

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Plan Amendments

Proposed Amendments to Elmore Town Plan

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4384(c) which states:

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to add a Health and Human Services chapter to the Elmore Town Plan. The language of the proposed amendment addresses other goals established in §4302, such as access to local foods, diverse transportation choices, and environmental quality.

The proposed amendment does not alter any of the land use designations defined in the current town plan.

Section Headings of proposed Health and Human Services chapter are: Introduction/ Health Care Systems and Services/ Access to Health Care/ Healthy Food Access/ Healthy Homes/ Environmental Quality/ Substance Misuse Prevention/ Active Living and Active Transportation/ Goals Policies and Recommendations

Health and Human Services

Introduction

The health and safety of Elmore residents are of the utmost importance. Elmore's vision for health, wellness and safety is that all citizens in the community have access to high quality, affordable, physical and mental health care through local providers; that employers and individuals support healthy lifestyles and environments, that the well-being of children is a central focus; that prevention, personal wellness and freedom from pain are strong areas of focus from birth to death; that domestic violence and substance abuse are unacceptable in our families and elderly and disabled citizens have adequate health and wellness support to remain in their homes and remain integrated in their community; and that all residents have access to prompt and effective services in the event of an emergency.

The Town of Elmore seeks to elevate the vitality of its citizens by including a comprehensive element dedicated to health and wellness in its Town Plan. Although the Community Health and Wellness Element is not a state-mandated element, the Town believes that its inclusion in the Plan ensures that public health and wellness remains a top Town priority.

Access to Health Care:

Health care facilities are essential in the prevention, treatment, and management of illness, and in the preservation of mental and physical well-being through the services that they offer. Rural locations such as Elmore are served by small facilities that can assist residents with general health care needs but are not suited for more complex acute care services that require specialized services and equipment.

Healthy Food Access:

Food access is not simply a health issue but also a community development and equity issue. For this reason, access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food is a key component not only in a healthy, sustainable local food system, but also in a healthy, sustainable community. Stores, farm stands and farmer's markets, community meals, and the food shelf in Elmore and nearby Morrisville are all opportunities to create access to healthy foods.

Healthy Homes:

Housing is the best-known predictor of health. Lead exposure can lead to significant abnormalities in cognitive development; asbestos and radon exposure can increase the chance of developing lung cancer; uncontrolled moisture, mold, pests, and other triggers cause or exacerbate asthma and other respiratory dysfunction; inadequate heat can lead to use of inappropriate heating sources potentially resulting in fires or monoxide poisoning; and poorly maintained stairwells and other structures can cause injuries. The risk of falls for older adults is another healthy home concern, particularly when these adults are living in old housing stock that may have uneven floors, narrow stairs, or other potentially hazardous features.

Environmental Quality:

Safe air, land, and water are fundamental to a healthy community environment. An environment free of hazards, such as secondhand smoke, carbon monoxide, allergens, lead, and toxic chemicals, helps prevent disease and other health problems. Implementing and enforcing environmental standards and regulations, monitoring pollution levels and human exposures, building environments that support healthy lifestyles, and considering the risks of pollution in decision-making can improve health and quality of life.

Substance Misuse Prevention:

Building a positive town culture that promotes healthy behaviors also significantly reduces risky behaviors such as substance misuse. Town policies are an important mechanism for creating healthy culture because citizens, especially youth, get "messages" from what they see in their communities, thereby influencing their choices.

Active Living & Active Transportation:

As the built environment has become increasingly car-centric, levels of physical activity have correspondingly declined. Reduced physical activity has resulted in population weight gains. To counter these trends, it is necessary to make communities more conducive to physical activity once again, particularly walking and cycling. Bicycles are used both for transportation and recreation. Many bicyclists can be seen riding throughout Elmore and the Lamoille County region. Recreational users include local residents who seek the health benefits of the sport and visitors who come to Vermont to experience the outstanding scenery. Walking is an important part of community life and much like bicycling, actively contributes to vitality, reduces our dependence on the automobile, and provides a healthy recreational opportunity.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

- Promote and expand farmers' markets and community gardens.
- Promote environment and programs that support physical activity.
- 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 that may not be current users.