



RESTRUCTURING OF URBAN AND RURAL PLANNING INSTRUMENTS IN VIETNAM UNDER THE TWO-LEVEL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MODEL: THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF LAW NO.144/2025/QH15 AND RESOLUTION NO.111/2025/UBTVQH15

TÁI CẤU TRÚC HỆ THỐNG ĐỒ ÁN QUY HOẠCH ĐÔ THỊ VÀ NÔNG THÔN TRONG BỐI CẢNH CHÍNH QUYỀN ĐỊA PHƯƠNG 2 CẤP: NHÌN TỪ LUẬT 144/2025/QH15 VÀ NGHỊ QUYẾT 111/2025/UBTVQH15



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Abstract: This article examines the restructuring of Vietnam's system of urban and rural planning instruments under the two-level local government model, focusing on the legal implications of Law No. 144/2025/QH15 and Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15, both effective from 1 January 2026. Rather than treating these legal changes as isolated technical amendments, the article argues that they jointly reshape the legal structure of planning instruments in Vietnam. Using legal-text analysis and before-and-after comparison, the study shows that Law No. 144/2025/QH15 has a direct restructuring effect by redefining planning objects, reallocating planning levels, revising planning bases, and adjusting implementation authority in line with the two-level local government model. At the same time, Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 has an indirect but powerful normative effect by replacing the previous six-level urban classification regime with a four-category system and by linking urban classification more closely to urban planning, urban development programs, urban development plans, and the assessment of urban development levels. The article concludes that the post-2026 framework should be understood not as a simple continuation of the earlier planning

system, but as a new legal and governance configuration in which planning instruments play a more central role in urban development governance and implementation-oriented territorial management.

Keywords: Urban and rural planning, planning instruments, urban classification, two-level local government, Law No. 144/2025/QH15, Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15, urban development governance.

Tóm tắt: Bài viết phân tích sự tái cấu trúc của hệ thống đồ án quy hoạch đô thị và nông thôn ở Việt Nam trong bối cảnh chuyển sang mô hình chính quyền địa phương 2 cấp, tập trung vào tác động của Luật số 144/2025/QH15 sửa đổi, bổ sung một số điều của Luật Quy hoạch đô thị và nông thôn và Nghị quyết số 111/2025/UBTVQH15 về phân loại đô thị. Trên cơ sở phân tích văn bản quy phạm pháp luật, so sánh pháp lý trước và sau ngày 01/01/2026, bài viết cho rằng Luật 144/2025/QH15 đã tác động trực tiếp đến cấu trúc hệ thống đồ án thông qua việc xác lập lại hệ thống quy hoạch đô thị và nông thôn, tổ chức lại đối tượng lập quy hoạch, phân hóa cấp độ đồ án và điều chỉnh thẩm quyền, cơ chế thực hiện cho phù hợp với mô hình quản trị mới. Đồng thời, Nghị quyết 111/2025/UBTVQH15 đã thiết lập khung phân loại đô thị mới, chỉ còn 4 loại đô thị, và quy định việc đánh giá phân

loại đô thị phải dựa trên thực trạng phát triển đô thị phù hợp với quy hoạch đô thị. Từ đó, đồ án quy hoạch đô thị không còn được nhìn như một tài liệu định hướng không gian độc lập, mà trở thành một mắt xích trong chuỗi liên kết giữa quy hoạch đô thị, chương trình phát triển đô thị, kế hoạch phát triển đô thị, đầu tư hoàn thiện tiêu chí và đánh giá loại đô thị hoặc trình độ phát triển đô thị. Bài viết kết luận rằng từ sau ngày 01/01/2026, hệ thống đồ án quy hoạch đô thị và nông thôn ở Việt Nam cần được nhận diện như một chỉnh thể pháp lý mới, trong đó sự thay đổi không chỉ diễn ra ở danh mục đồ án mà còn ở nền tảng tổ chức hệ thống, cấp độ quy hoạch, cơ chế thực hiện và quan hệ giữa quy hoạch với phát triển, phân loại đô thị.

Từ khóa: Quy hoạch đô thị và nông thôn, đồ án quy hoạch, Luật 144/2025/QH15, Nghị quyết 111/2025/UBTVQH15, phân loại đô thị, chính quyền địa phương 2 cấp.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's recent transition toward a two-level local government model has created a new institutional context for territorial governance. In the planning field, this shift does not merely affect the allocation of

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administrative authority; it also alters the legal logic through which planning instruments are organized, approved, and implemented. This is why the adoption of Law No. 144/2025/QH15, amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Law on Urban and Rural Planning, and Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 on urban classification, both effective from 1 January 2026, should be understood as part of a wider restructuring process rather than as isolated legislative updates. The earlier baseline for this restructuring was Law No. 47/2024/QH15 on Urban and Rural Planning, which took effect on 1 July 2025, while the broader institutional background was established by Law No. 72/2025/QH15 on the Organization of Local Government. [6][7][8][13]

Before 1 January 2026, the planning framework was already moving toward modernization, but it still operated within a legal environment shaped by older territorial-administrative assumptions. This was especially visible in the urban classification regime. Under Resolution No. 1210/2016/UBTVQH13, as amended by Resolution No. 26/2022/UBTVQH15, Vietnam maintained a six-level urban classification system, running from special urban areas to Category V urban areas. That six-level framework provided an important legal background for earlier planning and development control, but it also reflected a territorial logic that had not yet been realigned with the newly emerging two-level local government structure. [11][12]

In that context, the central research problem is not simply whether new legal texts exist, but whether the system of urban and rural planning instruments itself has been restructured. This article argues that the Law No. 144/2025/QH15 directly restructures the planning system by redefining planning objects, reallocating planning levels, clarifying planning bases, and revising implementation authority. Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15, by contrast, does not amend the planning law itself, but indirectly reshapes the same system by redefining the standards of urban classification, the assessment of the level of urban development, and the relationship between planning and urban development implementation. The legal significance of the current transition therefore lies in the interaction between

direct legislative amendment and indirect normative reorientation. [7][13]

The article's contribution is to show that the post-2026 planning framework should be read not as a mere continuation of the previous system with updated wording, but as a new legal architecture of planning instruments. More specifically, the article demonstrates a shift from a system that remained closely tied to earlier administrative layers and classification categories toward one that is increasingly organized around differentiated planning spaces, urban development governance, and implementation-sensitive territorial management. In this respect, the current legal transition is significant not only for legal interpretation, but also for how planning is conceptualized in academic analysis and in the practice of urban development management.

2. LEGAL BASIS, METHOD, AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The legal basis of this article is built on four groups of materials. The first group includes Law No. 47/2024/QH15 and the 2026 consolidated version of the Law on Urban and Rural Planning, namely Consolidated Document No. 33/VBHN-VPQH, which should be treated as the primary text for reading the current legal framework as amended. The second group consists of Law No. 144/2025/QH15, which took effect on 1 January 2026 and explicitly amends the 2024 planning law. The third group includes Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 and Decree No. 35/2026/ND-CP, which together define the current legal regime for urban classification, the assessment of urban development levels, and the associated procedures for recognition. [2][6][7][9][13]

The fourth group provides the broader institutional and implementation context. It includes Law No. 72/2025/QH15, which establishes the organizational logic of local government under the new model; Decree No. 145/2025/ND-CP, which regulates the allocation of authority, delegation, and decentralization in the field of urban and rural planning under the two-level framework; Decision No. 891/QĐ-TTg, which approves the national urban and rural system plan for 2021–2030 with a vision to 2050; the Ministry of Construction's official explanatory

materials on both the 2024 planning law and Law No. 144/2025/QH15; and Circular No. 17/2025/TT-BXD, which regulates norms, methodologies, and cost management for planning activities. These materials matter because the restructuring of the planning system is not driven by one text alone. It emerges from the interaction between primary legislation, implementation decrees, institutional restructuring rules, and technical planning instruments. [1][3][4][5][7][10]

Methodologically, the article combines legal-text analysis with before-and-after legal comparison. Legal-text analysis is used to identify changes in legal concepts, planning objects, planning levels, and implementation authority. Comparative analysis is used to distinguish what has been retained, what has been repealed, and what has been reorganized into a new legal structure after 1 January 2026. This combined method is preferable to a purely descriptive clause-by-clause approach because the issue under examination is not simply legal wording, but systemic restructuring. A planning system may retain familiar labels while changing its underlying institutional logic. The comparison method is therefore necessary to show whether the post-2026 framework represents continuity, modification, or genuine reconfiguration.

The analysis is organized around four axes. The first is planning objects, which addresses the question of which territorial spaces are now covered by the planning system. The second is planning levels, which examines how master plans, zoning plans, and detailed plans are distributed across different planning spaces. The third is authority and implementation, which focuses on the movement of responsibilities across central, provincial, and commune-level authorities under the two-level model. The fourth is the relationship between planning and urban classification, which explores how planning now interacts more directly with urban development programs, urban development plans, and the assessment of the level of urban development. These four axes are selected because they capture both the legal structure of the planning system and the practical governance consequences of the recent reforms.

On that basis, the article advances two

central claims. First, Law No. 144/2025/QH15 has a direct restructuring effect on Vietnam’s urban and rural planning instruments by revising the architecture of the planning law itself. Second, Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 has a strong indirect normative effect because it changes the standards that planning instruments are expected to support through the new regime of urban classification and urban development assessment. The following sections test these claims without altering the overall five-part structure of the article.[2][7][11]

Figure 1 illustrates how institutional restructuring, legislative amendment, and urban classification reform jointly reshape Vietnam’s current urban and rural planning system.



Figure 1. Illustrates how institutional restructuring, legislative amendment, and urban classification reform jointly reshape Vietnam’s current urban and rural planning system (Source: Developed by the author based on [7][8][13])

Rather than operating independently, these legal and institutional changes interact to produce a restructured planning framework.

3 THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF URBAN AND RURAL PLANNING INSTRUMENTS

The current system must be read through the amended law as reflected in the consolidated 2026 text. Under this framework, the planning system is no longer described in a way that privileges the earlier administrative hierarchy. Instead, it is organized through differentiated categories of planning space. The amended law recognizes urban planning for cities, provincial urban areas, urban areas under cities, special zones classified as urban areas, and new urban areas; rural planning for communes and special zones not classified as urban areas; along with functional area planning, underground space planning for cities, and specialized technical infrastructure planning for cities. This shift is important because it indicates that the legal identity of planning instruments is now tied more closely to development spaces and governance functions than to inherited administrative layering.

To clarify the structure of the current legal framework, Table 1 summarizes the main components of Vietnam’s urban and rural planning system after 1 January 2026.

Table 1. Main Components of Vietnam’s Urban and Rural Planning System after 1 January 2026

Planning component	Main spatial object	Main planning levels	Primary legal significance
Urban planning	Cities, provincial urban areas, urban areas under cities, special zones classified as urban areas, new urban areas	Master plan, zoning plan, detailed plan (depending on the planning object)	Establishes the core territorial planning structure for urban development
Rural planning	Communes, special zones not classified as urban areas	Rural planning instruments as defined by the amended planning law	Provides the planning basis for non-urban territories under the new territorial governance framework
Functional area planning	Economic zones, national tourism zones, and other functional areas	Depending on the legal status and planning requirements of the area	Integrates development control for specialized territorial areas
Underground space planning	Cities	Urban underground space planning	Extends the planning system beyond surface spatial organization
Specialized technical infrastructure planning	Cities	Sector-specific technical infrastructure planning	Strengthens the integration of infrastructure systems into urban planning governance

Source: Compiled by the author from [7][9][5]

Table 1 indicates that the amended planning law reorganizes the planning system less around inherited administrative layers and more around differentiated planning spaces and governance functions.

The legal significance of that change becomes clearer when viewed institutionally. In the earlier planning environment, planning objects were still easier to interpret through older territorial-administrative categories. In the current system, however, the amended law explicitly distinguishes between cities, provincial urban areas, urban areas under cities, communes, new urban areas, and special zones. This differentiation matters because it changes how the law understands the territorial basis of planning intervention. The planning system is no longer simply a hierarchy of plans attached to inherited territorial layers; it is a set of instruments calibrated to different spaces of development and different modes of implementation. That conceptual shift is one of the clearest indicators that the post-2026 framework should be understood as restructured rather than merely revised.

The current law also preserves the three

familiar planning levels-master plans, zoning plans, and detailed plans-but no longer distributes them uniformly across all planning objects. Official explanatory materials clarify that city planning is prepared at three levels; provincial urban areas and certain major functional areas such as economic zones and national tourism zones are prepared at two levels; while some other territories may be planned at two levels or only through a detailed plan, depending on their legal and functional character. This differentiation changes the internal logic of the planning system. The earlier tendency to interpret the planning hierarchy as a standardized sequence applicable everywhere is replaced by a more selective and governance-sensitive allocation of planning levels.

This differentiated structure has broader implications for development control. Where planning levels are allocated according to the type and complexity of development space rather than by administrative routine alone, the legal system becomes more capable of matching planning intensity to implementation needs. That does not automatically solve problems of coordination or enforcement, but it does show that the amended framework is designed to reduce unnecessary layering and improve functional differentiation. In this respect, the restructuring of planning levels is not a technical drafting detail; it is part of a larger move toward a more implementation-sensitive planning system.

The amended framework also clarifies the legal basis for each planning level. Master plans must align with socio-economic development strategy, defense and security considerations, and one of the relevant higher-level national, regional, or provincial plans. Lower-level planning instruments are then prepared on the basis of higher-level plans or provincial plans, depending on the case. This is significant because it strengthens vertical legal coherence and clarifies how different planning instruments are meant to interact. It also supports greater integration across the planning system by reducing the risk that different planning layers will be prepared in isolation from each other or from the broader territorial planning framework.

Another important feature of the current system is its implementation logic. The two-

level local government model, together with the associated legal adjustments on decentralization and delegation, creates the basis for reallocating planning authority more clearly toward provincial and commune-level institutions. This means that the restructuring of planning instruments must also be understood as an institutional restructuring of the planning process itself. What changes is not merely the list of instruments, but the chain through which plans are prepared, appraised, approved, disclosed, and implemented. In legal terms, the planning system after 1 January 2026 becomes more closely embedded in the territorial governance capacity of local authorities.[1][8]

The system also interacts more directly with urban development policy than before. Decision No. 891/QĐ-TTg on the national urban and rural system plan provides a strategic frame for territorial development, while Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 and Decree No. 35/2026/ND-CP tie urban planning more closely to urban classification and urban development performance. This means that planning instruments in the current framework are not solely spatial documents. They also function as part of a broader governance chain that includes urban development programs, urban development plans, and development assessment standards.[2][10][13]

That relationship is especially evident in the urban classification regime. Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 reduces the classification system to four urban categories—special, Category I, Category II, and Category III—and requires classification to be assessed through criteria relating to socio-economic role and position, urbanization level, and infrastructure and spatial organization. The resolution further provides that classification and development assessment are to be conducted on the basis of actual urban development within the scope determined in conformity with urban planning. This creates a more explicit legal feedback loop between planning and classification than existed under the previous regime.[2][13]

The current framework goes even further by introducing the assessment of the level of urban development for commune-level administrative units within urban areas

and for new urban areas. This is important because it means that evaluation no longer occurs only at the level of the urban area as a whole. The assessment can reach into the commune-level units that make up the urban territory, thereby strengthening the connection between planning instruments, implementation realities, and development standards. As a result, the planning system after 1 January 2026 is not simply a set of territorial plans; it is a legal structure designed to interact more directly with measurable urban development outcomes. [2][13]

4. COMPARISON WITH THE PREVIOUS SYSTEM AND THE LEGAL EFFECTS OF LAW NO. 144/2025/QH15 AND RESOLUTION NO. 111/2025/UBTVQH15

The pre-2026 planning framework already contained a modernized planning law, but it still operated under assumptions associated with the earlier territorial-administrative structure. Most notably, the urban classification framework still followed the six-level model under Resolution No. 1210/2016/UBTVQH13, as amended by Resolution No. 26/2022/UBTVQH15. This six-level structure shaped the legal and policy environment in which planning instruments were read and implemented. Even where the 2024 planning law introduced new mechanisms, the broader logic of urban hierarchy remained tied to an earlier territorial model.[3][6][11][12]

A before-and-after comparison helps demonstrate that the post-2026 framework is not merely an updated version of the earlier system, but a legally restructured one.

Table 2. Comparison of the Urban and Rural Planning System before and after 1 January 2026

Comparative dimension	Before 1 January 2026	After 1 January 2026	Main implication
Organizational logic	More closely associated with the previous administrative-territorial structure and the earlier urban classification regime	Reorganized in line with the two-level local government model and the amended planning law	Planning is repositioned within a new territorial governance framework
Planning objects	Included planning layers linked to older administrative units and legacy urban categories	Defined through cities, provincial urban areas, urban areas under cities, new urban areas, communes, special zones, functional areas, underground space, and technical infrastructure	The system shifts from administrative layering to differentiated planning spaces

Comparative dimension	Before 1 January 2026	After 1 January 2026	Main implication
Planning levels	Commonly understood through a relatively uniform sequence of master plan, zoning plan, and detailed plan	Explicitly differentiated by planning object; some spaces require three levels, others two or one	The system becomes more flexible and selective
Repealed planning layers	Township master planning, master planning for new	These layers were repealed under Law No. 144/2025/QH15	The amended law removes planning layers tied to the
Authority and implementation	Reflected the previous allocation of responsibilities within the earlier administrative model	More clearly redistributed toward provincial and commune-level authorities under the two-level model	Planning implementation is brought closer to territorial management practice
Relationship with urban classification	Urban classification operated under the six-category regime and was less explicitly integrated into the planning-development chain	Urban classification now operates under a four-category regime and is more directly linked to planning, urban development programs, urban development plans, and implementation	Planning instruments are more tightly connected to development outcomes and classification standards

Source: Compiled by the author from [6][7][11][12][13]

As Table 2 shows, the post-2026 framework departs from the earlier system not only in its legal terminology, but also in its planning logic, institutional allocation, and relationship with urban classification.

The direct restructuring effect of Law No. 144/2025/QH15 becomes most visible in its repeal of planning layers tied to the earlier system. The Ministry of Construction’s official explanation states that the amending law repealed provisions on township master planning, master planning for new urban areas expected to become townships, and district master planning, along with additional clauses and points in other provisions. The institutional meaning of these repeals is substantial. They remove planning layers that were closely associated with the previous territorial hierarchy and indicate a clear legislative move away from the administrative layering that had long shaped planning interpretation and practice.[5][7]

This repeal matters not only because specific planning layers disappear, but because it changes the way the planning system is conceptually organized. Under the earlier framework, it was still possible to think of planning as following inherited territorial-administrative levels almost by default. Under the amended framework, that assumption no longer holds. Planning is instead reorganized around differentiated spaces of development and the legal functions they require. This

shift from administrative layering toward functionally differentiated planning spaces is central to the article's argument about restructuring. It is also one of the main reasons the post-2026 framework should be treated as a new legal architecture rather than as a simple revision.

The same pattern appears in the allocation of planning levels. Under the earlier legal environment, the familiar sequence of master plan, zoning plan, and detailed plan could easily be understood as a relatively standard chain, even if different territories did not always use all three in practice. The amended framework, by contrast, states more clearly that some planning objects require three levels, others two, and some only one. The legal effect is to make planning levels more selective and more explicitly tied to territorial function. This changes the logic of development control. Instead of assuming a generalized planning sequence, the current law allows the level of planning intervention to vary according to the nature of the planning object and the required degree of spatial and regulatory precision.

The restructuring is equally visible in the field of implementation authority. The two-level local government framework and the related decree on delegation and decentralization change the legal setting in which planning authority is exercised. Under the current system, responsibilities are positioned more clearly around provincial and commune-level institutions. That matters because planning instruments do not operate in isolation. Their legal meaning depends partly on who prepares them, who approves them, who discloses them, and who links them to development implementation. Once those responsibilities move under a different governance structure, the planning system itself must also be reinterpreted accordingly.

The indirect but powerful effect of Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 lies in its creation of a new normative environment for urban planning. By reducing the urban classification system from six categories to four and by specifying that classification and development assessment must be

undertaken within the scope determined in conformity with urban planning, the resolution transforms urban classification into a stronger feedback mechanism for planning. Under the previous regime, planning and classification were related, but the legal chain linking them was less explicit. Under the current regime, planning becomes more directly implicated in whether an urban area can meet the criteria of classification and in how the level of urban development is evaluated.[2][11][12][13]

This shift is reinforced by the requirement that urban development be implemented in an integrated way through urban planning, urban development programs, urban development plans, and implementation measures. In legal and governance terms, this means that planning instruments are now more tightly embedded in a chain of development management. A plan is no longer merely a regulatory map or a statutory territorial framework. It becomes part of a feedback loop in which planning affects development implementation and development outcomes then inform classification and future planning adjustment. This is one of the strongest reasons why the post-2026 planning framework should be analyzed through the lens of governance, not only through that of statutory planning technique.

Figure 2 highlights the feedback loop through which planning instruments, urban development programming, and urban classification now interact under the post-2026 legal framework.



Figure 2. The Feedback Loop between Urban Planning, Urban Development, and Urban Classification (Source: Developed by the author from [13][2])

This feedback loop explains why planning instruments in the current framework function not only as spatial planning documents but also as core instruments of urban development governance.

The practical consequences of this shift are significant for local authorities. Provinces and commune-level authorities now face stronger pressure to coordinate planning instruments with development programming and with urban classification standards. This is especially important in rapidly urbanizing areas, in new urban areas, and in commune-level administrative units within urban territories, where mismatches between planning content, infrastructure provision, and classification standards can now affect not only implementation quality but also formal urban recognition outcomes. The amended legal framework therefore places greater weight on implementation capacity, sequencing, and development control than the previous regime did.

The restructuring discussed in this article is driven by different but interacting legal mechanisms, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Direct and Indirect Legal Effects of Law No. 144/2025/QH15 and Resolution No.111/2025/UBTVQH15

Legal instrument	Type of effect	Main regulatory intervention	Effect on planning instruments
Law No.144/2025/QH15	Direct restructuring effect	Amends the Law on Urban and Rural Planning; redefines planning objects, planning levels, legal bases, and implementation authority; repeals obsolete planning layers	Restructures the legal architecture of the planning system itself
Resolution No.111/2025/UBTVQH15	Indirect but normative effect	Reduces the urban classification system to four categories; links classification and development assessment more closely to urban planning	Changes the normative standards that planning instruments are expected to support
Decree No.35/2026/ND-CP	Procedural and implementation effect	Details the dossiers, procedures, and development assessment mechanisms for urban classification	Strengthens the operational link between planning, classification, and implementation
Two-level local government framework	Institutional effect	Reallocates authority and shifts governance logic away from the previous administrative structure	Repositions planning instruments within a new territorial governance model

Source: Compiled by the author from [2][7][8][13]

Table 3 clarifies that the current restructuring is not attributable to a single legal text, but to the interaction of legislative amendment, urban classification reform, and institutional reorganization.

From a scholarly perspective, the comparison suggests that the restructuring is best understood at three levels. First, there is a legal-structural level, where planning objects, planning levels, and formal provisions have been revised. Second, there is an institutional level, where authority and implementation responsibility have been redistributed under the two-level model. Third, there is a normative-governance level, where urban classification and urban development assessment feed back into the operation of planning instruments. Only by combining these three levels can one adequately explain why the current system is more than a routine legislative update.

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This article has argued that the changes effective from 1 January 2026 amount to a restructuring of Vietnam's urban and rural planning instruments. Law No. 144/2025/QH15 has a direct restructuring effect because it amends the planning law's architecture, removes obsolete planning layers, clarifies planning objects, differentiates planning levels, and reshapes implementation authority. Resolution No. 111/2025/UBTVQH15 has a strong indirect normative effect because it creates a new urban classification regime and makes planning more central to urban development assessment and recognition. Taken together, these changes form a new legal architecture of planning rather than a simple continuation of the pre-2026 framework.[2][5][7][13]

The article's first conclusion is that the current framework should be interpreted through the lens of legal restructuring, not legal updating. The planning system after 1 January 2026 has different planning objects, a different logic for assigning planning levels, a different relationship with territorial governance, and a different connection with urban classification. The second conclusion is that urban classification now functions as a more explicit normative

feedback mechanism. Because classification and development assessment are linked to planning and implementation, planning instruments now carry greater weight in shaping measurable development outcomes. The third conclusion is that the amended framework gives planning instruments a more central role in urban development governance, not merely in statutory territorial regulation.

Three recommendations follow from these conclusions. First, state agencies should standardize interpretation and implementation of the restructured planning system, especially in relation to planning objects, planning levels, and implementation authority under the two-level local government model. Second, provinces and localities should review not only their existing planning instruments but also their urban development programs and urban development plans in light of the new classification criteria and development assessment standards. Third, academic research and teaching should move away from presenting the planning system primarily through the earlier administrative hierarchy and instead analyze it through the interaction between planning space, urban development governance, classification standards, and implementation capacity.

Future research should go beyond identifying the formal components of the new framework and should examine how it functions in practice. This includes investigating whether the new system actually improves coordination between planning and development implementation, whether it strengthens development control, and whether further institutional or technical guidance will be needed to make the restructured system work effectively at local level. In this sense, the current legal transition should be seen not as the end of reform, but as the beginning of a new phase in the governance of urban and rural development in Vietnam.[1][2][4][10]

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