

# Town of Bristol

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## MEMORANDUM

From: Planning Commission, Kevin Hanson, Chair  
To: Bristol Planning Commission  
Date: October 17, 2023  
Re: Submission of the amended Bristol Zoning Regulations

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Enclosed is the proposed draft of the amended Bristol Zoning Regulations for review and consideration. This Memorandum constitutes the report necessary to satisfy the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4441(c) requiring that the Planning Commission prepare a written report summarizing the proposed amendments to Bristol’s 11/3/2020 Zoning. The Bristol Planning Commission will hold a public hearing scheduled for November 7, 2023, at 7:00 pm, in person and via <https://zoom.us/>, Meeting ID: 832 9978 6183; Passcode: 618777; or Join meeting by phone: 1 (646) 558-8656. Notice of this hearing is posted in the October 19, 2023, *Addison Independent* and at the Bristol Clerk’s Office.

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND AREAS OF TOWN AFFECTED

On October 17, 2023, the Planning Commission completed a draft for public hearing of proposed changes to its Unified Development Regulations, work it had undertaken pursuant to a Bylaw Modernization Grant. The goal of the Bylaw Modernization project was to increase housing opportunities for residents of all income levels by making it easier to develop affordable, smaller homes on smaller parcels in the Village Planning Area of Bristol as defined by the Bristol Town Plan. Revisions to Bristol’s Unified Development Regulations, based on the analysis of existing land development patterns, are proposed in this draft. A 2022 housing survey and feedback from Bristol’s municipal boards support these revisions. This work was made possible by a 2022 Bylaw Modernization Grant from the VT Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

The Planning Commission has proposed changes in several Articles of the Unified Development Regulations including: ARTICLE II: ESTABLISHMENT OF ZONING DISTRICTS AND ZONING MAP; ARTICLE IV: REQUIRED REGULATIONS and ARTICLE X: DEFINITIONS. The Planning Commission believes these proposed changes further the goals of Bristol’s Town Plan and conform to State of Vermont statutes enabling municipal land use regulations. The following list highlights the changes that the Planning Commission deems the most substantive. **This Memorandum does not discuss every single minor change. Accordingly, all are encouraged to read the entire proposed Unified Development Regulations, which show proposed changes in a track change format and are available on**

**the Town website at <http://bristolvt.org/> and at the town offices during normal business hours.**

1. ARTICLE II: ESTABLISHMENT OF ZONING DISTRICTS AND ZONING MAP. The most substantive change to these proposed regulations occur in ARTICLE II, which govern the Purpose, Allowed Uses and Dimensional Standards of each Zoning District. Specific changes to each district follow:

a. Maps. The Planning Commission has proposed to change the boundaries of several zoning districts to encourage more housing. It has expanded the High Density Residential (HDR) district North and South of the village and correspondingly shrinking the Village Residential (VR) district. Additionally, it expanded the Village Business (VB) district to encompass every parcel on the Bristol sewer system, slightly expanding the Village Business (VB) district and reducing the Residential, Office, Commercial (ROC) district. This change allowed the Planning Commission to incorporate nearly all of the requirements of the HOME Act into the proposed changes for the Village Business District.

b. Uses: The Table of Uses shows four proposed changes to uses allowed in Districts. These changes are also recorded within the Allowed Uses table of each individual district impacted.

i. Multi-family Dwellings are proposed to be allowed with a Site Plan review in the Village Mixed (VM) district, reducing the review from a conditional use.

ii. Inn/Guest Facilities are proposed to move from a Site Plan Review to a Conditional Use review in the Village Business (VB) and the High Density Residential (HDR) district.

iii. Business Yards are proposed to be eliminated as a permitted use in the Village Mix (VM) district. They are currently a conditional use.

c. Village Business District (VB): In addition to the proposed expansion in area to encompass all of the small area in Bristol served by sewer and changes of uses noted in sub-sections a and b of this memo immediately above, the Planning Commission proposes to provide for additional housing opportunities by changing several dimensional standards within this district allowing up to 8 units per acres and reducing the minimum lot size to 5,000 sq. ft. It also included density and height bonuses for affordable housing as required by the HOME Act for areas served by both water and wastewater.

d. Residential Office Commercial District (ROC): The ROC District shrank slightly, losing some parcels to the Village Business (VB) district. See Subsection a, Mapping, above. Otherwise, it is proposed to remain the same.

e. Village Mixed District (VM): The Planning Commission proposes to provide for additional housing opportunities in this District by changing several dimensional standards within this district allowing up to 4 units per acre and reducing the minimum lot size to 10,000 sq. ft. It also proposes to reduce several dimensional standards to better reflect existing development patterns.

f. High Density Residential District (HDR): The Planning Commission proposes to expand the size of the HDR District to provide more opportunities for housing. *See Subsection a Maps*. It also proposes offering an incentive to create Two family Dwellings (Duplexes) by allowing them to be built to a density of 5 units per acre, a 25% density bonus over other residential construction.

g. Village Residential District (VR): The Planning Commission proposes to shrink the size of the Village Residential District in certain areas north and south of the village and to replace it

with a High Density Residential (HDR) district. It believes this will provide an opportunity to expand the opportunity for housing by expanding the fabric of the existing village.

2. **ARTICLE IV: REQUIRED REGULATIONS.** In ARTICLE IV, Section 404, the PC changed the section governing Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADUs”) to conform to State of Vermont statutory requirements and to further define what “clearly subordinate” as referenced in the statute means in the Town of Bristol. Bristol proposes to define clearly subordinate as not exceeding the greater of 30 percent of the total habitable floor area of the main single-family dwelling or 900 sq. ft., having a lesser number of bedrooms than the main single-family dwelling, new structures being 20% lower than the main single-family dwelling and located at least 20 feet to the rear of the main single family dwelling.

3. **ARTICLE X: DEFINITIONS.** To improve the clarity of the proposed regulations the Planning Commission added and edited several definitions in ARTICLE X. These include:

- a. Business yard: Proposed changes to the definition of Business yard to clarify the types of business and activities allowed and to specify access requirements for businesses with larger pieces of equipment.
- b. Hotel and Inn/Guest facility: Proposed changes to require a manager on premises at larger hotels and on duty and available to respond in a timely manner at Inns/Guest Facilities.

The Planning Commission believes the changes noted above improve the ability for an applicant to create additional housing units in the Bristol Village Planning Area, will promote thoughtful land development implementing the Bristol Town Plan, and provide Bristol with more opportunities for right sized housing in specific zoning districts within the Village Planning Area. Our goal is to implement our Town Plan and make Bristol a better place to live for all its citizens.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any members of the Planning Commission if you have questions regarding the document or the process.

On behalf of the Planning Commission members, thank you for your consideration.