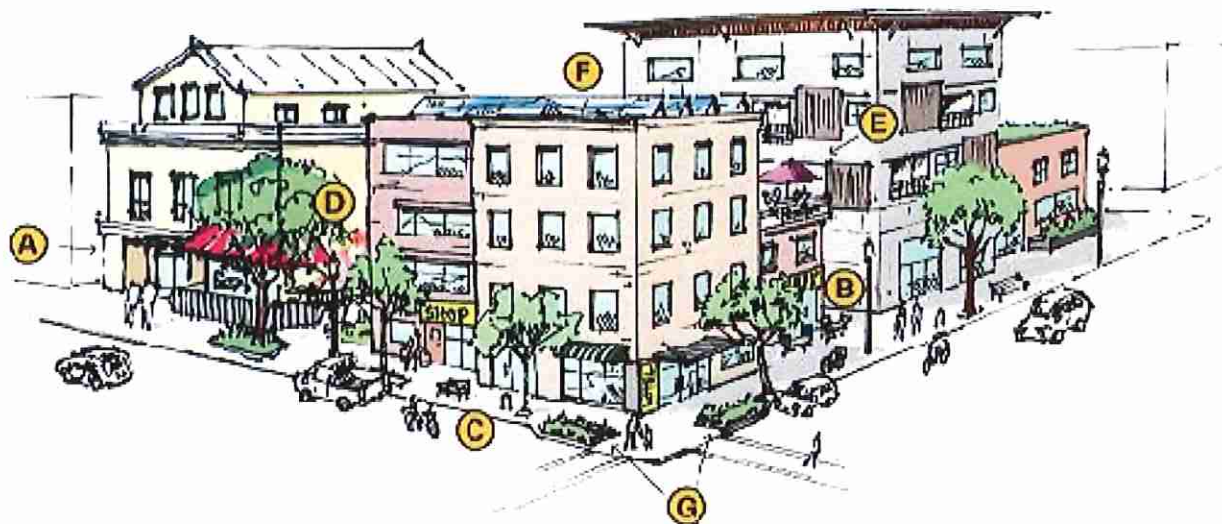


August 24, 2020

For Immediate Release

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## **Bennington Planning Commission Presents Draft Revisions to Bennington’s Land Use and Development Regulations – Revisions Focus on Inclusion of Form-Based Design Standards**

The Bennington Planning Commission has published draft development standards for the town center that use form-based regulation to guide future development. Planning Commission Chair, Michael McDonough, explains, “The intent of these new standards is to further Town Plan goals for diverse economic development, walkability and safety, and resilient mixed-use development through regulation of the of the built environment. The impetus for this project is relevant today more than ever as the community looks to recover from the economic impacts of the ongoing pandemic.”

### **Background**

Growth and development in Bennington are shaped by two municipal documents: the Bennington Town Plan, and the Bennington Land Use and Development Regulations (LUDR). The Town Plan provides a framework for decisions that will guide growth and development in Bennington. The Plan’s “...statements, policies and recommendations will help ensure that the Town retains the attributes that residents’ value while promoting actions that enhance the Town’s character, prosperity, and overall quality of life.” The LUDR establishes the standards used to implement growth and development. Established under Vermont State law, each is subject to periodic review by the Planning Commission and adoption by the Select Board.

The Bennington Planning Commission is currently undertaking a review of the LUDR to ensure consistency with the most recently adopted Town Plan, and in particular to address a specific element in the plan.

The current Town Plan, adopted in 2015, proposes that the Planning Commission review form-based land use ordinances, evaluate their effectiveness in communities similar to Bennington, and consider developing comprehensive form based standards (FBS) to replace or complement the current LUDR. Following an October 2018 forum at Bennington College CAPA about such standards, sponsored by the Bennington Planning Commission and the Bennington County Regional Commission, the Planning Commission embarked on a review of the LUDR intended to incorporate FBS, utilizing grant funds from the State of Vermont. The Bennington County Regional Commission is acting as project consultant to guide the analysis and develop Form Based Standards to incorporate in the LUDR.

### **FBS**

Form Based Standards (FBS) emphasize the regulation of the physical form of buildings and developed areas over the regulation of uses. This approach aims to lower barriers to new development while encouraging building forms that enhance walkability and safety, accommodate mixed uses, and adapt well to changing uses over time. The Planning Commission focused its efforts on developing Form Based Standards for the areas in and around Bennington's Downtown. The proposed LUDR revisions create three new Form Based Design Areas in the town center and consolidate regulated land use categories and some existing zoning districts.

A video presentation summarizing the proposed revisions to the LUDR and a copy of the draft revisions may be found at:

[www.bcrcvt.org/benningtonludr](http://www.bcrcvt.org/benningtonludr)

### **Public Input**

Having developed draft revisions of the Land Use Regulations incorporating FBS, the Planning Commission is entering a stakeholder input phase, within COVID restrictions, to present the draft standards and seek public comment. Two Zoom meetings are planned. A Downtown Stakeholder Zoom meeting is planned for August 27 at 6:00pm, while a Town-wide Stakeholder Zoom meeting is planned for September 3, also at 6:00pm.

Input derived from these targeted sessions will help shape a revised Land Use and Development Regulations public hearing draft. This process will then enter a public hearing phase, with at least two meetings before the Planning Commission, followed by a final public hearing before the Select Board. The Select Board can then choose to adopt the Planning Commission proposal, or seek further revision prior to adoption.

People with questions may call the Bennington Planning Department at 802 447-1037.