family organizations often sponsor events and trainings for municipal officials to receive further education about changes to State rules, new research, guest speakers, and peers with experience in varied subjects. Participating in educational and training opportunities may inspire new ideas to test or provide statistical insight into public health situations in Lamoille County.

Do parents, guardians, and community leaders set an example? Parents and guardians have tremendous influence on the decisions made by youth. Modeling appropriate alcohol consumption patterns demonstrates healthy decision making for the next generation. Some police departments have identified the home as a place of greatest concern about alcohol consumption and activity.

Do beer cans and boxes line the roads? Allowing litter to accumulate, such as beer cans and bottles, liquor bottles, and alcohol packaging, sends a message to young people that it is okay to consume alcohol – and then litter, often while driving. Removing the visual clues that alcohol use is widespread is a powerful signal.

What kind of advertising is encouraged? Advertising alcohol sales at establishments or alcohol-themed special events (e.g. plays, exhibits) further indoctrinates youth that alcohol consumption is expected.

Sponsorship of events. Are events sponsored by alcohol companies? Do national beer chains provide banners, signs, and “giveaways” for community events? For healthy activities such as fun runs, races, and other recreation- oriented events or fundraisers, who is the sponsor?

Set the agenda(s) for other municipal initiatives that will facilitate and/or further prevention policies. The town plan is also a good vehicle for providing support and vision for other local community initiatives that can affirmatively further fair housing outside of the realm of land use planning and regulation. Just as the town plan section on scenic and historic resources can advocate for the creation of a local historical society, the housing section could call for the creation of a local housing commission, local fair housing enforcement standards, or the use of public and grant funds to develop housing opportunities, so can the plan intend to partner with public, private and nonprofit entities for prevention.

Encourage positive behaviors, such as encouraging designated drivers. To balance prevention efforts, encourage other behaviors that provide alternatives to alcohol consumption. For example, provide incentives for designated drivers, such as free event tickets or free sodas. Encourage the development of alcohol free activities for youth (and adults) with free programming and safe spaces, such as teen centers or teen activity nights. Encourage youth to identify what activities they would like to see in the community. Less than half of Lamoille County youth felt valued by their community; by empowering young adults to take ownership of their communities, they become engaged and pass that respect to others.

Enforcement of existing regulations. If a municipality has alcohol ordinances, are they enforced? What are options to improve enforcement of ordinances?

SPOTLIGHT: HEALTHY RETAILER PRACTICES

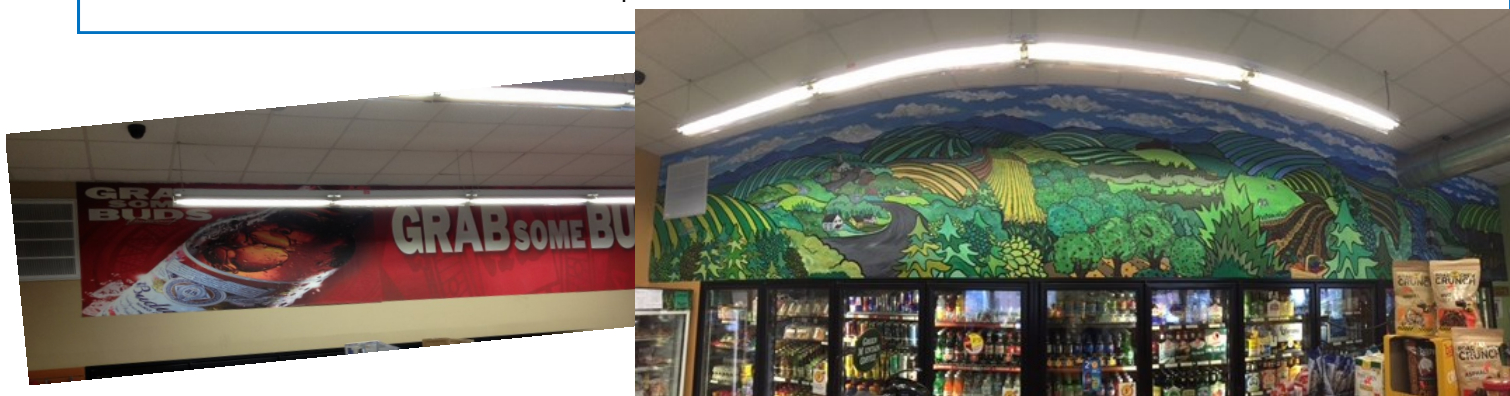
Ensuring retailers remain economically viable while focusing on prevention efforts isn't a zero sum situation. Voluntary "healthy retailer" practices focus on encouraging healthy food products, such as fruits, and de-emphasize tobacco and alcohol. Additional examples are listed below. For more information on healthy retailers practices and for access to free resources, contact www.healthvermont.gov.

Location of alcohol in stores Lessen the visibility of product placement in the store by re-positioning alcohol at the back of the establishment, and separate alcohol from juice, soda, and other beverages.

Signage inside package goods establishments Reduce the amount of signs displayed, which are supplied free of charge to establishments for product advertising. Eliminate signage that associates alcohol with driving, hunting, or snowmobiling.

Signage placement Raise the height of alcohol or tobacco signs so they are at an adult's eye level, not at a child's eye level.

69% of Maine adolescents surveyed said that alcohol advertising appeals to underage youth. Respondents remembered alcohol advertising as much as they remembered television ads.⁸



Riverbend Market (formerly Bourne's Food Mart), a convenience store in Morrisville, worked with Healthy Lamoille Valley to implement healthy retailer practices. One example included removing alcohol advertising (above left) and replacing it with a hand painted mural (above right). Preliminary sales figures show no decrease since this change.

Steps to further Prevention Planning

As part of a national movement to improve the health and wellness of Americans, the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services has taken great steps forward to incorporate healthy community principles into local and regional planning. Planning for substance abuse prevention is just one of the many activities that fall under “healthy community design”. A “healthy community” can be characterized by the following:

Bicycle and Pedestrian – Friendly Communities. Well-designed, interconnected bicycle and pedestrian networks and facilities support an active lifestyle. Bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly communities take into consideration safety, comfort and aesthetics by providing bicycle lanes and parking, sidewalks, crosswalks, shared use paths, lighting, benches and trees along the street.



Access to healthy and affordable foods. Fresh and healthy foods are essential for a healthy diet. Lack of access to affordable, fresh produce and nutritious foods contributes to obesity and associated health problems. Key strategies for expanding access to healthy food and local food production include use of public spaces for farmers’ markets and community gardens, support for community-based agricultural enterprises, incentives for retailers to offer healthier foods, and zoning and other actions that attract food markets and restaurants.

Community gathering places. Creating safe spaces for residents to gather is important to fostering an inclusive community. Having spaces for young people to gather is also important in ensuring that population feels like they have a safe place to belong. Community gathering places can also be destinations to accompany recreational facilities.

Mixed-use development. Building residential, retail, industrial, medical, and educational facilities close together creates walkable communities and encourages people of all ages and abilities to make physical activity a part of everyday living. Concentrated mixed-use development can also create a greater market for healthy foods, resulting in greater access to healthy food choices. It also concentrates infrastructure investments (e.g., sidewalks and bike paths), creates options for public transportation, maintains green space, reduces air pollution, and promotes greater social interaction.



Johnson Village is an example of a compact center with mixed-use development that encourages bicycle and pedestrian travel. The village connects to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, linking trail users to public services, retail, restaurants, and cultural opportunities.

Green spaces, Parks, Recreational Facilities. Access to recreational facilities (such as parks and green spaces, outdoor sports fields and facilities, trails, and playgrounds) supports active and healthy living with safe places to play and socialize. Access to these places is affected by distance from homes or schools, cost, hours of operation, and available transportation.

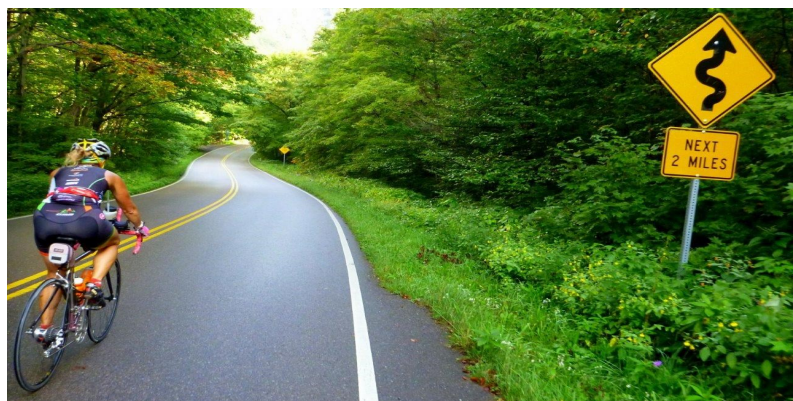


Photo courtesy of Lee Krohn.



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Find this and other
municipal planning
documents, zoning bylaw
information, and additional
resources at:
www.lcpcvt.org



Together, we can build
healthier communities for all!

Organizations, Data, Websites

Vermont Department of Health
www.healthvermont.gov

Vermont Agency of Commerce and Commu-
nity Development
<http://accd.vermont.gov/>

Vermont’s Regional Planning Commissions –
Vermont Association of Planning and Devel-
opment Agencies
www.vapda.org

Lamoille County Planning Commission
www.lcpcvt.org

Healthy Lamoille Valley
www.healthylamoillevalley.org

Community Health Services of Lamoille
Valley www.chslv.org

North Central Vermont Recovery Center
www.ncvrc.com

Vermont League of Cities and Towns
www.vlct.org

Youth Behavior Risk Survey
[http://healthvermont.gov/research/
yrbs.aspx](http://healthvermont.gov/research/yrbs.aspx)

Publications

Vermont Healthy Community Design
Resource: [Active Living and Healthy Eating](#),
Vermont Department of Health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
[Practitioner’s guide for Advancing Health
Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing
Chronic Disease](#)

Town of West Tisbury, MA [Beer & Wine Li-
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*East Central Vermont: What We Want Re-
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Brattleboro Code of Ordinances
www.brattleboro.org

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