

Sample Language for Town Plans: Preventing Substance Abuse

This document was created by the Burlington District Office of the Vermont Department of Health in response to needs identified by community coalitions working on the Partnership for Success grant. Far from a complete or prescriptive list, this document is intended as a source of ideas for coalitions who are working on incorporating health-promoting language into their town plans. Sample language has been drawn from existing town and regional plans, health department grants, and the National Prevention Strategy to create a list of health-supporting statements that are aligned with current community-level approaches to health promotion. Towns are required to address certain elements, such as land use, transportation, and facilities in their municipal plan, so this document has been organized according to the required elements.¹

Objective/Policies/Programs: *A statement of objectives, policies and programs of the municipality to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment.*

[Town] will strive to reduce harms from substance misuse and poor mental health through its policies, programs, and use of funds.²

[Town] will ensure that under-represented populations are engaged in town decision-making.²

[Town] will support strategies that reduce stigma associated with addiction and mental health problems.³

[Town] will promote social connectivity through strategies that enhance family relationships through meaningful intergenerational substance free social opportunities.³

[Town] will implement efforts that promote continuity of care for people affected by their own or another's substance use or mental health problems. This includes collaborating on education, screening, intervention, treatment, and recovery services.³

Land Use Plan: *A land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land uses, indicating those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture, residence, commerce, industry, public semi-public uses and open spaces reserved for flood plain, wetland protection, or other conservation purposes; and setting forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity and character of land uses and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services.*

[Town] will implement zoning, policies, or ordinances to prevent businesses that sell tobacco or tobacco paraphernalia from locating near schools, parks, religious institutions, child care facilities, and other family-oriented areas.²

[Town] prohibits tobacco use on town property including vehicles, parks, and recreation facilities.²

[Town] will implement zoning, policies, or ordinances to prevent businesses that sell alcohol from locating near schools, parks, religious institutions, child care facilities, and other family-oriented areas.²

[Town] will restrict the establishment of medical marijuana dispensaries.²

[Town] will update development practices (such as zoning ordinance, design review, incentives, etc.) to require or encourage mixed-use development and redevelopment in community centers that will support³ positive social interactions for all residents such as through the provision of vibrant parks, greenspace, boulevards, and town greens.

[Town] will update development practices (such as zoning ordinance, design review, incentives, etc.) to require or encourage mixed-use development and redevelopment in community centers that will³ allow residents to access mental and physical health services.

[Town] will encourage the addition of more pedestrian amenities (such as street trees, benches, water fountains)⁴ in designated center, enterprise, and metro areas to encourage social connectivity and sense of place.

[Town] will ensure adequate and appropriate lighting⁴ in designated center, enterprise, and metro areas to encourage all residents to feel a sense of safety and belonging in the community.

Transportation Plan: *A transportation plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities showing existing and proposed highways and streets by type and character of improvement and where pertinent, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, with indications or priority and need.*

[Town] strives to foster roadway safety by enhancing support and funding for party patrols, saturation patrols, sobriety checkpoints, and other activities that reduce underage drinking and driving under the influence.^{6*}

[Town] strives to create⁵ a safe transportation system by arranging for public transit options at events associated with alcohol consumption.

Facility Plan: *A utility and facility plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective community facilities and public utilities showing existing and proposed educational,*

recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage and other similar facilities and services with indications of priority of need, costs and methods of financing.

[Town] will create and maintain smoke-free policies for all recreational facilities and opportunities - with special attention to the needs of youth, those attempting to quit tobacco, and those with chronic respiratory conditions that make them particularly susceptible to second-hand smoke.^{5*}

[Town] will sponsor or support substance-free recreational activities.⁶

[Town] will expand safe drop off options and locations by working with local law enforcement agencies, pharmacies, health care providers, local community organizations and coalitions, and their associated partners.⁶

[Town] will leverage municipal newsletters and bulletin boards to publicize permanent safe drop off locations in the community and educate the community about proper storage and safe disposal of prescription drugs.^{2*}

[Town] will promote safe shared spaces for people to interact (e.g. parks, community facilities) which can foster healthy relationships and positive mental health among community residents.⁷

[Town] will evaluate and incentivize models of integrated mental and physical health in primary care.⁷

Educational Facilities Plan: *An educational facilities plan consisting of a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system.*

[Town] will expand funding for school-based substance abuse prevention services to schools.⁶

Implementation of the Development Plan: *A recommended program for the implementation of the development plan.*

[Town] will, in its role as a local employer, provide employees and their dependents with access to free or reduced-cost tobacco cessation supports to encourage utilization of these services.⁷

[Town] will, in its role as a local employer, facilitate the provision of Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) or offer alcohol and substance abuse counseling through employee assistance programs.⁷

[Town] will provide evidence-based incentives to increase tobacco cessation, consistent with existing laws.⁷

[Town] will support smoke free policies in the community.⁷

Housing Element: *A housing element that shall include a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons housing needs as identified by the regional planning commission. The program may include provisions for conditionally permitted accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons.*

[Town] will implement ordinances to prohibit smoking in multi-unit dwellings.²

Town Maps: *The maps called for by this section may be incorporated on one or more maps, and may be referred to in each separate statement called for by this section.*

[Town] will include a map of parks, beaches, residential or commercial areas, business campuses, or university campuses with smoke-free policies.

[Town] will include permanent safe drop off locations in maps. If none exist, [town] will consider opportunities to expand safe drop off options.

Sources

**Indicates that the language was modified to fit the format of model language for town plans or to address the topic of substance abuse prevention.*

Note: Statements without a superscript citation are suggested as potential ways that town plans can incorporate substance abuse prevention.

¹Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. Guidelines and Standards for Confirmation of Municipal Planning Processes and Approval of Municipal Plans, 2013. Available online at:
http://www.ccrpcvt.org/land_use/PlanReviewGuidelines_FINALwithAppen_20130522.pdf

²East Central Vermont: Health as a Sustainable Outcome, 2013.

³Vermont Department of Health. Combined Community Prevention Grants, 2014.

⁴Morristown Town Wellness Plan, 2013.

⁵Vermont Healthy Community Design Resource. Active Living & Healthy Eating Toolkit. Sample Language for Town Plans, 2013.

⁶Vermont Department of Health. Partnership for Success Grant, 2013.

⁷National Prevention Strategy: America's Plan for Better Health and Wellness, National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council, 2011.