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VERGENNES MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2020 – 2028

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This plan is available online at www.vergennes.org

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Chapter I. PLANNING OUR FUTURE

Section 1.1 About Vergennes

Vergennes is located in the northwest quadrant of Addison County bordered by the towns of Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham. "It is the only city in Vermont that was not chartered first as a town or village and as such is supposed to be the third-oldest "city" in the United States (after New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut)."*. Our City was created in 1788 for many reasons, but none more important than the vision that this vital incorporation would pave the way for a great industrial center. Indeed, the creation of our City was necessary to develop the Otter Creek Falls to their fullest potential. With a fall of 37 feet and a basin remarkably free from flooding, it was an ideal site for industry. However, the falls lay at the boundary of three towns. In 1785, when asked to lay a tax to defray the cost of building a bridge over the Otter Creek near the falls, the towns of Panton, Ferrisburgh, and New Haven balked and the dreams of harnessing this valuable waterpower seemed in jeopardy. The solution to the problem was a political one. The Republic of Vermont decided to create its first city on the site, and only the third in New England at the time. This way Vermont could increase its stature in its attempts to be accepted as a state and simultaneously unlock the potential of the falls.

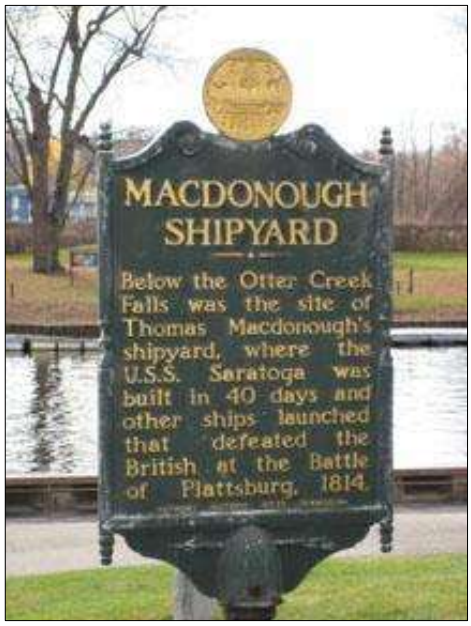
Otter Creek Falls circa 1877

Thereafter, the path that Vergennes followed differed markedly from the rest of the towns of Addison County. As historian John D. Smith remarked in 1886,

"It should be remembered that the history of Vergennes must be different from that of a farming town. A different class of people located here. Their pursuits and avocations were different. With only 1,200 acres in her territory, the farming interests within her limits was of small moment. Those who expected to live by farming settled elsewhere. Manufacturers, merchants, and professional men, with such mechanics and laborers as were needed, composed her population."

- Meeks, Harold A., "Time and Change in Vermont: A Human Geography" 1986, The Globe Pequot Press.

The early settlers of Vergennes battled against frontier conditions to establish Vermont's first city. The crude beginnings of industry emerged on the falls; gristmills and sawmills were erected and iron-making was begun. Vergennes made an unsuccessful bid to become the state capital, and the building constructed for that purpose became a multi-purpose meeting house. Even a newspaper was started, a rare occurrence in frontier Vermont. However, it wasn't until the beginning of the 19th century that Vergennes would make its first significant leap forward. This was when the Monkton Iron Company was established by a group of Boston merchants hoping to take advantage of President Jefferson's embargo. When the disagreements with Great Britain dissolved into war, Commodore Thomas Macdonough chose Vergennes as his naval base on the lake. However, after Macdonough's decisive victory at Plattsburgh Bay and the subsequent end of the war, this brief but eventful epoch in Vergennes' history came to a close.



The next boom in the city came after the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823. Vergennes became the state's largest shipping port for the next five years and the outlines of its retail sector began to emerge. The commercial center would continue to grow and reach maturity in the 1840s with the advent of agricultural specialization in the surrounding countryside and the coming of the railroad. Vergennes continued to be seen as the commercial center for our surrounding communities, providing goods and services, not just for our residents, but for many towns in northern Addison County.

Our city's true "golden years" extended from the close of the Civil War until the turn of the century. Encouraged by a flood of duty-free virgin lumber from Canada, a number of wood-finishing industries sprang up on the falls, and the city flourished until new tariffs in the 1890s dried up the flow of Canadian lumber.

Although not on the scale of the Victorian era, Vergennes maintained its claim as a regional industrial and commercial center into the 20th century. The Havilland Shade Roller Company survived the shakeout of the 1890s and was joined by a fledgling hydroelectric plant and the L.F. Benton Company spark-plug factory on the falls. The city still had a vibrant "downtown" and was buoyed by an expansion of the State of Vermont Reform School for Troubled Youth. In 1907, the school began a major building program that added nearly a dozen new structures over the next fourteen years. By mid-century, Vergennes had lost much of its diversification and as the years passed, it became more and more dependent on one company, Simmonds Precision Products, and its successors. Although the business was for a long time a loyal and valued corporate citizen, its downsizing of the 1990s revealed the danger of relying too much on one employer. Vergennes has since been proactive in luring other companies. Ushio America, Inc (formerly Nathaniel Group) and Plymouth Toy and Book, operating as WowToys, also moved into industrial space constructed in the 1990s on Panton Road.

A revitalization of Vergennes began in the early 1990s, principally through the volunteer efforts of The Friends of the Vergennes Opera House. Restoration of the Opera House provided a beautiful space for music, theater, and community gatherings; many view it as the heart of our city. The restored Opera House brought community members to our downtown, and local entrepreneurs responded with new restaurants and shops.

In 2001, our downtown was recognized as one of the first Downtown Development Districts by the State of Vermont. To support this designation, the non-profit Vergennes Partnership was formed to support investment and focus on the revitalization of our downtown. Ultimately, the revitalization of our community is the result of committed, energetic, and caring volunteers working in partnership with businesses and City leaders. Vergennes citizens are grateful for their efforts.

Our vibrant downtown

Throughout our history, the City of Vergennes has been a municipality based on industry coupled with an important retail and service sector for our region, including high-speed internet access to allow viable remote working opportunities. Today our thriving downtown offers an eclectic mix of dining, shopping, historic sites, a library, art galleries, a City Green with bandstand, and theater. A walk down Main Street takes one past buildings and houses that portray our city's rich history, attracting residents and visitors alike. Vergennes strives to be a friendly, welcoming place, and we wish this legacy to continue.

Section 1.2 Our Vision for the Future

Vision can be defined as "an image of the future we seek to achieve." When a vision is developed as part of a community planning initiative, it is intended to reflect the broad views of the community. A vision statement generally arises from within the community through strong leadership and engagement. For the purposes of this plan, the Vision presents a sense of how Vergennes is seen now and how it will be viewed in the future. More importantly, it provides the background for both the municipal development plan and the goals and policies that are forwarded by the plan.

The planning commission has articulated an overall vision for Vergennes' future:

"Vergennes serves as the commercial and cultural hub for northern Addison County. We are a vibrant and friendly community with a wealth and diversity of business and job opportunities, and a range of housing options. We have kept our small-town feeling and identity, while continuing to grow and prosper. We are a full-service community where people feel safe and secure, and our children are well-prepared for the future. We promote the integration of resources and technology and the integration of renewable energy. We are forward-thinking and embrace innovation and new technology while maintaining a strong connection to our past. Our historic architecture remains intact and our neighborhoods are attractive, affordable, and carefully-designed to be walkable, interconnected, and complement our community character. Our parks, open spaces, and waterways provide visual charm and a wide range of recreational activities that connect our schools, neighborhoods, and business community. The great variety of festivals, concerts, plays, movies, sporting venues, and cross-cultural events that entertain our residents, attract visitors, and exemplify our role as a destination for arts and culture."

Section 1.3 Community Involvement

Citizen participation is an important component of any public planning effort, and most particularly, the municipal development plan. The municipal development plan is an opportunity to express community vision and values and to provide a tangible representation of what a community wants to look like in the future. The best municipal development plans are developed through a collaborative and inclusive community participation process. While public hearings are the state-mandated approach to involving the community, municipalities are encouraged to provide community involvement from beginning to end of the planning process, from surveys to focus groups to newsletters and so on.

A series of public workshops were held in 2008. The workshops helped the Planning Commission receive public input on the direction of the plan and in turn helped to communicate the plan update process to the community. The Planning Commission also distributed a questionnaire to obtain the public's views on a variety of community values and priorities. The survey asked 36 questions about land use, the environment, recreation, transportation, energy, and other related issues. A total of 154 surveys were completed online or submitted by hand or by mail.

In December 2013, the Addison County Economic Development Corporation nominated Vergennes to the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) as a community who would most benefit from their Community Visit Program in 2014. The Community Visit program is a four-month process involving a series of public meetings, facilitated discussions, and community events. The VCRD come with no agenda, but have a visiting resource team of over 30 state, federal, business, non-profit, and philanthropic leaders who can help a community identify and realize common goals.

The first meeting in the Community Visit Program was held on Thursday, February 6, 2014 with the VCRD and the Community Visit Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consisted of a cross-section of approximately 25 community members. During the course of the meeting, the group identified nine topics of interest for community discussion and possible action:

- Municipal & Non-Profit Resources
- Tourism
- Recreation & Entertainment
- Role of Municipal Government
- Basin & Riverside Development
- Connecting Youth
- Transportation Infrastructure & Pedestrian Safety
- The Future of Economic Development
- Vergennes Community Center

The next Community Visit meeting was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 and consisted of nine 90-minute public sessions, with three sessions running concurrently at three different locations. The

sessions were held at the Vergennes Opera House and at the Bixby Library. We also held a free community dinner. Well over 100 community members attended the sessions.

On Wednesday, April 2014, the next stage in the Vergennes Community visit was held at the Vergennes Opera House. The VCRD returned to Vergennes to present a synthesis of the big ideas that Vergennes community members generated at the set of forums in March. Over 100 community members discussed the ideas and championed directions that they thought would have the greatest long-term benefit for Vergennes, voted for their top priorities for action, and joined task groups to move them forward.

As a result of this meeting, the three priorities for action to advance the community were:

- Improve Transportation and Parking
- Advance the Vergennes Economy and Expand the Community and Economic Development Capacity of the City
- Redevelop the Vergennes Falls Basin and Open a Riverwalk

The final Community Visit meeting was held on Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at the Bixby Library. The VCRD brought a new Visiting Team of state, federal, regional, non-profit, and philanthropic leaders to Vergennes to help task force groups as they developed action steps and resource ideas to move these projects forward. In conclusion, the public forums were very well received by attendees and many agreed that it was a worthwhile and productive process. The sharing of opinions and ideas through these workshops and the public opinion survey only helped to infuse the Planning Commission with a strong sense of community support. The summaries, notes, and ideas generated from the public participation process provided some clear directives, and encouragement, for the plan update.

As a direct outgrowth of the 2014 Community Visit, the City of Vergennes received a Strong Communities, Better Connections (SCBC) grant from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD) to develop a Master Plan for our downtown and the Otter Creek Basin. The goal of the SCBC program is to encourage communities to proactively coordinate land use decisions and transportation investments. Matching funds are provided by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) and the City of Vergennes. Technical support was provided by ACRPC.

The Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan used a variety of methods to reach out to and listen to the public. The methods used to gather input and feedback from the public included the following:

- Website
- Intercept surveys
- Outreach to bicycle tour companies
- Business owner and developer interviews
- Walking tours of the study area
- Pop-up demonstration event of temporary curb extensions, splitter islands, gateways, bike lanes, and an information kiosk
- Open House at the Vergennes Opera House
- Farmers' Market table for project Q + A

The recommendations resulting from the public process were organized according to the three Master Plan goals:

- Improving the transportation connections between the Basin and Downtown
- Developing the Basin's draw as a recreation destination
- Identifying economic development issues and opportunities through a market analysis

While the Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan is separate from the Municipal Development Plan, many of the goals and recommendations from the former are included within the latter.

On September 13, 2018, the Planning Commission hosted a public forum attended by over 70 community members to discuss four specific areas in the Municipal Development Plan. Local businesses contributed refreshments and door prizes. Small group discussions were conducted on the following topics:

- Regarding the High Density Residential District – Do the current dimensional standards (for minimum lot size, front yard set-back, rear yard set-back, building height, etc.) make sense for a "high density" district? What should development look like in this district? What type of development should be approved (or denied) by the City for this district?
- Regarding the Agricultural and Rural Residential District – Given our small size and identity as a city center for several local communities, should we continue to have this district and, if not, what should that area look like in the future?
- What should the City look like in the future in terms of accessibility / connectivity / pedestrian safety, including: walking and biking options (trails? paths? the rail trail? a greenbelt connecting right-of-ways?); vehicle speeds, tractor trailer truck traffic, safer crossings; and is the ½ mile radius around downtown truly walkable and, if not, how is that goal to be achieved?
- How will the City meet the community's energy needs in the future?

The discussions from this public hearing helped inform the updates contained in this plan.

Section 1.4 About Our Plan

The City of Vergennes is enabled by state statute to develop and adopt a Municipal Development Plan pursuant to Title 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117. The plan automatically expires eight years after the last date of adoption. Before the plan expires, state law requires that it be reviewed and the information on which it is based be updated. The City may either readopt the plan with updated data, or develop and adopt a new plan. The City's first Municipal Development Plan was created December 19, 1972 and last adopted by the City Council in March 10, 2020.

The Municipal Development Plan is the tool we use to set broad goals and objectives for the community, and to guide land use, growth, development, conservation, and business activities in Vergennes. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring the continuing viability of our community's cultural and historic traditions. It is a research document as well as a guide that helps give direction to our local leaders, the business community, and private citizens. It helps us to make informed decisions about a broad range of issues and to create the type of community that we envision. The Municipal Development Plan is also the key to implementing local regulations and allows us to participate in

certain state programs and receive grant contributions and external funding for municipal projects. All developments and subdivisions, including those required to obtain a permit under Act 250, must conform to the City's duly adopted Municipal Development Plan.

The preparation and maintenance of the Municipal Development Plan is the responsibility of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission submits the plan to the City Council for final review and adoption. This plan will continue to evolve and grow with changing conditions, needs, and opportunities and is intended to be a "living" document.

Section 1.5 Goals

It is the intent and purpose of this Municipal Development Plan to encourage the appropriate use and development of all lands and structures in the city in a manner which will promote the health, growth, safety, efficiency, prosperity, economy, and general welfare; to protect all residents from overcrowding, from traffic congestion and the invasion of through traffic, and from the loss of peace, quiet and privacy; and, to protect and preserve significant natural features, wildlife, and the health of natural systems.

In order to fulfill the intent and purpose of this plan, the City of Vergennes shall pursue the following general goals:

A. Maintain open and public decision-making processes that take into account evolving community needs.
B. Develop and maintain the city as an economic, industrial, and public service center for northern Addison County.
C. Work with surrounding municipalities to develop and implement mutually beneficial planning objectives.

Section 1.6 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Work with regional, state, and federal agencies including the Vergennes Partnership, Addison County Regional Planning Commission, and the Addison County Economic Development Corporation in pursuant of goals outlined in this plan.

Chapter 2. SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

Section 2.1 Our Housing and Population

Information and characteristics about our population provide the foundation for how we should adequately plan for our City's infrastructure and services, from housing, to transportation, to community services. Whatever the issue or trend may be, understanding how our community changes allows us to better meet the needs and desires of our residents now and in the future.

Section 2.1.1 Historic and Current Settlement Patterns

Vergennes is a reasonably concentrated urban settlement, much more than its surrounding communities or nearly any other municipality in Vermont, with 1052.5 people per square mile (compared to Addison County at 48.1 and Vermont at 67.7 per square mile).[1] Early housing and development centered on the downtown area, the adjacent mills, and work along the Otter Creek. The city was created in a classic New England town-centered pattern. Relative to today, houses were smaller, had less land, and were built closer to one another and to City streets. Households were also larger with extended families typically living in one home.

In the 1940s, an increase in the use of the automobile and consumer demand spawned an outward growth in the city with one-family houses spaced further apart than their predecessors. Lot sizes and setbacks increased in order to accommodate larger houses with garages and lawns. As housing spread, it continued to be relatively concentrated, partly in order to minimize the costs of extending municipal water and sewer systems as well as the limitations of the City's small land area.

One reason residents enjoy living in Vergennes is the balance of housing types and price ranges. The mix of housing types includes one- and two-family dwellings, multiple-family buildings/apartments, condominiums, mobile homes, nursing homes, and senior housing. Because of our relatively low housing costs, low crime rate, good schools, historic and user-friendly library, recreation facilities, opera house, dining opportunities, shopping, and walkability/increased connectivity to such, Vergennes is a very attractive community to homebuyers throughout Addison County. Coincidently, much of the "housing demand" in Vergennes comes from outside our community as a shortage of affordable housing units in Chittenden County as well as our county seat of Middlebury have also contributed to Vergennes home sales.

Section 2.1.2 Population

Since its establishment in 1788, Vergennes' population has been on a relatively steady incline, with some dips along the way. More recently, the City has seen an increase from 2,588 in 2010 to 2,606 as

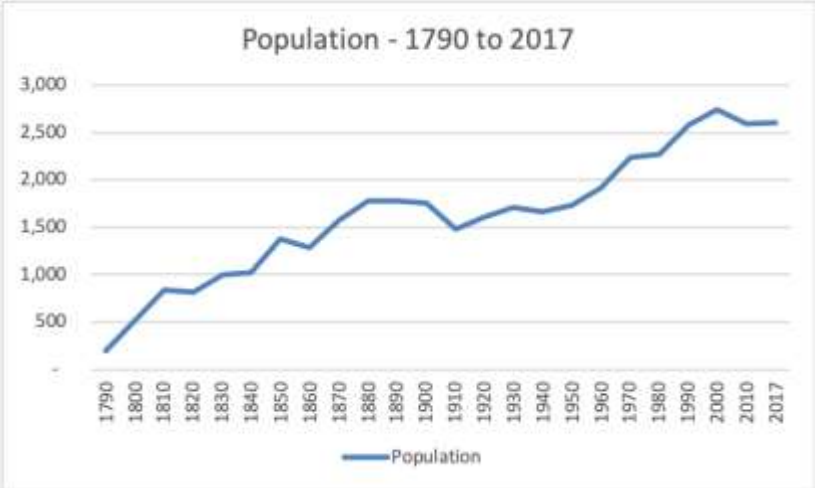
1 Census data: ACS 2017 5-year

of 2017[2]. Historically, population in Vergennes rises in good economic times and levels out or dips in times of economic distress. This is illustrated in the graph on the following page.

Population growth in Vergennes in the 1990s was modest, due to slow economic growth. The population in 1990 was 2,578 and 2,741 in 2000 - a 6.3% growth rate; in 2010 it was 2,588 – showing a decline from 2000 of -5.6%; and in 2017, Vergennes experienced a 0.7% increase to 2,606 from 2010. [2]

The age distribution of our City is generally spread out (see chart below). The median age at the 2017 Census update was 43.6 years (an increase from 36.9 years from 2010) and similarly for Addison County which is 43.4 and for Vermont 42.8. 57% of the population of Vergennes is women. Only 2.6% of women from 15-50 years old have given birth from 2016-2017 which is about half the rate in Addison County (5%) and about three-fifths of the rate in Vermont (4.3%). [3]

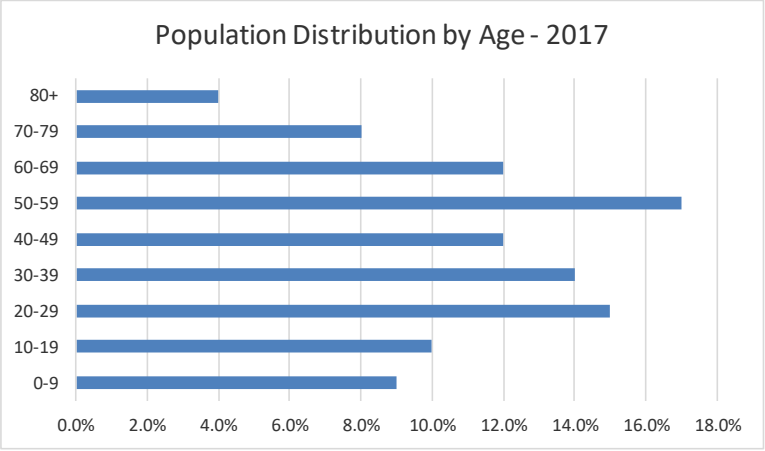
Figure 2.1



U.S. Census Bureau

In addition, our city's rate of natural increase (birth rate minus death rate) has declined significantly from 249 people in 1960 to minus 5 people in 2012 and minus 4 people in 2018[4]. This indicates that we are no longer experiencing birth rate population growth, in part because of a decline in birth rates and families with children which is in line with state trends as well.

Figure 2.2



U.S. Census Bureau

Many factors influence population changes from economic conditions - cost of living, housing availability, commuting costs, childcare expenses, etc. For example, if the

2 Census data: ACS 2017 5-year

[3] Census data: ACS 2017 5-year

[4] Annual Report for the Year 2018 – City of Vergennes, Vermont

populations of Chittenden and Addison County continue to grow, and migration out of the city centers into the suburbs and surrounding towns increases, then we may experience pressure on housing and land inventory in Vergennes and our neighboring towns. If our aging population continues to grow, it may amplify the demand on goods and services, particularly healthcare and the need for more institutional, non-family housing. If our birth rates continue to decline, school enrollment also declines and will contribute to changing per pupil costs and educational tax rates.

Section 2.1.3 Housing

Housing and the number of housing units are largely affected by our population and household size. A household includes all the people who live and work together. A household can also consist of one person living alone. Several households can occupy one housing unit, which explains why a town may have fewer housing units than it does households.

Figure 2.3

U.S. Census Bureau

Average household size helps to measure housing unit use and future housing demand. For example, if the average household size were to decrease from 3 to 1.5 people, then the number of housing units needed for each household could potentially double or even triple, even with a declining population. More households also amplify the demand for housing and services as well as the need for more land use and more materials consumed for construction.

There were 1,162 households in Vergennes in 2017. Average household size in Vergennes has been generally consistent with county or state averages, which indicate a trend towards smaller families. Since 1990, average

Figure 2.4

Vergennes Housing			
Year	# Sales	Median Sales Price	% Change
2014	26	$191,150	
2015	31	$183,500	-4%
2016	24	$209,279	+14%
2017	18	$222,500	+6%
2018	21	$229,000	+3%

Housingdata.org

household size in our city has seen a steady decline: 1990- 2.5%, 2010 - 2.3%, 2017 – 2.2%. [5]

In 2017, there were 1,214 housing units in Vergennes versus 1,072 from 2010. More than half of the housing stock is one-family (60.1%) and primarily owner-occupied (60%); compared to Addison County, 72% are owner occupied units. More recently, from 2012 to 2014, permits were issued for 14 units, and from 2015-2017 permits were issued for 18 units.

According to the 2017 Census Update, 77% of the city's residents had moved into Vergennes since 1995. In the last five years (2014-2018), the median sale price for all housing types in Vergennes has increased almost 20% due to low inventory combined with increased demand for communities like Vergennes.

There is a growing gap between household income and affordable housing. The generally accepted definition of "affordable housing" is if a household is paying no more than 30 percent of its income for rent and utilities or for mortgage, taxes, and insurance. This standard does not include the rising costs of other necessities, such as health care, fuel, and child care. The data for owner households by housing costs as a percentage of household income in 2017 shows that 16% of Vergennes' homeowners paid 50% or higher of their household income for housing expenses, and 30% paid 30% or more. Comparing to Addison County, it is 12% and 31% respectively. For renters in Vergennes, 20% paid 50% or higher of their household income towards gross rent, and 42% paid 30% or higher; in Addison County, the calculated figures are 18% and 45% respectively. [6]

As Vergennes grows and develops, it is imperative that the City maintains a diversity of housing for its current residents. The median household income in the City is $56,250 (see Figure 2.5 in Section 2.2), meaning the home cost, for these residents, should be about $178,000. As the 2018 average selling price in Vergennes was $229,000, it is difficult for residents to purchase a home in their city. Therefore, renting is the only option for many, and rental prices are increasing also due to supply and demand. Even though increasing home and rental values is often a positive indicator for the economy, efforts should be taken to include housing for the existing population.

Who can afford what?

- The median purchase price for a Vergennes city home in 2018 reached $229,000. To afford a $230,000 house, a purchaser would need a household income of at least $72,580 as well as $21,714 in cash. *
- The median income for all Vergennes households was $56,250 in 2017. A household with that income could afford a home priced at about $178,000, assuming it has about $17,395 in cash for closing costs and down payment. *
- For a $329,000 newly-constructed home, a household would need an annual income of about $103,500 and close to $30,000 for closing costs and down payment to afford that new home. *
- In Addison County, an average fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment is $870. A household income would need to be $34,800, or $16.73/hour, to afford this apartment.
- In Addison County, an average fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is $1,021. A household income would need to be $40,840, or $19.63/hour, to afford this apartment.

**Assumptions of 5% down payment and average interest rates, property taxes, private mortgage insurance costs, and closing costs.*

HousingData.org

[5] **Census Data: ACS 2017 5-year**

[6] **Housingdata.org**

Vergennes, along with Addison Housing Works, has made progress with accommodating such needs with two projects on Armory Lane. Armory Lane Senior Housing, constructed in 2012, consists of 25 rental units for low- to moderate-income elderly (62+) residents. Vergennes Community Housing, which broke ground in 2019 and open in 2020, is a 24 unit apartment complex that will allow for the creation of seven market-rate units serving households making up to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI), in addition to the 17 apartments for households making less than 60% of AMI. Vergennes Community Housing will bring much-needed affordable and workforce housing to downtown Vergennes.

Section 2.1.4 Goals

A. Grow the Vergennes population by 5%.
B. Increase housing stock to accommodate increased population.
C. Maintain desirable housing opportunities for a range of different incomes.

Section 2.1.5 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Support public, private, and/or non-profit efforts to rehabilitate and increase the city's housing stock.
2. Amend Zoning and Subdivision Regulations to support criteria for the Neighborhood Development Area program.
3. Promote and assist with the Opportunity Zone program to encourage new development.
4. Accommodate a range of housing options, including owner-occupied, rental, affordable and manufactured units to meet the needs of all Vergennes residents.
5. Continue to enforce the Vermont Department of Health minimum health and safety standards as they apply to residential rental units.
6. Ensure that safe, affordable housing is available for the elderly. A range of living situations including, but not limited to, independent living and assisted living should be considered.
7. Encourage partnerships with non-profit housing agencies to provide assistance with financing affordable housing projects, as feasible.
8. Support the development or redevelopment of new low-cost housing and other low-market housing to meet the needs of all residents.
9. Encourage development that is compatible with historic context, existing architecture, and community character.

Section 2.2 Our Economy

Our community has retained the feel and function of a traditional New England town. Although small in stature and enterprises, over the decades Vergennes' economy has continued to grow. Increases in housing, population, new industries, and investments in commercial enterprises are just a few of the factors that have contributed to relatively stable local economy.

Over the years, our city has seen significant investment in commercial properties. While employment grew in high-wage sectors, the percentage of Vergennes residents working outside the

city and/or county grew as well. Collins Aerospace and Northland Job Corps Center continue to be the dominant employers in the City.

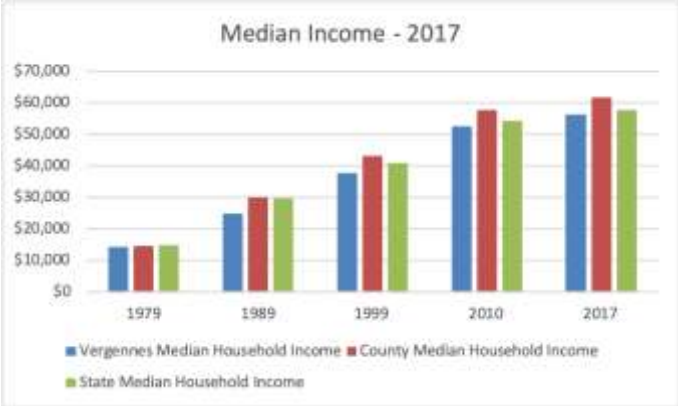
The Central Business District, along with The Northern Gateway, Commercial, and Industrial zones, continue to undergo extensive renovations and new construction to both public and private infrastructure. Specialty retail as well as new restaurants and emerging food and beverage industries have played a significant role in the revitalization of the City while adding to job growth in these sectors. Private investment, in combination with grants, historic tax credits and low-interest loans through our Designated Downtown status conferred by the State, has resulted in light-manufacturing and commercial activity in several previously marginal buildings. The result is that more visitors are drawn into the downtown not only from Addison County but the broader region as well.

Emerging beverage industries, like Hired Hand Brewing, Co and Shacksbury Cider, have played a significant role in the City's continued revitalization.

Through the aforementioned Designated Downtown status, The Vergennes Partnership and their Economic Development committee continue to focus on their goals of 1) finding new purpose for downtown's enterprises; 2) helping businesses expand and recruiting new ones to downtown; 3) converting unused space into productive property and sharpens the competitiveness of the business enterprises. The committee members also focus on underdeveloped and undeveloped parcels within our city limits; work with property owners to help find suitable renters, purchasers, and/or tend to their community needs and questions; and communicate with residential housing developers and keep them informed of housing programs such as the state Neighborhood Development Areas (NDA) and the state Opportunity Zone designation which is part of the federal Opportunity Zones program established by the "Investing in Opportunity Act".

For such a small area, our economic base is equally spread among varying sectors. The larger number of businesses we have provides us with a higher degree of local diversity and stability to endure business turnovers. It does not, however, lessen the impact of larger economic events that affect local economies. To maintain the character of Vergennes as an economic, social, and cultural center, we must pursue growth that balances high yield (in terms of economic activity and job creation) with low impact on our community's infrastructure. Creation of economic opportunity within the city is critical to providing sustainable and invigorating employment opportunities balancing our community's talented labor resources.

Figure 2.5



US Census Bureau

Section 2.2.1 Employment and Wages

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, Vergennes had a labor force of 1,371 people in December 2018 (compared to 1,420 from August 2013), 2.2% of which were unemployed which is a large decrease from 6% in August 2013. As of 2017, over 29% of adult residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to county and state rates of 37% and 37%. The average commute time to work is about 25 minutes.

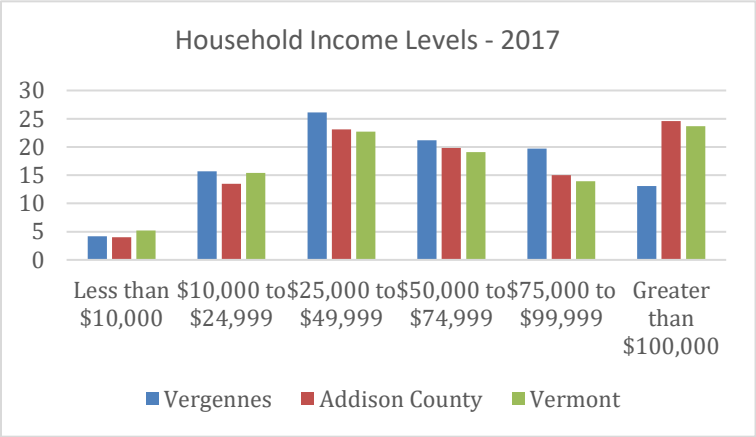
Restaurants have played a significant role in the City's revitalization.

As of 2017, the median income for a household living in the city was $56,250. This is $5,625 less than the county household median and $1,558 less than the state household median. Median household incomes for the county and state were $61,875 and $57,808.

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, the average annual wage paid by Vergennes' employers in 2017 was $52,039, which is nearly $6,200 greater than the county and almost $6,000 greater than the state.

The difference between income and wages in 2017 can be attributed to people's place of residence and where people work, as well as the possibility that more than one worker supports a household. About 10% of the City's population were below the poverty line (compared to 7.8% for Addison County and 11.4% statewide).

Figure 2.6



Housingdata.org

Vergennes faces a number of challenges in upcoming years, including the ability to effectively compete for tourist dollars in an increasingly competitive market; to sustain the local economy through national economic cycles; growing number of internet-based sales versus shopping at traditional "brick and mortar" establishments; and to provide goods, services, and jobs that pay living wages to support our residents.

Section 2.3 Goals

A. Maintain/achieve 100% business occupancy in the Central Business District.
B. Add a minimum of one (net) large-scale employer (10+ employees).
C. Promote tourist attractions, festivals, and local arts.

Section 2.4 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Establish and maintain funding for a municipal employee Economic Development Coordinator.
2. Maintain and promote the Downtown Designation as a tax incentive to continue the revitalization of the Central Business District.
3. Support the Vergennes Partnership as needed when new business ventures are considering Vergennes.
4. Continue to support additional small to mid-size industrial and commercial businesses that are compatible with the character of the city.
5. Support a committee to promote the economic development of Vergennes. Develop a plan to attract new businesses and support existing businesses that are compatible with the character of Vergennes.
6. Establish a capital improvement plan and budget for the City.
7. Work with regional, state and federal agencies including the Vergennes Partnership, Addison County Regional Planning Commission, and the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to:
    a. Promote high yield/low impact growth, particularly undeveloped and under-developed parcels in the Industrial District and the new Northern Gateway District.
    b. Develop a targeted marketing plan for job creation.
    c. Promote tourism-related commerce.
8. Maintain and enhance the appearance, function, and commercial viability of the city by improving parking, sidewalks, streetscape, pedestrian amenities, and streets; move utility lines underground.
9. Create and maintain innovative promotional materials to attract new businesses and support existing businesses.

Chapter 3. SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Section 3.1 Our Community Facilities and Services

The citizens of Vergennes depend on a variety of volunteer, public, and private services for health, safety, utilities, access (roads), and city management. Our community has a responsibility and an interest in ensuring that the required services and facilities are available as needed and will continue to be available into the future.

Section 3.1.1 City Hall and the Vergennes Opera House

Our City Hall was built in 1897. A conference room and administrative offices including the city manager, city clerk, and zoning administrator currently occupy the ground floor. The historic Vergennes Opera House is located on the second floor.

Friends of the Vergennes Opera House (FVOH) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration, revitalization, and preservation of the Opera House and arts in our community. They are largely responsible for fundraising and the ongoing management of the Vergennes Opera House. The FVOH have raised and spent over $1,250,000 on restoring the Vergennes Opera House; City expenditures and grants bring the total building investment at about $2,000,000.

A local artist created the clock/sign located just outside City Hall

The restoration of the Opera House is ongoing with several modern improvements completed which include heating, air conditioning, electrical systems as well as the entire exterior of the building (including new storm windows and painting). Also completed is the sprinkler system making the entire building compliant with updated fire and safety codes and regulations. In the lobby, the FVOH operates the restored ticket booth during events for ticket sales. This space is also shared with the Vergennes Partnership between events.

In the beginning of 2014, the FVOH started working with the City to upgrade and improve the entryway and courtyard leading to City Hall. Upgrades include a restored marquee, new concrete sidewalk, and granite curbing to complement the existing city scape improvements along Main Street. A twenty-five year lease which provides for a twenty-five year renewal option between the City of Vergennes and the Friends of the Vergennes Opera House was approved by the voters at the 2004 Annual City Meeting.

Section 3.1.2 Police Protection

The Vergennes Police Department is a municipal law enforcement agency providing services for the City of Vergennes. Currently, the department is comprised of eight full-time officers, one part-time officer, a part-time administrative assistant, and a part-time dog warden. Operating hours range from

nineteen to twenty-three hours a day, every day of the year, with officers on call for the period of time that there is not an officer on duty.

The Department enforces Vermont motor vehicle law, criminal and juvenile law, as well as city ordinances. The department provides complete police services and works in collaboration with the community to address and solve any civil issues. Staff participate on various state committees who help develop new legislation aimed to protect our communities and highways. The department staff also works closely with the city and area schools, providing mentoring and education to students, and serves as truant officers.

The full-service police department has proactively pursued individual as well as collective training, and includes specialty officers such as a state drug task force and DEA trained narcotics investigation officer, a "use of force and firearms" instructor, a NTOA (National Tactical Officer) certified instructor, a police K9 officer, a certified evidence officer, a DUI instructor, Drug Recognition Expert officers, a Core Values and Leadership/ Community Policing Instructor, and a county traffic safety officer. Many officers are also death investigation certified.

In March of 2014, the Vergennes Police Department moved into its new station at 8 Main Street. This state-of-the-art facility provides an optimal space for police officers to investigate crimes, process persons in custody, and train its staff. The facility was designed and constructed with a future target capacity for ten full-time officers, as well as a full-time administrative assistant, and a school resource officer for the Addison Northwest Supervisory District.

The department continues to make effective use of available federal and state grant monies to upgrade its communications and information systems in order to make officers safer and more effective in the performance of their duties. A heavy emphasis is placed on response, follow-up, availability, and approachability by our police officers.

Section 3.1.3 Fire Protection

The first organized fire protection in Vergennes began in September 1801 when the City Council appointed a number of fire wardens to patrol the city. In January 1876, the Otter Creek Hook and Ladder Company, Number One, the City's first volunteer fire department was formed. Over the years, equipment was updated, from horse-drawn hose carts to modern, motorized fire trucks. Vergennes has enjoyed a robust volunteer fire department from the 1870s to the present time.

Vergennes has a thirty-five person municipal fire department with an extensive countywide mutual aid agreement with 17 area towns plus several towns in Essex County, New York. The department serves our city as well as the surrounding towns of Panton, Waltham, and part of Ferrisburgh.

Major Fire Apparatus		
YEAR	TRUCK	SPECIFICATIONS
1994	Engine	1,500 gpm, 1,000 gallon capacity, Class A Foam system
1994	Engine	1,500 gpm, 1,500 gallon capacity

1998/2008	Hose-reel Pumper	1,250 gpm front mount pump, 300 gallon capacity, hose reel capable of holding 2500 feet of 4” large diameter hose
1998	Ladder Truck	1,750 gpm pump, 300 gallon capacity, Class A Foam system, 75’ ladder and built in generator.
2002	Rescue/Pumper	1,500 gpm pump, 500 gallon capacity, Class A Foam system, 10kW generator, Cascade air system, hydraulic rescue equipment, water and ice rescue equipment, high and low angle rescue equipment and a large assortment of rescue equipment.
2011	Pick up	Personnel carrier and brush fire equipment.
2018	Engine	

Capitol Replacement Plan		
YEAR	EQUIPMENT	ESTIMATED COST
2018	1994 Engine	$350,000
2018	Start truck replacement program in which one truck is replaced every 5-8 years	$350,000

Our department is housed in a modern three-bay fire station which includes a 4,500 square foot apparatus room, meeting rooms, kitchen, showers and restrooms, hose tower, storage rooms, communications center, and office. The station is designed to permit community use by the public and meets all requirements for handicapped accessibility.

In 1988, our department initiated a cadet firefighter program with the expressed purpose to encourage youth to develop an awareness and understanding of the role of the volunteer firefighter in the community. The cadets provide assistance to the department and participate in all required training, which enables them to become fully qualified for admission to the department upon reaching the age of eighteen.

The New England Fire Rating Bureau of the Insurance Services Office issued the Vergennes Fire Department a rating of four (based on a rating scale of a low of nine to a high of one). The best rating attainable by a volunteer response department is four. The significant factors in maintaining this impressive rating is a combination of excellent response time, personnel training, the performance of apparatus, and water flow through the hydrant system. Commercial and industrial properties, multiple-family dwellings, and municipal and school buildings benefit from significantly reduced insurance premiums as a result of this rating.

The department maintains a committee of officers and firefighters whose purpose is to review any building developments within the city relating to road location, width, hydrant location, and other matters relating to fire protection. Plans are reviewed and reports are given to the Planning Commission and Development Review Board.

Section 3.1.4 Emergency Response Services

The Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS) provides our emergency response services. It is a non-profit volunteer agency serving Addison, Bridport, Ferrisburgh, New Haven, Panton, and Waltham, as well as Vergennes. There has been a significant increase in the number of calls over the last few years, and the trend is likely to continue. For those without insurance or with deductibles, VARS offers a yearly subscription program to alleviate financial hardships.

While the VARS is required to respond to any call regardless of ability to pay, in January 1995, they began billing patients and insurance companies for services provided. The VARS Community Training Center offers CPR and first aid classes to individuals, organizations, and private groups. VARS volunteers provide bicycle helmet fitting and child seat installations, every third Saturday of the month, at no charge to the community.

Section 3.1.5 Public Works

Our Public Works Department is located in the municipal garage which was constructed in 1980. This facility allows for an efficient means of housing City vehicles and equipment. The old Public Works garage was initially converted to the recycling center; but, it is now used for storage; trash and recycling drop-off activities are conducted on the grounds adjacent to the building. The salt shed is also within the compound area and is scheduled for replacement.

Our Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining roads, sidewalks, municipal buildings, and parks. Additionally, the Department clears snow from both roads and sidewalks, receiving frequent praise from the community for their significant and successful efforts to maintain our roads during winter weather events.

The City's salt shed is scheduled for replacement

Section 3.1.6 Water Service

The Vergennes-Panton Water District (VPWD) has provided Vergennes with water service since 1973. The District is a municipal corporation (24 V.S.A. § 3341) chartered in the State of Vermont. It serves the City of Vergennes and the Town of Panton, with oversight provided by a Board of Water Commissioners with four representatives from Vergennes and three from Panton. Our water is treated at a facility at Arnold Bay in Panton and pumped into the distribution system. Water is stored in the southeastern corner of the City of Vergennes at the Stone Crusher property.

Between 2011 and 2013, the water treatment facility underwent significant upgrades. The work was designed and overseen by Otter Creek Engineering. Enhancements include installation of new filters, new pumping equipment and variable flow devices (VFDs), new computer software to enhance operators' control of the plant, a new dehumidification system, and heating system.

The system is expected to have adequate residential, commercial, and industrial capacity well into the next decade. According to population projections completed by Otter Creek Engineering, the plant will be capable of meeting the future growth needs of the Vergennes-Panton area. The new plant will allow for a 17% increase of daily water usage from the previous maximum daily demand of 990,000 gallons per day to 1,330,000 gallons per day.

Like all water systems, VPWD requires ongoing maintenance. Twenty-five to thirty-five percent of the Vergennes lines are old and will be upgraded as issues arise or as development drives the need for additional capacity.

Vergennes – Panton Water District Average Consumption	
Customer Type	Average Gallons / Day Consumption
Residential (4,500 customers)	270,505
Industrial / Commercial	133,207
Agricultural / Commercial / Industrial outside of Vergennes	192,025

Section 3.1.7 Wastewater Treatment

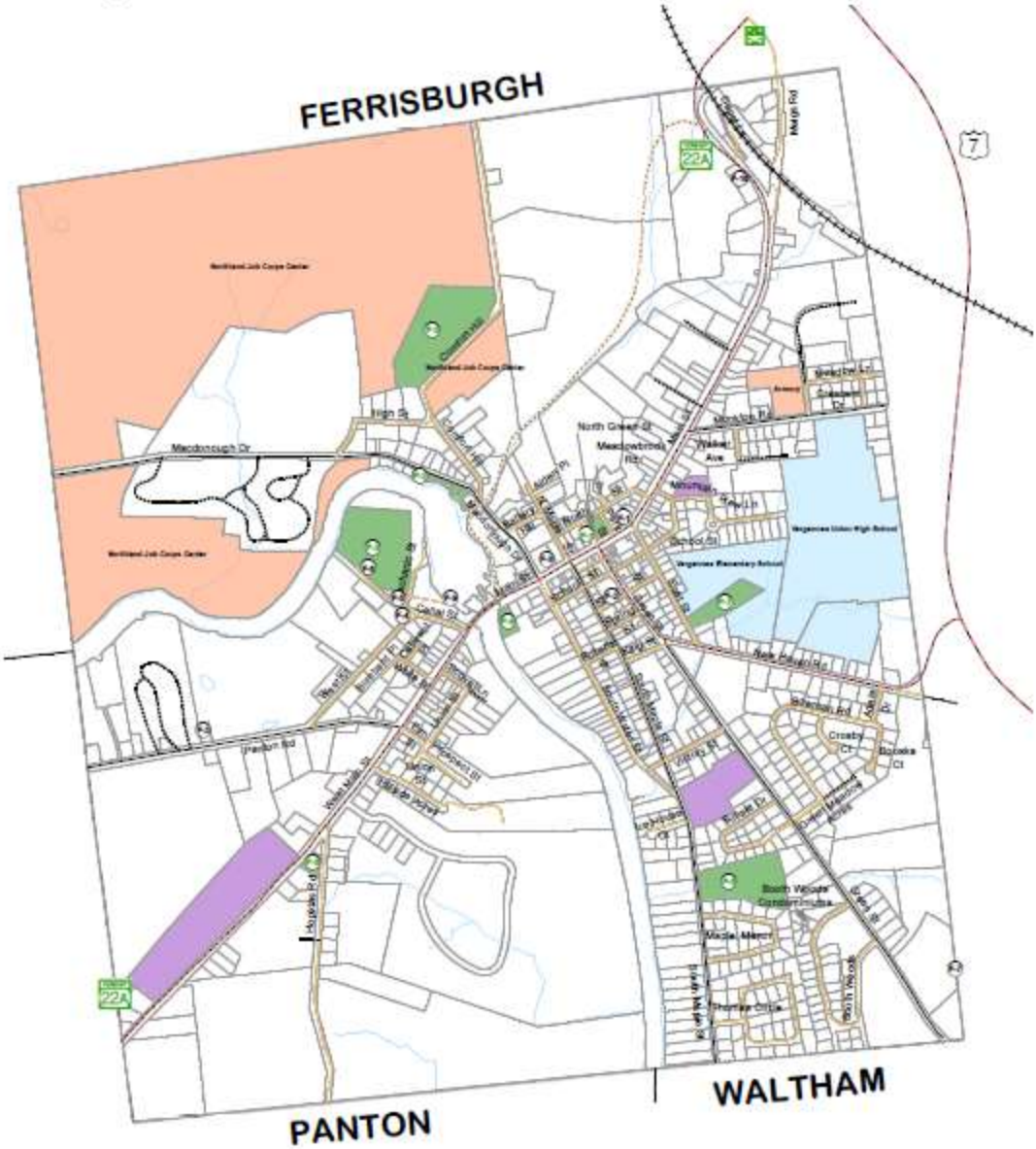
The upgraded tertiary wastewater treatment system is capable of treating wastewater at an average design flow of 750,000 gallons per day. Based on the flow records for the year ending December 2013, the plant treated an average of 329,000 gallons per day of wastewater.

While the sewer system has capacity to serve our current average daily flow rate, it does on seldom occasions overflow into the Otter Creek during significant rain or snow melt events. The City has a mitigation agreement with the State which includes reducing inflow and infiltration through sewer pipe replacement and other measures. The system is expected to have adequate residential, commercial, and industrial capacity well into the next decade if the remaining inflow/infiltration is eliminated. The City is also addressing illegal roof drain connections, sump pumps, and other devices that deliver stormwater to the wastewater collection system. There still remain areas within the city that need attention relative to the upgrading of the collection system.

In a 2007 Charter change, the City voted that extending sewer outside the city limits requires approval by the voters on a case-by-case basis. Respondents to the Planning Commission's 2008 survey appeared divided on the question of what might constitute an appropriate sewer extension.

City of Vergennes

Community Facilities and Utilities



- Public Parks
- State of Vermont
- Public School Land
- Cemetery
- Proposed Rail Trail

Public/Semi-Public Facilities
F-1 City Hall
F-2 Fire Station
F-3 Vergennes Area Rescue Squad
F-4 Recycling Center
F-5 Public Works
F-6 Wastewater Treatment Plant
F-7 Water Supply Storage Reservoir

Public Parks
P-1 City Green (0.6 ac)
P-2 MacDonough (1.2 ac)
P-3 Vergennes Falls (6.5 ac)
P-4 Pump House (0.2 ac)
P-5 Macintosh Memorial (11.9 ac)
P-6 Fisher Memorial (7.1 ac)
P-7 Veterans Memorial (2.7 ac)
P-8 Western School District (0.2 ac)

Sources:

Parcel Boundaries: Prepared under State contract, 2017.

0.5 0.25 0 Miles

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

ACRPC 10/2019

Section 3.1.8 Stormwater

According to a GIS data layer prepared in 2011, there are 217.59 acres of impervious surface in Vergennes (i.e. paved roads, parking lots, roof tops) which accounts for 13.4% of the city. Approximately 25% of the impervious area is roads, with the remainder being split between public and private properties. There are four parcels of impervious surface in the City larger than three acres: the privately-owned property on Meigs Road (formerly the DR Power Company facility) and Collins Aerospace properties, and the publicly-owned Northland Job Corps Center, and Vergennes Union High School properties.

Vergennes has a separated stormwater drainage system. The City developed up-to-date municipal drainage maps in a GIS format in 2012. The maps show the paths that stormwater runoff travels from where it falls as precipitation to receiving waters. The maps include features like pipes and outfalls.

In 2018, Watershed Consulting Associates prepared a Stormwater Master Plan (SMP) for the City with funding from the Lake Champlain Basin Program. The SMP identified and prioritized 27 sites in the City for improved stormwater management. For the top priority sites, 30% design level plans were developed. The sites and treatments were: 1) a gravel wetland at the Waste Water Treatment Facility, 2) a gravel wetland at the High School, and 3) a series of underground chambers and filters at Settler's Park. In addition to the 30% design plans, the SMP included landscape renderings for each of the three sites and for a series of streetscape bioretention options along Main Street. Funding to move from design to implementation for these projects may be available through the Ecosystem Restoration Program of DEC, Section 319 funds or the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Sanitary sewer pipes identified as 'high priority' for replacement in Vergennes 2018 Stormwater Master Plan (SMP) prepared by Watershed Consulting Associates. See the SMP for methodology. Lengths listed should be within +/- 5% of actual lengths.

Pipe Reach	**Priority**	**Length (ft)**	**Potential Cost**
Meigs Road to Coventry Lane (approx.)	High	1,927	$19,271 – 385,436
Monkton Rd (near High School)	High	877	$8,770 – 175,375
Main Street (near Town Hall)	High	450	$4,500 – 90,000
Green Street	High	1,107	$11,007 – 221,400
Lower Main Street (near Otter Creek Bridge)	High	1,397	$13,970 – 279,400
MacDonough Drive (High St to Comfort Hill)	High	1,403	$14,030 – 280,600
Victory Street	High	573	$5,730 – 114,602
Green Street (Green Meadow Acres towards Victory Street)	High	877	$8,770 – 175,400
Maple Manor	High	1,339	$13,390 – 267,800
From Waltham Town Line along Otter Creek to just past Maple Manor	High	1,841	$18,410 – 368,200
Upper New Haven Road	High/Medium	1,095	$10,950 – 219,000
Panton Road to W Main Street	High	415	$4,150 – 83,000
Scoval Lane across W Main Street	High	364	$3,640 – 72,800
West Main Street (near Canal Street)	High	434	$4,340 – 86,800
UTC Aerospace Campus	High	601	$6,010 – 120,200
Northlands Job Corps Campus	High/Medium	1,699	$16,990 – 339,800
Pipe along Otter Creek Below S Water Street	Medium	848	$8,480 – 169,600

As part of the SMP, the City's Sanitary Sewer Plans were digitized and georeferenced. The SMP categorized the piping as high, medium or low priority for repair or replacement, and found approximately 16,100 feet of high, 1,400 feet of medium, and 75,000 feet of low priority pipe in the City.

Section 3.1.9 Solid Waste/Materials Management

Vergennes complies with the Vermont Universal Recycling Law (Act 148) of 2012 by our membership in the Addison County Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD). ACSWMD manages the solid waste of its member municipalities through the guidelines of its Solid Waste Implementation Plan approved by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the Addison County Regional Planning Commission.

ACSWMD operates the District Transfer Station in Middlebury which accepts Municipal Solid Waste and single stream recyclables from haulers, construction and demolition debris, hazardous waste from households and Conditionally Exempt Generators, leaf and yard waste and clean wood for offsite composting, electronic waste, and many other special wastes such as appliances. The ACSWMD's Waste Management Ordinance regulates the separation, collection, transport, recycling, and disposal of all solid waste within Addison County, with the exception of Hancock and Granville.

Vergennes residents may contract with a licensed private hauler for curbside pick-up of trash and recycling or may transport waste themselves to the mobile drop-off location next to the old Public Works garage in Vergennes. All haulers offering trash collection have to offer collection of mandated recyclables (and subsidize the residential recycling cost on the trash bag), and collection of leaf and yard waste. A private trash hauler is currently available on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. Vergennes operates the mobile drop-off location by contract. The private hauler charges customers by the bag for trash and recycling.

In 2014, ANR developed a new Vermont Materials Management Plan implementing Vermont's landmark Universal Recycling Law, or Act 148, in order to:

- Prevent waste from being generated;
- Promote sustainable materials management, with a preference for highest and best uses;
- Minimize reliance on waste disposal (landfill and incineration); and
- Conserve resources, minimize energy consumption, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other adverse environmental impacts.

Among other aspects of Act 148, recycling containers are now required to be located next to any trash bins in all public places. Vergennes responded quickly by purchasing appropriate containers for such locations as the bus stop and the city park. All certified facilities accepting trash are required to accept leaf and yard waste. Banned from landfill disposal are mandated recyclables, leaf and yard waste, and starting year 2020, all organics (food scraps). It is the goal of Vergennes and the ACSWMD to manage materials (solid waste) in a safe, legal, cost effective, and efficient manner while promoting recycling, reuse, and reduction of waste at the source.

Section 3.1.10 Health and Wellness Services

For a relatively small city, Vergennes has abundant and diverse private medical and health services. These include medical and dental practices, mental health and counselling services, as well as massage and alternative health services. There is a free medical clinic on alternating weeks at the Little City Family Practice facilities.

Our seniors are well served with a network of agencies including Support & Services at Home (SASH), Age Well, Addison County Home Health and Hospice (ACHHH), Addison County Transportation (ACTR) and Retired Seniors Volunteer Services (RSVP). Armory Lane Senior Housing is the center for most of the coordinated activities, senior community meals, and maintains the SASH Coordinator Office. Individual home visits can also be arranged through SASH, Age Well, and ACHHH.

SASH provides its participants with health and wellness assessments, healthy living planning, crisis team, transitions back home from a hospital or rehab stay, wellness nurse supports, and free exercise classes all designed to keep seniors living as well and independent as possible. The focus is prevention, education, and support.

Age Well provides the weekly senior luncheons, meals on wheels and coordinates a local restaurant meal program, open to all seniors with a minimum donation. Free transportation is provided by ACTR. Other activities provided through ACHHH and RSVP include foot clinics, Bone Builders and Rock & Roll exercise classes, Tai Chai, and Bingo.

Vergennes Movement on Main Street is a beautiful studio space providing indoor fitness activities and wellness classes for all ages which include meditation, stress reduction, intense cardio workouts, belly dancing and a variety of yoga classes. Vermont Sun Fitness Center and Vintage Fitness Studio of Vermont are both located in the Kennedy Brothers building. They offer a traditional gym facility and a variety of fitness classes.

Section 3.1.11 Parks and Recreation

We recognize that recreational programming for our citizens helps to foster an active, involved, and vibrant community. Many of our families depend on recreation programming to provide children with creative, supervised activities outside of the structure provided by the schools. City residents have access to several sites owned by the City of Vergennes. We also have access to a recreation trail connecting Vergennes Falls Park to Collins Aerospace. Below is a list of the recreation areas within our city (and shown on the Community Facilities and Utilities map on page 21):

Parcels Devoted to Recreation	
P-1 Vergennes City Green	0.6 acres
P-2 Macdonough Park	1.2 acres
P-3 Vergennes Falls Park	6.5 acres
P-4 Pumphouse Island	0.2 acres
P-5 MacIntosh Memorial Park	11.9 acres
P-6 Fisher Memorial Park (Currently undeveloped)	7.1 acres

P-7 Vergennes Veterans' Memorial Park*	2.7 acres
P-8 Western School District	0.2 acres
P-9 Settlers' Park	0.9 acres
P-10 Outdoor Classroom Property	8.13 acres
Total acres:	39.43 acres

* The Vergennes Veterans' Memorial Park includes tennis courts, basketball courts, ice-skating rink, skateboard park, and The Sam Fishman Memorial Pool.

While these areas are diverse in topography, size, and location, improvements should be made to make them safer, more enjoyable, connected, and relevant to the community. There is a lack of a public playground area within the city for young children to play in during school hours. In fact, 63% of the 2008 City Plan survey respondents identified neighborhood parks and playgrounds as a recreation facility that should be built.

Our City and community volunteers strongly support family and recreational activities in Vergennes including:

- Community Garden located at the Northland Job Corp Center property
- Eat on the Green
- Farmers' Market at the Vergennes City Green
- Vergennes Memorial Day parade and festivities
- Youth Fishing Derby
- Green-Up Day
- Summer time Concerts on the Green by the Little City Jazz Band and City Band
- Vergennes Day

Children enjoy petting goats at Vergennes Day

An essential part of successful recreational programs is easy and safe access. In our small community of Vergennes, this should be accomplished by ensuring safe pedestrian and bicycle connected travel throughout the city, including sidewalk improvements and enhanced crosswalk awareness and safety. Recent studies have identified opportunities for additional sidewalks and bike/pedestrian trails along the downstream side of the Otter Creek Bridge, as well as connecting our downtown schools with the surrounding neighborhoods and the Vergennes business and shopping centers.

In July of 2018, the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes purchased a permanent home on Armory Lane in Vergennes. The Club is in close proximity to Vergennes Union Middle/High School and has bus service from Vergennes Union Elementary School and Ferrisburgh Central School. The Club serves youth in grades 4 through 12 afterschool each day and during the summer. The members are welcomed by caring and competent staff and volunteers. They

offer a comprehensive meals program serving dinner and snacks each day, and breakfast and lunch during the summer months. In addition, the Club provides homework assistance, recreation, arts, and STEM enrichment activities. The new facility will also allow the Club to provide outdoor recreation opportunities as well as a community garden.

As funding permits, our residents and our community, would be well-served by continuing to retain the position of a recreation coordinator which was filled in early 2020. The recreation coordinator organizes activities for a variety of age groups in different venues throughout our city and will write a recreation newsletter outlining events.

In the 1930s, the City of Vergennes purchased and developed a water reservoir on a 685-acre parcel in the town of Bristol to supply water to the city. The so-called Watershed Property supplied the city with water until the Vergennes-Panton Water District completed its new treatment facility at Arnold Bay in Panton along with a new transmission main to the city. Because the Watershed Property no longer provided a direct benefit to the city, the City Council decided to market the property for sale. The proceeds from this sale are held in a reserve fund to be used for parks and recreation in the City of Vergennes as deemed appropriate by the City Council. In 1996, the voters authorized the sale of the Watershed Property for $300,000 to The Watershed Center, Inc., a non-profit corporation, to be used as a center for outdoor education and recreation. The "Watershed Fund" is still a resource today, being used to maintain and make improvements to the City's recreation facilities.

Below is a recommendations matrix from the Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan regarding maximization of recreation opportunities:

Priority		Category	Recommendations/Action Items	Timeframe	Estimated Order of Magnitude Cost	Potential Constraints	Anticipated Maintenance Needs
	2.1	Landscape	Unify Landscape and Materials to be Consistent	<5 years	>$100,000	None	Maintain and trim vegetation
	2.2	Landscape	Improve Canal Street and Vergennes Falls Park Entrance to be Less Industrial and More 'Park-Like'	<5 years	>$100,000	None	Trash pick up, maintain landscaping, signs
	2.3	Active	Enhance Water-Related Recreation Opportunities for Fishing, Boating, etc.	<5 years	>$1,000	Floodplain	Assign to vendor/contractor
	2.4	Active	Design and Maintain Streets as Part of the Walk/Bike Network to Improve Safety and Accessibility	Ongoing	>$100,000	Rights-of-way	Maintain pavement markings, signs, pavement conditions, etc.
	2.5	Active	Develop a Natural Play Area at Vergennes Falls Park	5-10 years	>$10,000	Floodplain (possibly)	Repair play area facilities as needed.
	2.6	Amenities	Develop a Dog Park at Vergennes Falls Park	5-10 years	>$10,000	Floodplain (possibly)	Clean dog park as needed, maintain fencing and signs, stock dog waste bag dispensers.

	2.7	Amenities	Construct Park Amenities at the Basin (i.e. bathroom/showers, benches, picnic tables, etc.)	5-10 years	>$100,000	Floodplain, maintenance, GMP site restrictions	Clean; keep plumbing functional; maintain planters, furniture, etc.; empty trash receptacles
	2.8	Interpretation	Coordinate Interpretive Elements Throughout the City	<5 years	>$10,000	None	Maintain signs: clean, repair, and replace as needed
	2.9	Landscape	Install Permanent and/or Temporary Public Art in the Downtown and Basin	on-going	>$10,000		Coordination of installment, removal with artists, subcommittee and City
	2.10	Landscape	Revise Parking Area at Vergennes Falls Park to Create a Planted Shoreline Buffer Along Otter Creek and Minimize Run Off	5-10 years	>$100,000	Floodplain, maintenance, permitting	Maintain pavement markings, signs, pavement conditions, etc.
	2.11	Interpretation	Improve Overlook and Interpretation at Pumphouse Island	5-10 years	>$10,000	Floodplain, access to/through GMP site	Maintain overlook structure and seasonal access to it.
	2.12	Amenities	Install Pedestrian-Scaled Lighting at Key Locations	5-10 years	>$100,000	Floodplain, utility costs	Upkeep of lights, electricity costs

Section 3.1.12 Bixby Memorial Free Library

William Gove Bixby (1829-1907), a lifelong resident of Vergennes, gifted the majority of his estate to build and maintain a public library. The doors of the Bixby Memorial Free Library opened on November 4, 1912 in service to the City of Vergennes and the surrounding communities of Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham. In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, over 32,000 people visited the building. The library is governed by a board of trustees that includes representation from each of the five communities it serves.

Front entrance to Bixby Memorial Free Library

While the Bixby's collection has grown to contain over 23,000 physical volumes, the library is no longer just a building filled with books. The library is committed to digital literacy, evidenced by over 18,000 digital resources, six public access computers and 24-hour WiFi, on-site formal and informal technology training, and the digitization of library archives and artifacts. In addition, the library offers hundreds of programs per year, providing community members of all ages with the opportunity to engage, discover, and learn. The Bixby offers outreach programming to children, traveling to preschools and elementary schools throughout its five-town service area to help bolster early literacy in the community.

As a historic building, the Bixby Library faces significant challenges. In 2018, the library completed renovations that addressed fire code issues, allowing a greater number of patrons to safely visit the

first floor of the building. This has enabled the library to host events and programs for upwards of 120 people. However, code issues still restrict access to the second floor of the library, and the building, while ADA compliant, does not offer sufficient accommodation for people with disabilities. As public libraries across the nation shift their scope from reading to community engagement, the Bixby finds itself in a position of evaluating space needs, in addition to addressing accessibility and safety needs. In 2018, the library completed the first part of a two-phase project that will address all of these issues. The second phase is expected to be a capital campaign, targeted to begin within the next eight years.

Section 3.1.13 Education

Our community places a high value on education and has high expectations for school programs and student achievement. This is evidenced by the citizen's support of school budgets and activities, and by a high level of parent involvement in the schools. Under Act 46, the four towns and city of Vergennes (Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Vergennes and Waltham) chose to form a new single board district, which began operation in FY 18. This district is now known as Addison Northwest School District (ANWSD).

The Vergennes Union High School

Section 3.1.14 Vergennes Union High School

Vergennes Union High School (VUHS) was constructed in 1959, an academic wing was added in the mid-1960s, and another large addition was completed in 2001. In 2018-2019, a major building and renovation project was completed which included upgrades to the energy efficiency and safety of the building. Vergennes Union High School is part of the Addison Northwest School District (ANWSD) and serves students in grades seven through twelve. Middle School, located in a separate wing of the high school building, follow a middle school model. The school serves students from the towns of Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Waltham, and city of Vergennes. Maximum enrollment capacity is 666 students based on state requirements.

VUHS has a variety of programs that extend beyond the walls of the school. Community Based Learning, a service-learning program, enables students to work in area businesses to better prepare for career choices after high school. 89 students worked in placements during 2018-19 including local schools, pet shelters, the Bixby Library, auto-body shops, local farms, and area businesses and restaurants.

The Walden Program provides a unique learning experience rich in the humanities and in environmentally-based experiences using a model of inquiry based on the writings of Henry David Thoreau. Each student participates in an apprenticeship with a local mentor to focus on an area of interest.

In 2018, forty-two VUHS students attended the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury. The Center offers career training in programs such as human services, sustainable agriculture, forestry and natural resources, automotive technology, design and illustration, diesel power technology, industrial design and fabrication, medical professions, culinary arts, architecture and engineering design, and theatre arts.

VUHS Highlights

- VUHS is a member of the League of Innovative Schools and the New England Secondary School Consortium.
- Annually, more than 65% of VUHS students participate in co-curricular activities including award-winning music programs and division-winning athletic teams.
- 14% of VUHS students take advantage of the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center learning opportunities and programs.
- VUHS is the sponsoring school of the internationally-recognized Walden Program.
- VUHS averages a graduation rate range from 95% - 97%.
- The VUHS class of 2018 had an average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score of Critical Reading-551 and Math-563.
- 31 students took 40 dual enrollment classes to earn college credit in 2017-2018.

Enrollment figures for Vergennes Union High School are shown in the table below.

VUHS Enrollment, 2008 – 2019

Year	Addison	Ferrisburgh	Panton	Vergennes	Waltham	Total
2018-19	69	166	45	154	23	457
2017-18	78	154	40	147	19	438
2016-17	82	160	50	143	18	453
2015-16	94	161	49	151	18	473
2014-15	104	166	46	147	20	483
2013-14	112	165	50	167	27	521
2012-13	119	189	42	182	23	555
2011-12	103	200	49	189	25	566
2010-11	121	195	42	193	25	576
2009-10	121	203	39	196	26	585
2008-09	124	210	51	200	30	615

Source: ANWSD District Office

Section 3.1.15 Vergennes Union Elementary School

The Vergennes Elementary School was constructed in 1950. Two additions have been added since that time, the most recent in 1987. In 1993, the school commissioned a study of the short-term and

long-range educational curriculum goals and the ability of the existing elementary facility to support those programs. The study identified needed mechanical systems improvements, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, and roof repairs as well as a need for additional space, including several classrooms, and improved facilities for computers, art, music, special education, library, guidance, and administration. In 1997, a bond was approved for the mechanical system, ADA improvements, roof repairs, and modification of the existing architecture, and an addition for a music classroom. The additional expansion has not been pursued. Due to attrition of students, some spaces identified in the study of 1993 have since been realized. There is now dedicated space to music, art, special education, and guidance. There have since been changes in how technology is accessed. There is now ubiquitous technology available for students in grades 3-6. A bond approved in 2018 also allowed for updates in heating, lighting, cooling in some areas, safety, and ventilation. The facility is now used for the Fusion Program, educational services and child care for the ANWSD community throughout the summer. Likewise, it is a site for a free summer meal program.

In November 1988, Vergennes, Panton, and Waltham joined together to form the Union Elementary School District No. 44. Vergennes Union Elementary School is part of the Addison Northwest School District (ANWSD) and serves all students from Panton, Vergennes, and Waltham in kindergarten through sixth grade, unless they opt for intradistrict school choice. Maximum enrollment capacity is 400 students based on state requirements. Enrollment figures for Vergennes Union Elementary School are shown in the tables below.

VUES Enrollment by Grade, 2008- 2019

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2018-19	32	33	31	34	31	35	33	229
2017-18	32	30	33	32	38	33	36	234
2016-17	32	30	34	37	35	35	37	240
2015-16	33	33	44	36	37	41	27	251
2014-15	36	41	39	35	42	27	40	260
2013-14	36	37	41	42	31	39	29	255
2012-13	36	45	41	33	41	31	53	280
2011-12	39	37	32	41	25	56	29	259
2010-11	35	33	39	30	54	30	44	265
2009-10	31	41	28	53	26	41	35	255
2008-09	38	29	57	27	41	39	39	270

Source: ANWSD Office

VUES Enrollment by Municipality, 2008-2019

Year	Panton	Vergennes	Waltham	Total
2018-19	42	158	22	222
2017-18	41	173	19	233

2016-17	44	172	22	238
2015-16	41	188	26	255
2014-15	49	186	28	263
2013-14	46	180	27	253
2012-13	50	202	27	279
2011-12	51	184	25	260
2010-11	48	188	25	261
2009-10	50	180	22	252
2008-09	48	195	23	266

Source: ANWSD Office

Section 3.1.16 Pre-school, Non-Public, and Alternative Educational Options

Besides the traditional public school choices, there are many other educational options in Vergennes. One non-traditional educational and training facility in Vergennes is Northlands Job Corps Center, a United States Department of Labor program. Approximately 200 students reside at the center which serves most of New England. The center offers education and the skills they need to become employable and independent. Young people ages 16 to 24 may pursue their general equivalency diploma and vocational training in the fields of urban forestry, clerical, culinary arts, home building trades such as carpentry, auto mechanics, welding, and health occupations. Approximately 100 full- and part-time staff work at Northlands Job Corps Center and therefore provides Vergennes with a major source of employment. Other benefits include the many public service contributions from these students such as trail work, tree services, and participation in Vergennes Holiday events.

The Champlain Valley Christian School (CVCS) is a private school, accredited by Christian Schools International. The building site was donated to CVCS in 2008 by the Champlain Valley Christian Reformed Church and is located at 2 Church Street off New Haven Road. CVCS focuses on a Christ-centered education and serves grades kindergarten through eight. CVCS is unable to admit a student whose needs exceed the services CVCS is able to provide which includes an IEP or 504 plan. CVCS also offers Cornerstone preschool services. Tuition is an annual fee divided into 10 monthly installments.

Evergreen Preschool is a private preschool in Vergennes, located at 30 South Water Street, serving children ages 3-5. Evergreen's philosophy has always remained the same. Children learn best by doing what they do best – through their play. The preschool accepts 34 children, divided into two classes of 17. Preschool tuition is subsidized by individual school districts. After ACT 166, tuition reimbursement has been deducted from the full tuition cost, a family "co-pay" is due. Financial aid is offered to families who are income-eligible.

The preschools in Vergennes offer safe and affordable options, but there is a capacity for growth in this educational area. Space is sometimes limited, and parents may also choose from two other options just outside Vergennes, such as the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten, a private faith-based school operated by the Victory Baptist Ministries located just outside Vergennes on Route 7. The Ark Preschool/ Kindergarten strives to provide a quality education and social skills program for children age 3-5 years.

The preschool follows the guidelines of the State of Vermont, and its kindergarten operates under the Vermont Department of Education. The tuition is based on an annual fee and may be paid weekly, biweekly, or monthly.

Another option is the Wren's Nest, a companion program to Willowell's nationally-recognized outdoor high school program, The Walden Project. Wren's Nest is hosted by the Treleven Farm in New Haven and runs with the Addison Northeast Supervisory Union calendar. Their licensed teachers align curriculum with the Vermont Early Education Standards. State funding is available and state subsidies for income-eligible families, however additional out-of-pocket expenses may incur.

As daycare options may change over the years, the following websites provide the resources parents may find useful for locating the most up-to-date information. Bright Futures Child Care Information System is a resource directory operated by the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division to help families find registered child care services in Vermont. Another resource for child care centers in Vergennes is at ChildcareCenter.us for a list of basic child care information such as size, location, licensing information, and contacts.

Section 3.2 Goals

A. Develop and maintain City facilities and services in accordance with the needs of the community.
B. Reduce the instances of combined sewer overflows.
C. Better utilize existing spaces for recreation.
D. Improve connectivity between the Otter Creek Basin and the downtown.
E. Provide for the educational needs of Vergennes citizens with quality schools pre-K through high school, and programs for lifelong learning.

Section 3.3 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Research, prepare, and implement a capital budget and program that will help manage anticipated growth and development pressures by indicating when, how, and at what cost the City expects to expend and/or maintain its facilities and services in the future. Identify and prioritize all of the City's capital improvement requirements and capital funding options for a minimum of five years. Annually budget capital projects consistent with this plan.
2. Provide funding for the upkeep and operations of the Opera House, City Hall, and Bixby Library .
3. Make new investments in schools, libraries, recreation, and other community facilities and services in a manner that will be responsive to all our City's needs, goals, and desires.
4. Explore opportunities to share community facilities and services with neighboring towns or the private sector, when necessary and appropriate.
5. Conduct a study of the Police and Fire Departments to identify existing and projected needs for inclusion in a capital budget and program.
6. Maintain a police and fire department commensurate with community needs.
7. Ensure that Vergennes' land use and development regulations adequately address fire prevention and protection needs through the encouragement of fire ponds, hydrants, and adequate accessibility of roads and driveways.
8. Continue active support for the Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS) including allowance for participation by City staff during working hours, if necessary.
9. Support the development of senior care facilities and other health care facilities and services in appropriate locations under local regulations and ordinances.

10. Increase the availability of quality child care for City residents.
11. Develop or update capital improvement plans for Public Works, the Vergennes Panton Water District, the Wastewater Treatment plant, stormwater system, and solid waste to better inform the Municipal budget that will help manage anticipated growth.
12. Make any required improvements to our Municipal garage area. In particular, upgrade or replace the salt shed to ensure adequate short- and long-term storage of our City's supplies.
13. Establish and implement a program for routine maintenance of City-owned structures, including a maintenance fund.
14. Maintain and improve a high quality water supply system. Continue to support retention of the capacity of the Vergennes-Panton Water District facilities.
15. Support the Vergennes-Panton Water District to implement a water conservation program that includes metering all consumers, detecting and repairing leaks in the underground distribution pipe network, and installing water conservation devices in residential and commercial buildings.
16. Work to reduce inflow and infiltration from the wastewater system. Implement a disciplined, long-term assessment program that routinely identifies, records information, and resolves issues that relate to a variety of problems including observed overflows, measured or observed surcharges, reported bypasses, customer backup complaints, and chronic maintenance activities.
17. Develop criteria to be used in assessing requests from adjoining communities for wastewater service. Prior to utility extension outside the city limits to facilitate development in neighboring communities, the Vergennes Development Review Board should review site plans or zoning changes for any proposed development to mitigate any potential negative impacts on public services (i.e. fire/rescue/police), schools, traffic, density, landscaping, open space, and visual quality.
18. Use site design guidelines to improve treatment of stormwater runoff as outlined in the subdivision review requirements.
19. Modify the extended detention pond at the Vergennes Union High School to a wet pond.
20. Recommend and work with landowners to build a bioretention area to treat runoff from the Meigs Road parking lot.
21. Facilitate the building of a wet pond to treat runoff from the neighborhood bounded by Main Street, Monkton Road, and Walker Avenue.
22. Modify the extended detention pond serving the area around Bowman Road, Green Meadow Acres, and Booska Court.
23. Continue to participate in the Addison County Solid Waste Management District, as long as this is the most cost-effective solid waste disposal option.
24. Appoint a Vergennes resident to participate on the ACSWMD Board of Supervisors and provide regular updates to the City Manager and City Council.
25. Dispose of solid waste in a safe and economical way with emphasis on recycling and monitoring of new waste disposal technology alternatives.
26. Support and encourage waste and hazardous waste reduction in schools, businesses, public offices, and other community facilities.
27. Support local, regional, and state recycling programs and initiatives, explore programs for composting food and agricultural wastes, and use recycled products when possible.
28. Encourage the development and participation in local and regional food composting programs.
29. Work with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District to inform and educate the public on solid waste issues and how to minimize waste at home, school, work, and at play.

30. Maintain, enhance, and expand existing public parks and recreational facilities and activities. Inventory current status, with community input, and create a 10-year plan for improvements and maintenance.
31. Provide a playground or play structure in the downtown area.
32. Install wayfinding signs to guide pedestrians to and from the Otter Creek Basin and create a sense of identity.
33. Maintain and improve access to public parks, trails, playgrounds, and other facilities, including completion of the bicycle path around our city. Identify opportunities for connecting existing private and public trail systems within the city to each other and to trail and pathway systems in neighboring communities. New planned unit developments should incorporate and/or continue recreation facilities, including trails, pathways, playgrounds, conservation areas, water access, etc., and remain open to the public.
34. Encourage development of private, low-impact recreational enterprises, and recreation opportunities on private lands.
35. Improve and develop Veteran's Park for year-round use.
36. Establish and maintain a recreation committee, appointed by and responsible to the City Council that is officially charged with the development of new recreation activities and facilities as well as to support a recreation coordinator in managing existing activities and facilities.
37. Establish the publication of a Recreation Program Guide for Vergennes. Develop a comprehensive map delineating recreational opportunities throughout the community, which includes trail locations, suitability for types of activity, parks and playgrounds, public access areas and any private commercial recreational enterprises.
38. Maintain a quality school system.
39. Explore opportunities to collaborate with Northlands Job Corps Center over the short and long term.
40. Involve students in projects for community improvements. Solicit support from the business, government, and academic communities to enrich educational and other programs. Support school-to-work programs, including training opportunities in City departments and local businesses.
41. Continue educational and support activities by Vergennes Police and Fire Departments as well as VARS.
42. Review new housing development for its potential impact on the school system.
43. Support an open communication process between the school, school board, and the community and identify opportunities to improve the exchange of information.

Chapter 4. OUR ENERGY

Please see Appendix 1 for Our Enhanced Energy Plan

Chapter 5. PROTECTING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

Section 5.1 Our Natural Resources

Even with our relatively high density, Vergennes has maintained a traditional compact New England development pattern. This means that large areas of open space, including meadows, fields, forested lands, small, steep-sided streams, wetlands, and hilltops still exist around the central core of the city, especially to the North and Southwest. These open lands, which can be viewed from many vantage points throughout the city, offer scenic beauty that attract many visitors to our city, as well as provide diverse habitats.

Our city's total area of about 1,600 acres of land (compared to the average 19,235 acres of surrounding towns), create a character of place and are a critical element in maintaining our health and economic welfare. Vergennes' forests, fields, wetlands, streams, riverbanks, and ponds provide habitats to a variety of animals, insects, and plants. Open grassy meadows offer excellent sites for foraging, nesting, and resting and are valuable for pollinators such as butterflies and bees. Beavers, bobcats, otters, foxes, herons, and waterfowl use the shores and waters of the Otter Creek, as well as the minor tributaries that feed into the river and adjacent wetlands. From wetland to wildland, these varied resources provide a flourishing and attractive place to live, work, and visit.

Our natural resources help maintain our quality of life.

Our city's natural resources support land use activities, provide outdoor recreation, and offer opportunities for learning about our natural world. Because of our small land area and relatively high density, our natural resources are more susceptible to development. We must be careful stewards of the natural resources of Vergennes.

Section 5.1.1 Rivers and Streams

Perhaps the most significant natural resource in Vergennes is the Otter Creek, which occupies over 4 percent of our city. Stretching about 1.8 miles through the heart of the city at an average width of nearly 200 feet, Otter Creek and its associated wetlands, falls, and floodplain are home to many species. The floodplains, wetlands, and falls act as natural flood control systems. These areas have been mapped and are precluded from development or destruction under local, state, and federal laws.

Immediately below the falls is the Otter Creek Basin, a large, seasonally flooded area, about 600 feet wide and covering about 8 acres. The basin and falls serve as a major recreational resource for fishing, boating, sightseeing, and tourism. Several rare and endangered species are found in the waters of the basin. Studies by Green Mountain Power Corporation found three rare species of fresh water mussels below the falls. The black sandshell mussel, pink heelsplitter, and fragile papershell are endangered mollusk species protected under the Vermont Endangered Species Act.

Lake Champlain is located about 7 miles downstream from the city. Water quality concerns for the greater Otter Creek watershed and Lake Champlain include animal waste storage and management, nutrient management, pasture management, runoff from developed land, and combined sewer overflows. Pollutants include phosphorus, bacteria, and sediment entering watercourses. The City's treated wastewater is released in the creek, downstream of the basin.

The stream corridors in Vergennes are perhaps our most significant wildlife habitats. They provide naturally-protected pathways along which wildlife species can move in relative security between high quality natural wildlife habitats beyond in Vergennes and throughout the region. These corridors function best for wildlife when sparsely developed.

Section 5.1.2 Wetlands

Nearly 50% of Vermont's wetlands have been lost or severely impaired from draining, dredging, filling, excavation, pollution, and other activities. Destruction or drainage of wetlands prevents surface water storage and reduces their water quality protection function. Loss of water storage increases the downstream flow of water, which may cause increased flood damages.

A massive wetland complex on the Otter Creek between Rutland and Middlebury helped spare Vergennes from the widespread damage caused when Tropical Storm Irene struck Vermont on August 28, 2011. During Irene, the Otter Creek in Rutland swelled reaching a peak discharge of 15,700 cubic feet of water per second (cfs), and flood waters caused tremendous damage. Thirty miles downstream in Middlebury (the nearest gage to Vergennes), the maximum peak discharge was only 6,180 cfs. Within four days, the river flow in Rutland had returned to normal, but water levels were just peaking in the low-lying areas of Vergennes. The 9,000 acres of wetlands along the Otter Creek held Irene's waters, slowly releasing them over time so that Vergennes never faced the damaging peak flood waters seen in so much of Vermont.

Wetlands provide for recreational and educational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, and wildlife observation. For example, the wetlands by the Vergennes Union Elementary School serve as an outdoor classroom. Wetlands also contribute significantly to the open space character and overall beauty of the Vergennes landscape.

Tools to protect wetland values include education, conservation, regulation, and restoration to ensure their preservation for future generations. We should maximize our city's healthy, functioning wetlands by minimizing impacts and by developing management strategies that protect, and where possible, rehabilitate ecosystems at risk.

Wetlands are defined by the State of Vermont as those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient enough to support significant vegetation or aquatic life that depend on saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. These areas often act as recharge areas, areas for filtering and cleaning water, significant wildlife habitat, and aiding in flood control. In the Vermont landscape, wetlands often occur in association with lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, but they may also be isolated from any obvious connection to surface water.

The Vermont Water Resources Board adopted the **Vermont Wetland Rules** in 1990 to identify and protect Vermont's "significant wetlands." The general locations of most "significant wetlands" are identified on the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI), which is based on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) of 1978 (see "Natural Resources" map inset for wetland locations).

The Wetland Rules classify wetlands into three categories. The first two classes (Class One and Class Two) are considered "significant" and are protected by the Vermont Wetland Rules.

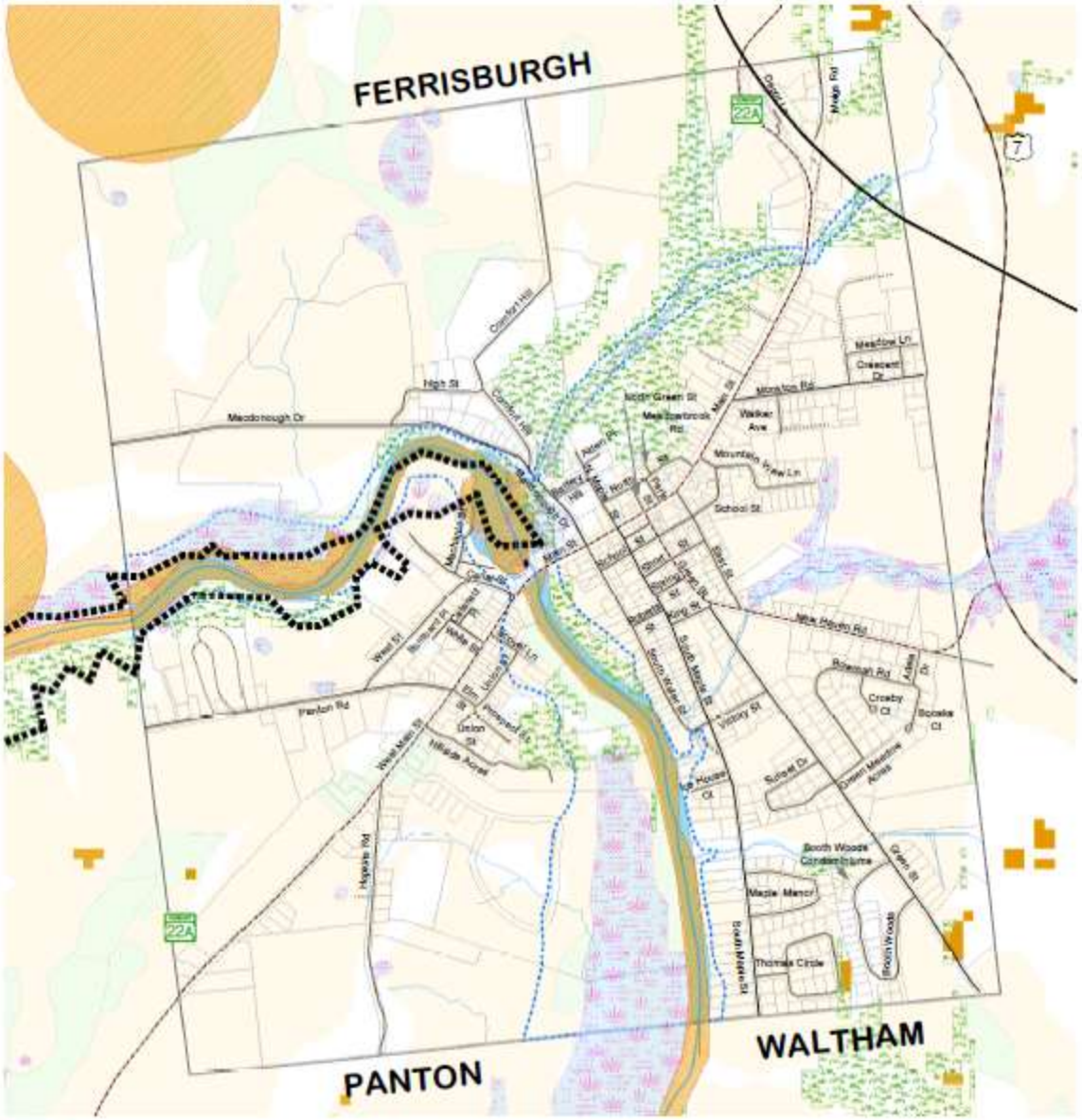
Class One wetlands are exceptional or irreplaceable and merit the highest level of protection. Class One wetlands must be specifically designated by the Board. A 100-foot buffer zone is designated adjacent to Class One wetlands.

Class Two wetlands are presumed to serve one or more wetland functions at a significant level. The Wetland Rules designate most wetlands on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps and those wetlands contiguous to mapped wetlands as Class Two wetlands. A contiguous wetland is a wetland, which shares a boundary with or touches a mapped wetland. A 50-foot buffer zone is designated adjacent to all Class Two wetlands.

Class Three wetlands have not been mapped on the NWI maps or have been found by the Board to be not significant for providing any wetland functions when last evaluated. Class Three wetlands are not protected under the Wetland Rules. Petitions can be presented to the Board to upgrade a Class Three wetland based on an evaluation of its functions. Class Three wetlands are, however, protected by other federal, state, and local regulations.

City of Vergennes

Natural Resources



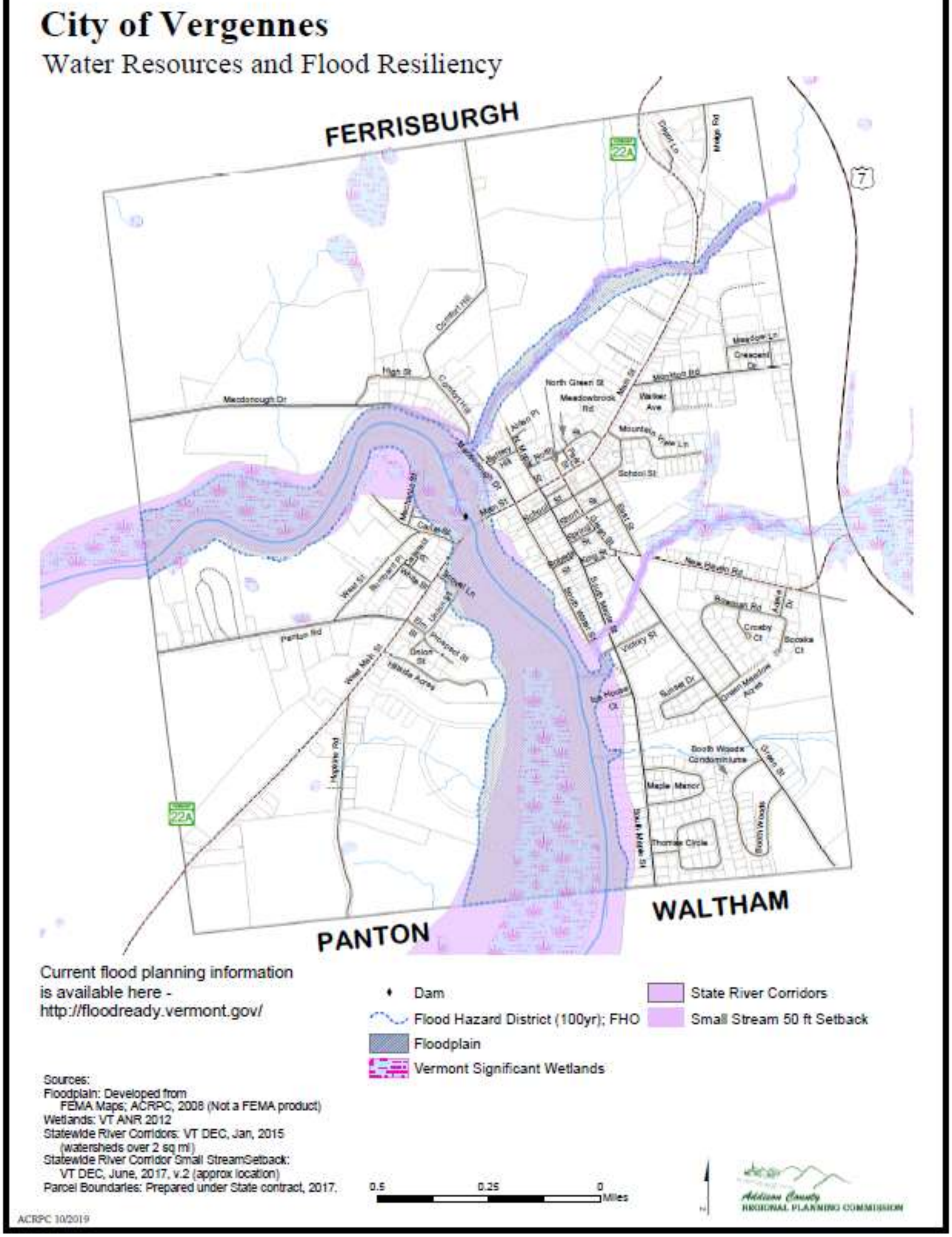
Rare Plant/Animal Habitat	**Agricultural Soils**	**Steep Slopes**	**Connectivity Blocks**
Vermont Significant Wetlands	Prime Value	Less than 20%	HIGHEST PRIORITY
Clayplain Forest Fragments	Statewide or Local Value	20% Slope and greater	

Sources:
Rare, Threatened and Endangered and Significant Communities, VT ANR, 2017.
Vermont Significant Wetlands, VT ANR, 2011.
Clayplain Forest, Marc Lapin
Agricultural Soils; NRCS.
Steep Slopes; USGS 1:24,000 DEM
Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks; Vermont Conservation Design Layer

0.5 0.25 0 Miles

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

ACRPC 10/2019


City of Vergennes
Water Resources and Flood Resiliency
FERRISBURGH
WALTHAM
PANTON
22A
7
Current flood planning information
is available here -
http://floodready.vermont.gov/
Dam
Flood Hazard District (100yr); FHO
Floodplain
Vermont Significant Wetlands
State River Corridors
Small Stream 50 ft Setback
Sources:
Floodplain: Developed from
FEMA Maps; ACRPC, 2008 (Not a FEMA product)
Wetlands: VT ANR 2012
Statewide River Corridors: VT DEC, Jan, 2015
(watersheds over 2 sq mi)
Statewide River Corridor Small StreamSetback:
VT DEC, June, 2017, v.2 (approx location)
Parcel Boundaries: Prepared under State contract, 2017.
0.5
0.25
0
Miles
Addison County
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
ACRPC 10/2019

Section 5.1.3 Floodplains

The Vermont River Management Program (RMP) works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to oversee the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in Vermont. The NFIP is a voluntary program administered at the local level in which participating communities agree to manage river corridor development using building and land-use regulations. In return, residents have the ability to purchase flood insurance, apply for federally insured loans (such as mortgages), and receive flood disaster assistance. The City of Vergennes is currently a participating community in the NFIP.

The NFIP provides maps that specifically show the extent of flood hazard areas that are managed under the program. These Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) (also referred to as the base floodplain or 100-year floodplain) are the land that will be inundated with water during a 100-year storm, or, a storm that has a 1%-chance (1 in 100) of occurring in any given year. It is possible to have this unusual storm two years in a row or even more frequently. Some Vermont towns have had two 100-year floods in the same decade.

Participation in NFIP is one important approach to flood hazard mitigation and flood resiliency, but NFIP maps are based only on inundation hazards, and fail to consider fluvial erosion, the cause of most flood damage in Vermont. Fluvial erosion is erosion caused by the movement of rivers and streams and can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimension during flood events.

Vergennes must continue to properly manage development in the floodplain so that safety risks and loss of property due to flooding are minimized.

Section 5.1.4 Agricultural Soils

Agriculture has long been an important element in our region's physical, cultural, and economic make up. Farms supply us with an abundance of fresh, healthy food and contribute to local economies through jobs and by sustaining local businesses such as grocers, equipment dealers, and hardware stores. Agricultural lands contribute to the scenic beauty of the area. Farmlands also provide valuable open space and serve as a natural buffer from unplanned growth and development.

Demand for residential housing and commercial building space drives a corresponding increase in the amount of land being developed to accommodate these needs. Prime farmland is often the easiest land to develop due to gentle slopes and deep, well-drained soils.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has mapped and ranked soils in Vergennes. Approximately 77% of the city's non-forested flat lands are classified as prime or statewide soils. These two highest categories are considered best suited for agriculture. Many of these productive agricultural soils are located north of Macdonough Drive and along the stream corridors, leading to our existing pattern of land use. Of these valuable soils, 7% are considered "prime" agricultural soils. Prime agricultural farmland, according to the NRCS, is suitable for almost any type of farming operation and is essential for intensive agriculture. Statewide soils, and some of the lesser-ranked soils that have been improved with drainage, are suited for grazing and production of hay and forage crops.

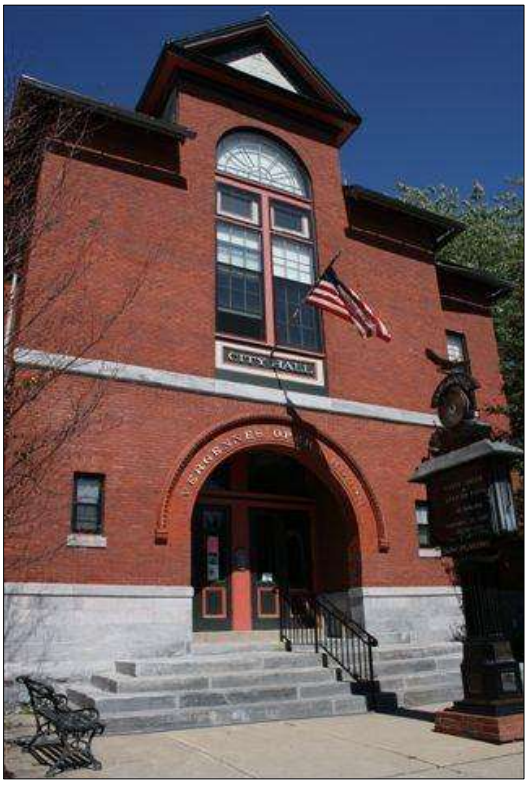
For purposes of **Act 250**, "primary agricultural soils" means soil map units with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics that have a potential for growing food, feed, and forage crops, have sufficient moisture and drainage, plant nutrients or responsiveness to fertilizers, few limitations for cultivation or limitations which may be easily overcome and an average slope that does not exceed 15%. Present uses may be cropland, pasture, regenerating forests, forestland, or other agricultural or silvicultural uses. However, the soils must be of a size and location, relative to adjoining land uses, so that those soils will be capable, following removal of any identified limitations, of supporting or contributing to an economic or commercial agricultural operation. Unless contradicted by the qualifications stated in this definition, primary agricultural soils shall include important farmland soils map units with a rating of prime, statewide, or local importance as defined by the NRCS. A subdivision or development may not significantly reduce the agricultural potential of such primary agricultural soils without suitable mitigation.

Section 5.1.5 Forests

Although forest land is limited in Vergennes (see "Natural Resources" inset map) it provides benefits from recreation to flood control to wildlife habitat -- and contributes to the character of the city. Of particular interest are Vermont's clayplain forests, which are only found in the Champlain Valley and are seriously fragmented due to their value as prime agricultural land. Clayplain forests, characterized by fertile clay soil, moderate to poor drainage, and moderate climate support a more diverse mixture of trees than other forest types in Vermont, including shagbark hickory, white pine, various oak species, white ash, and red maple, as well as a variety of shrubs and herbs. Clayplain forests also provide habitat for an abundance of mammals, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and insects.

Within the populated areas of the city, we have several small, forested areas and open spaces that provide outdoor opportunities for our residents. The Vergennes City Green provides a peaceful place in the middle of the city and a site for outdoor festivals and gatherings. Trees such as mature maple, ash, and other hardwoods line many of the City streets and greatly enhance our quality of life by filtering stormwater runoff, stabilizing soils, improving our air quality, reducing building energy consumption, promoting social interaction, and many other benefits vital to the health of our community.

Section 5.2 Our Historic and Scenic Resources



Vergennes is fortunate to have a high proportion of scenic and historic resources relative to its size, including the Otter Creek basin, 226 historic sites and structures, and three historic districts recognized by the State of Vermont Division of Historic Preservation. We recognize the value of these areas and the positive impact they have on our quality of life, tourism, and commercial development. Our City is committed to protecting, enhancing, and cultivating appreciation for these resources.

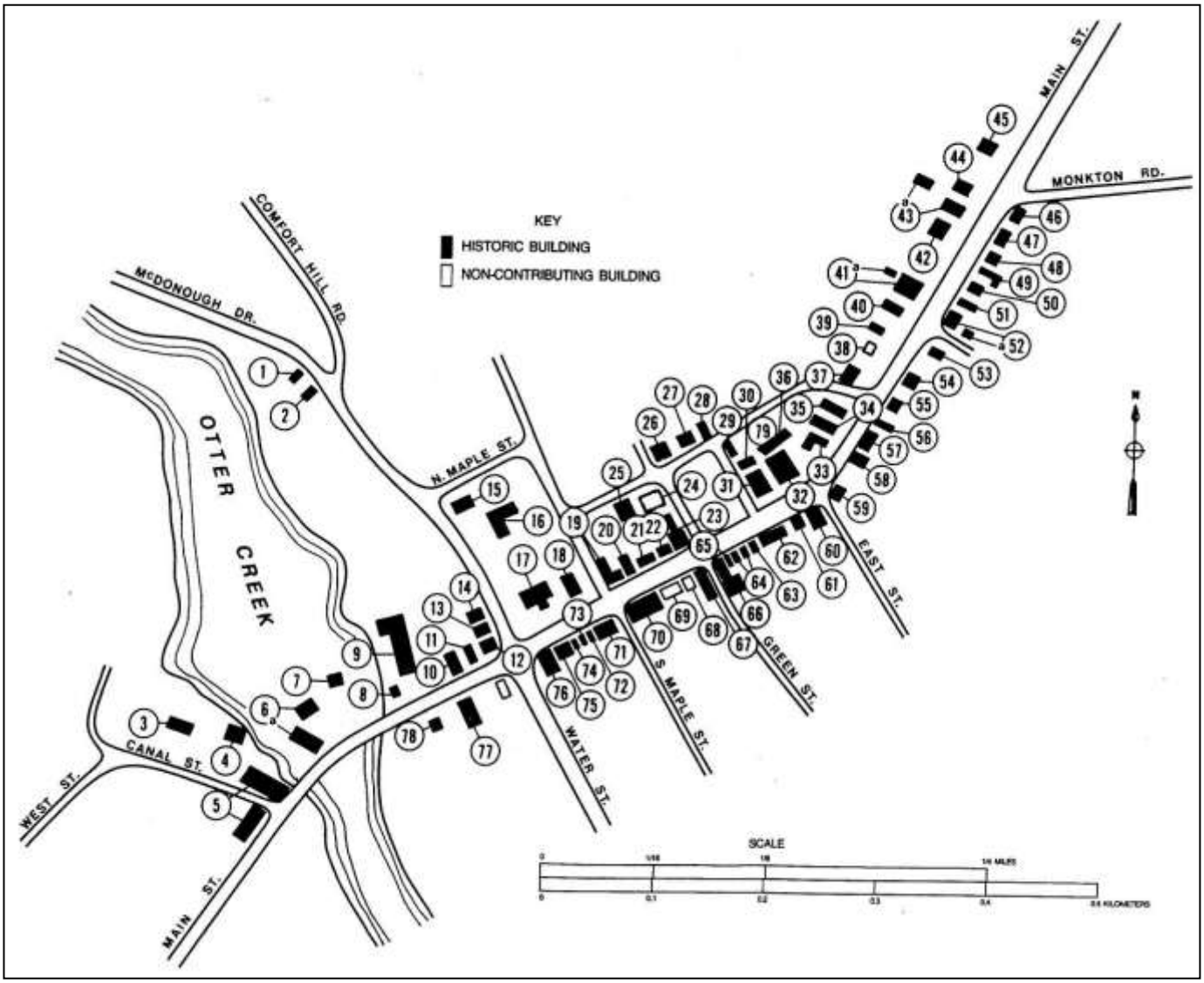
The Residential and West Main Street Historic Districts are listed in the Vermont Register of Historic Places and contain 71 and 32 sites respectively. The Vergennes (Main Street) District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and includes 78 sites from Monkton Road to Canal Street and along Macdonough Drive (see map on next page). It includes archaeologically sensitive areas of eighteenth and nineteenth century military occupation and fortifications.[7]

The Vergennes Partnership was established in 1999 to support a document entitled "Shaping the Future of Downtown Vergennes." The Partnership is our City's downtown revitalization organization.

They have positively transformed our downtown with the help of the City and property and business owners. In 2001, Vergennes became a Designated Downtown under the Vermont Downtown Program, making the City eligible for grants toward physical improvements. The Vergennes Partnership is charged with maintaining the City's Designated Downtown status from the state of Vermont. This designation is an important way for Vergennes to achieve the goals of this Municipal Development Plan by allowing us to maintain the historic settlement pattern of an economically viable urban center surrounded by rural countryside. Businesses that make improvements to historic buildings are eligible for tax credits due to this designation. Historic attractions have been highlighted and downtown

[7] The land along the east bank of Otter Creek is of particular significance with the location of Fort William, Macdonough's shipyard, and two military batteries erected during the War of 1812. Archeological remains in this District receive special treatment under regulations described in the land use section of this plan.

buildings reclaimed and restored. The overall vitality has attracted new restaurants, stores, residents, and vistors. The historic Vergennes Opera House (pictured on previous page) is perhaps the best and most well-known symbol of this significant transformation.

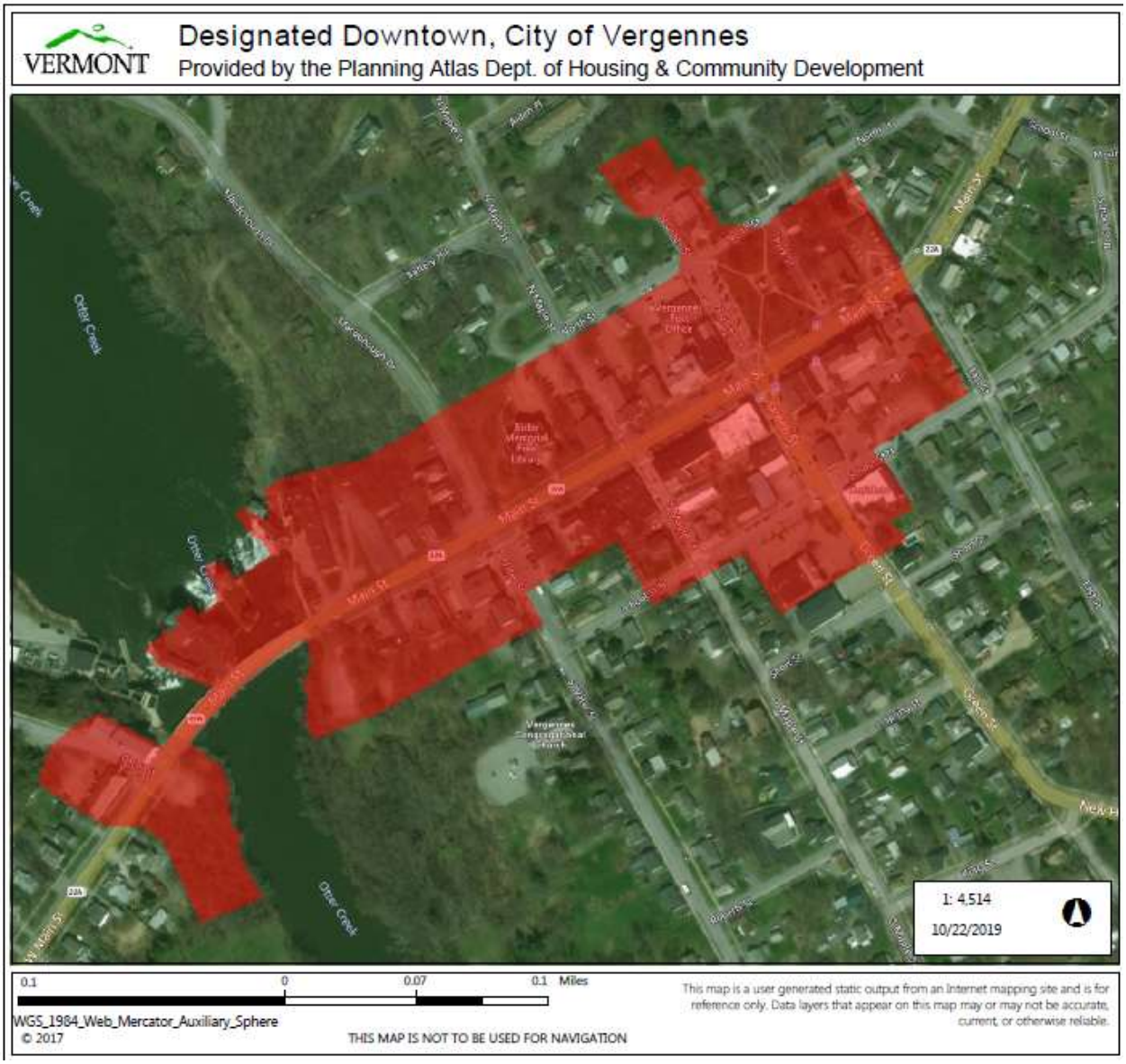


Vergennes National Historic District Map from **The Historical Architecture of Addison County: Vergennes**

The following capital improvement projects have been formally adopted by the Vergennes Partnership Board of Directors:

- Wayfinding signage
- Main Street utility pole relocation – engineering/design
- Main Street (West side) Streetscape Project
- Pedestrian signalization – Main Street & Green Street intersection design
- Main Street sidewalk (West side) Macdonough Drive to Riverwalk
- Pumphouse Island foot bridge design/study and construction
- Two downtown charging stations for electric vehicles

Map of the Designated Downtown in the City of Vergennes.



We are proud of Vergennes' sense of place, which is not only the result of the built environment, but also our scenic resources, economic opportunities, and civic life. Defining and celebrating our sense of place enables our community to retain links to our past, maintain our traditions (including quality of life), and bring economic benefits through increased property values and tourism. It connects people with each other, with the community, and with the surrounding landscape.

Vergennes must maintain this physical and visual character and manage and protect its critical resources in an appropriate manner to continue to attract new residents, new businesses, and new visitors to ensure a sustainable future.

Section 5.3 Goals

A. Preserve the character and historic charm of the city while allowing for future development.
B. Preserve historic buildings, neighborhoods, and celebrated events.
C. Preserve out natural resources while encouraging thoughtful development.

Section 5.4 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Plan for arrival of emerald ash borer.
    a. Be prepared to manage infested trees.
    b. Be prepared to replace infested ash trees with tolerant, native streetscape trees.
2. Support capital improvement projects adopted by the Vergennes Partnership.
3. Actively cooperate and work with appropriate authorities to update Flood Hazard maps.
4. Encourage development on existing footprint which will not increase impervious surfaces.
5. Promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land and its suitability for use.
6. Protect surface water and ground water, including wetlands, from pollution and contamination. Require that runoff and erosion be adequately controlled during all stages of development. Evaluate existing stormwater management facilities in Vergennes and identify structural improvements that would enhance water quality through better stormwater collection and treatment.
7. Work with local and state officials, non-profit organizations, and citizens to implement a program to monitor and assess water quality in the city, particularly the Otter Creek. Identify specific threats to water resources and develop policies to maintain or restore ecological functions and values where necessary.
8. Utilize the Urban Forestry Management Plan to help guide the planning, planting, maintenance, and removal of trees along streets in the downtown.
9. Continue to identify, collect information, and educate residents about the city's natural resources and special places and enact regulations to protect them. Encourage opportunities to raise community awareness and activism through education.
10. Promote the stewardship, protection, and enhancement of our City property, which includes the trees along our streets, our parks, and City Green. Seek funding through the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program and other local, state, and national agencies to prepare management plans, conduct tree inventories, perform tree maintenance and tree plantings, develop educational programs or materials, and other projects that improve our quality of life.
11. Revisit the Main Street Revitalization Plan and enhance, expand, and revise as necessary or appropriate. Identify funding and other needed resources to accomplish improvements or maintain resource qualities and continue to implement recommended actions.
12. Encourage, promote, and develop events to bring residents and visitors into the downtown and basin areas.
13. Provide information and technical assistance to homeowners to maintain, renovate, and restore historic dwellings in keeping with their history, including a list of public and private historic preservation experts who can provide detailed advice on restoration or construction projects.
14. Ensure that sign standards (i.e. number, height, material, lighting, and size) are not detrimental to the visual quality of our city.
15. Electrical distribution, transmission facilities, and other utility development and upgrades shall not have an undue adverse impact on the character of the city or on existing views.

16. Utilize federal, state, and local funding programs for developing and preserving our historic, cultural, and scenic assets.

Chapter 6. OUR TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Section 6.1 Our Transportation Network

At one time, the navigability of Otter Creek from Lake Champlain played a major role in the development of the city. More recently, our location at the junction of two of the state's major traffic arteries has taken on that role. Vermont Route 22A (also known as Main Street and West Main Street within City boundaries) runs through downtown Vergennes and terminates after joining U.S. Route 7 just north of the city limits. Traffic from points West and South destined for the region north of Vergennes is channeled through the city on Route 22A, making this route a critical component of Vergennes' transportation network and streetscape in both positive and negative ways. Vergennes is recognized as a regional source of services and as a tourist destination, but heavy truck traffic damages our historic buildings, threatens the safety of our pedestrians and cyclists, and reduces the aesthetic appeal of shopping and dining on our Main Street.

Vergennes is committed to accommodating the transportation needs of all who wish to drive, walk, or ride in our city. Our priorities are aligned with those of the state and the region. Vermont's Complete Streets law, Act 34, requires that all users be considered in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of roadway systems, and the Addison County Regional Transportation Plan calls for a transportation system that safely supports all modes of travel.

Section 6.1.1 Roadways

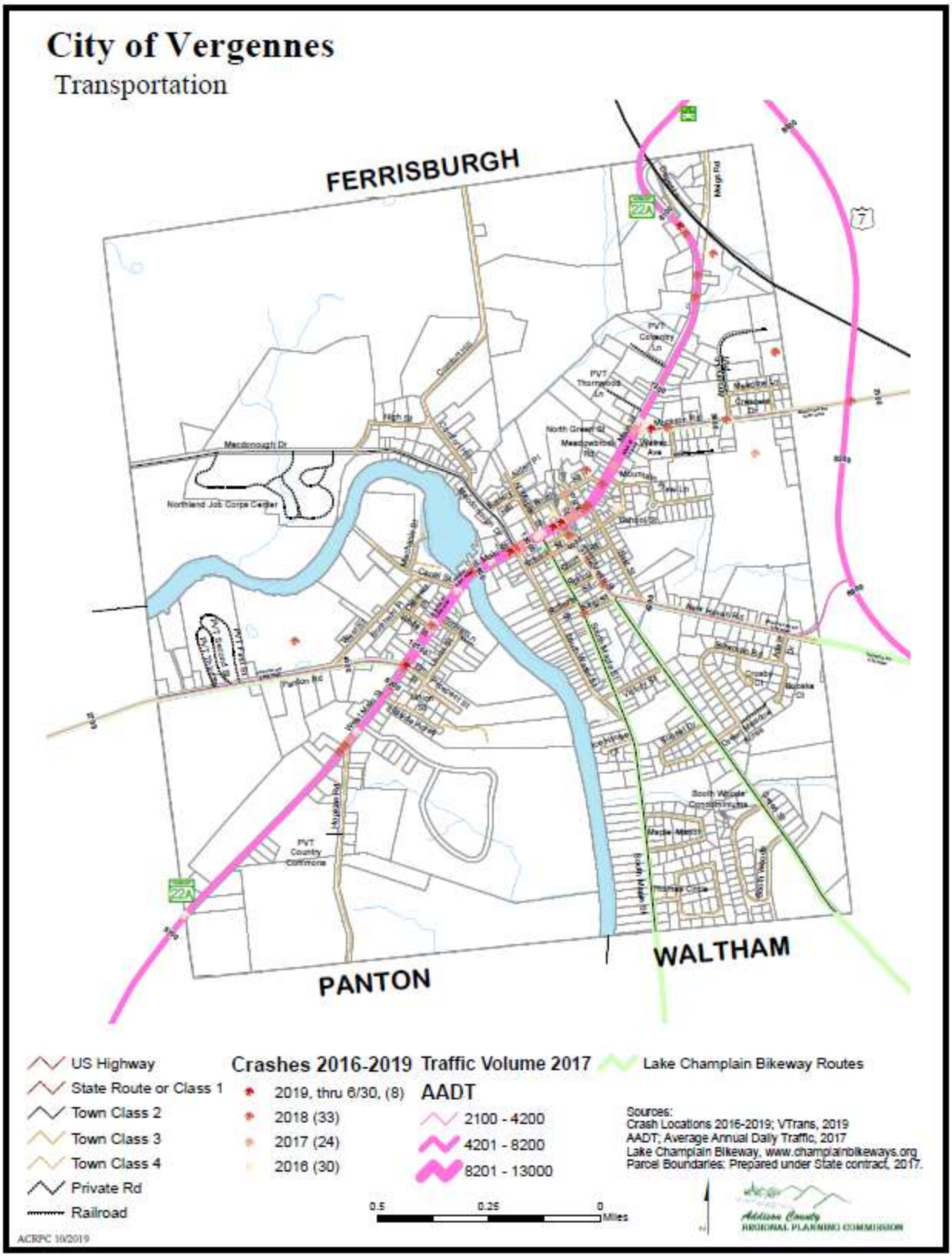
Vergennes' roads fall into three legal classes: Class 1, which are numbered state or federal highways, or municipal extensions of these highways; Class 2, which are major connector roads solely under municipal authority; and Class 3, which are all other roads meeting state standards for year-round maintenance.

The 2019 state aid allocation for roads in Vergennes was $59,500.

Roads in Vergennes fall into the listed legal categories as follows:

	Roads	**Miles**
Class 1	Main Street (Route 22A), West Main Street (Route 22A), New Haven Road, Green Street (Main Street to New Haven Road)	2.850
Class 2	Panton Road, Monkton Road, Green Street (New Haven Road to City line), South Maple Street, Macdonough Drive	3.740
Class 3	All other roads	8.10
Class 4	Undeveloped roads	0.030
	TOTAL MILES	14.72

Source: "Vermont General Highway Map: City of Vergennes" (2017)


City of Vergennes
Transportation
FERRISBURGH
PANTON
WALTHAM
US Highway
State Route or Class 1
Town Class 2
Town Class 3
Town Class 4
Private Rd
Railroad
Crashes 2016-2019
2019, thru 6/30, (8)
2018 (33)
2017 (24)
2016 (30)
Traffic Volume 2017
AADT
2100 - 4200
4201 - 8200
8201 - 13000
Lake Champlain Bikeway Routes
Sources:
Crash Locations 2016-2019; VTrans, 2019
AADT; Average Annual Daily Traffic, 2017
Lake Champlain Bikeway, www.champlainbikeways.org
Parcel Boundaries: Prepared under State contract, 2017.
0.5
0.25
0
Miles
Addison County
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
ACRPC 10/2019

Vergennes is well-positioned to capitalize on its reputation as a destination for cyclists. Bike touring companies regularly guide clients to our downtown shops and restaurants, and our access to Lake Champlain Bikeways and back roads makes us appealing to local cyclists as well. Cycling infrastructure is an important component of the Addison County Transportation Plan's goals for sustainable transportation, and in 2018, Vergennes teamed up with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, the Walk-Bike Council of Addison County, and neighboring New Haven to win a grant to develop a Triangle Cycling Loop Master Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to define a potential cycling route between Vergennes, Bristol, and Middlebury through New Haven. This cycling route would make cycling safer for commuters as well as for tourists. New opportunities for the City to explore include the construction of a bike path alongside the proposed Route 22A truck route, and, as e-bikes and cargo bikes become more popular, improved on-road cycling conditions for residents wishing to bike to school and shopping areas.

Section 6.1.2 Sidewalks

An extensive sidewalk system exists in the downtown and throughout much of the city where historic settlement patterns reflect a pedestrian scale and orientation. Pedestrian accessibility is a longstanding interest of city residents. In 2006, a Multi-Use Path and Planning Feasibility Study recommended extending the sidewalk along the eastern side of Main Street to the Ferrisburgh Park and Ride on Route 7, and in 2008, a survey of city residents (City Plan Survey) found that construction of new sidewalks would make walking more appealing. The 2016 Downtown-Basin Master Plan went on to suggest that increasing connectivity among recreational assets would make Vergennes more attractive to residents and visitors alike. In 2017, the City obtained grant funding which made it possible to build a new sidewalk to Kennedy Brothers and across the road to the Police Station. In 2019, the City obtained grant funding to install a new sidewalk on the north side of Main Street from Macdonough Drive to the Otter Creek Bridge.

A 2017 Sidewalk Inventory prioritized "hot spots" where severe cracks, missing sidewalks, and uneven surfaces compromise pedestrian and wheelchair access, and the City's ongoing program of sidewalk replacement uses this inventory as a resource. Crosswalks are provided along popular pedestrian routes, and in 2018, five grant-funded crosswalk signals were installed at key intersections in response to citizen concerns. Opportunities to further enhance the sidewalk system include reducing the impact of truck traffic (as mentioned above), increasing connectivity among recreational assets, and further extending sidewalks to reach established and potential residential, business, and recreational areas.

PM Peak Hour Pedestrian and Bicycle Activity in Vergennes:

Intersection	PM Peak Hour Pedestrian and Bicycle Movements
Green Street/Main Street	116
Panton Road/VT 22A	4
Monkton Road/Main Street	37
VT 17/VT 22A	1
VT 17/US 7	1

Source: "VT 22A Truck Route Study Response to Public Comments" (2018)

The *Addison County Transportation Plan* ranks the Route 22A bridge over Otter Creek as a top priority for improvement (section 6, page 19). Any reconstructive work on this bridge should incorporate better accommodations for pedestrians. Currently, there is a sidewalk only on the south side of the bridge, but the Grist Mill, Pumphouse Island, and the stairs that provide access to the Otter Creek Basin's Macdonough Park are located on the north side. Pedestrians en route to these sites often cross Route 22A without a crosswalk, in the middle of the bridge. This unmarked access has long been of concern to residents; a *Sidewalk and Bridge Modification Feasibility Study* completed in August 2007 recommended better pedestrian access in this area, and the 2016 *Downtown-Basin Master Plan* recommended speed reduction measures and enhanced crossing treatments. (p.22)

Conditions for pedestrians have recently been improved in response to local interest. The Vergennes Partnership, municipal employees, and volunteers have installed and maintained trash and recycling bins, benches, and colorful potted plants along Main Street and on the City Green. These initiatives were a direct response to a 2008 *City Plan Survey* which indicated that improvements such as these would make walking more appealing:

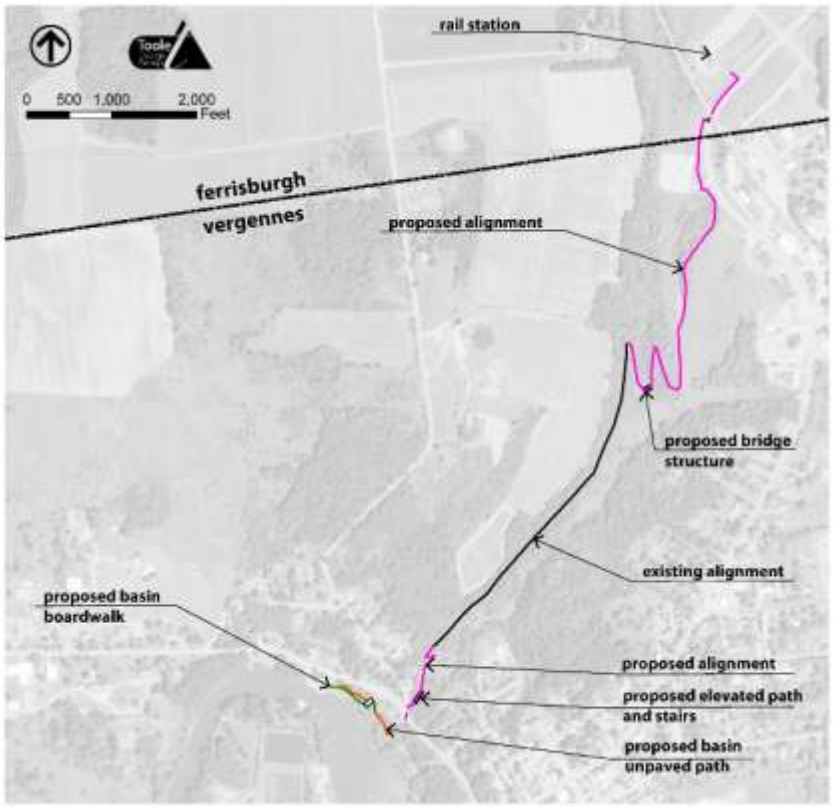
The 2016 *Downtown-Basin Master Plan* reminds us of the economic value of strengthening connections between downtown shops and restaurants and the Basin. The enhancements that it envisions for this corridor provide additional impetus for moving ahead with sidewalk and streetscape redesigns.

> "Multiple studies indicate that property values for homes and businesses near parks / recreation areas are greater – with increases ranging from 4% to 20% -- when compared with properties not along trails." ("Downtown-Basin Master Plan," 2016, p. 25)

Section 6.1.3 Trails

Interest in establishing recreational trails in Vergennes is enjoying a resurgence, and sustainable implementation could soon be within reach. A history of challenges and opportunities should guide our work. As early as 2006, a *Multi-Use Path and Planning Feasibility Study* documented efforts to establish a bicycle and pedestrian loop around the city. Thanks to work done under the aegis of the City by the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, a rail trail between the Ferrisburgh Park and Ride and the Otter Creek Basin was constructed, but it failed to take hold. A 2012 study (*Cultivating Community through Sustainable Transportation: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements in Vergennes, VT*) suggested new solutions:

The current rail trail is mostly a dirt and bark mulch path, with three existing wooden bridges over streams and wetlands. To be completed, this path would need a few wooden walkways through the creek floodplain for the wet season, as well as a bridge to cross the ravine. At certain sections wooden stairs should be implemented and eroding land should be filled in and stabilized. A good amount of clearing is necessary to connect the old rail spur to the desired locations. ("Cultivating Community through Sustainable Transportation: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements in Vergennes, VT," 2012, p. 14)



POTENTIAL BIKE TRAIL ALIGNMENT FOR RAIL TRAIL - *Concept provided by Timothy Cowan*

In 2016, the *Downtown-Basin Master Plan* advised that public investment in a stronger walking and biking infrastructure would stimulate investment and activity in Vergennes. The Plan referenced not only the rail trail, but also walking trails in the Otter Creek Basin. Discussions at a 2018 Public Forum on the renewal of this *Municipal Development Plan* confirmed that our community is ready again to take action.

"For years, we've documented public interest in recreational trails. Let's bump up the priority." - City resident at 2018 Public Forum.

The following year, a number of groups materialized in an attempt to make this vision a reality. A task force for the Otter Creek Basin was revived and quickly began to strategize on how to establish walking trails in the Basin. A reconstituted Recreation Committee began to discuss the viability of creating a pathway that would connect public parks and recreation areas around the City. And, interested citizens inspired by the possibility of creating a Vergennes Trail Network were brought

together on social media. All of these efforts will be strengthened by communication and coordination with one another and with regional trail-building resources.

The Recreation Committee is charged with developing trails. When residents were asked what types of recreational opportunities were needed in Vergennes, trails ranked high on the list. Other people and organizations who are interested in trails include the Basin Task Force, the Planning Commission, the Walk-Bike Council of Addison County, the Vergennes Trail Network Facebook group, and citizens represented in the Downtown-Basin Master Plan. Trails were developed in Vergennes even before the Downtown-Basin Master Plan was published, and we hope to learn from this history.

Why trails?

- Run errands
- Walk to school
- Play outdoors (safe from traffic)
- Highlight best features of Vergennes
- Improve health
- Strengthen economy

What kinds of trails?

- Walking
- Biking
- Snowshoeing
- Cross-country skiing
- Different segments could be designed for different uses

Where will the trails be located?

The Recreation Committee has sketched out a network of trail segments that could be developed in stages, beginning with areas surrounding the downtown (see Proposed Pedestrian Loop Trail map on the next page). Developing these first segments would take a number of years. Other areas, including neighborhoods west of Otter Creek, would be added later. In general, the Recreation Committee would like to connect points of interest, bikeways and trails. They would aim to make as much use of public land as possible. In some cases, they will need permission from private landowners. They have begun to speak with landowners and other stakeholders. More community involvement is essential.

City of Vergennes

Proposed Pedestrian Loop Trail

Proposed Loop Trail

- Existing sidewalks and easements
- Needed Connections
- Designated Downtown District
- VSWI Class 2 Wetlands

Sources:

Parcel Boundaries: Prepared under State contract, 2017.
Vermont Significant Wetlands (Class 2): 2011, rev 2019.

0.5 0.25 0 Miles

ACRPC 10/2019

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Trail Connections	Capital Investments

Public Assets
• High School
• City Docks
• Fischer Park
• Veterans Park
  ○ Pool
  ○ Tennis
  ○ Basketball
  ○ Skating
• Community Gardens
• MacDonough Park
• Police Station
• Bixby Library
 	
Community Assets
• Rail Trail
• Mountain Bike Track
• Kennedy Brothers
• Northern Gateway
• Basin Block
• Boys & Girls Club
• Eagles Club
• American Legion
• Comfort Hill
• Lake Champlain Bikeways
• Proposed Triangle Bike Loop
 	
Neighborhood Assets
• Maple Manor
• Sunset Drive
• Crosby Farms
• Monkton Road
• Addison County Community Trust Apartments
• North of Main Street
• North Historic
• South Historic
	• 2 bridges
	• 2 culverts
	• 5 new trails
	• 2 new sidewalks

Section 6.1.4 Public Transit

The Vermont Railroad and its freight service also serve Vergennes. The Ferrisburgh Park and Ride, located in Ferrisburgh at Kayhart Crossing, includes a bus stop and plans to create a multi-modal facility with a visitors' center in the relocated and restored historic Vergennes train station, as well as a connection to walking paths and bikeways. Amtrack rail service is expected to arrive at the Ferrisburgh Park and Ride in the near future.

Addison County Transportation Resources (ACTR) and Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) provide public bus transportation, connecting downtown Vergennes with Middlebury, Bristol,

and Burlington. Vergennes is also served by Vermont Translines (to Burlington or Albany) and is part of the Greyhound Bus network (to Burlington or Rutland).

Section 6.1.5 Truck Traffic on Main Street

Truck traffic in Vergennes, and what to do about it, is a top priority in many residents' minds. Main Street in Vergennes is also VT Route 22A. Vergennes has one of three state designated downtowns in Addison County. This designation is designed to promote our downtown as an urban, pedestrian, and bicycle-friendly destination for shopping and dining. VT Route 22A is also a state designated truck arterial corridor. The goals of these two state designations appear to be at odds with one another. Recent public forums on truck traffic held in 2016 with the Vermont Transportation Board and in 2018 with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission yielded comments from business owners and residents noting truck traffic has increased over recent years and incidents like trucks getting stuck on the hill on Main Street. It seriously interferes with the quality of life along VT Route 22A and in our downtown. More importantly, it creates a safety hazard. As Vergennes works to make our downtown more vital, and pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, the truck traffic creates negative impacts on those efforts.

An average of 11,000 vehicles travel through downtown Vergennes daily, including 400 tractor-trailer trucks and 700 total trucks per day. Tractor trailers, up to 72 feet long and weighing up to 80,000 pounds, negotiating the steep hill in downtown Vergennes create noise, vibrations, fumes, dust, and causes damage and stress to existing buildings and structures. Residents, pedestrians, bicyclists, and those dining at sidewalk cafes experience these impacts. The percentage of trucks on this route, compared to other vehicles sharing the road, is more than double the percentage on US 4 in Woodstock and US 7 in Rutland.

Community leaders have been considering how to address the truck situation since 1995 when the feasibility of constructing a new North-South truck route to bypass the downtown area was assessed. The 2002 Greater Vergennes Traffic Impact Feasibility Study reconfirmed public interest in finding a solution. City officials recently identified a potential new strategy and asked that VTrans conduct a new study – "Vermont Route 22A Truck Route Study" – managed by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC). The ACRPC, in conjunction with VTrans, contracted with Stantec Engineering to assess alternatives for addressing the impact of truck traffic in downtown Vergennes:

A. VT 22A Truck: VT Route VT 22A would continue to serve as a truck route with modifications made to the roadway and traffic controls within Vergennes to allow for safer pedestrian and bike accommodations and smoother, quieter truck operations.
B. New Alignment Truck Route (Vergennes Economic Corridor): A new road would be constructed on an alignment that bypasses downtown Vergennes. Through-trucks would be restricted from using VT Route 22A through downtown Vergennes.

The alternatives analysis indicates and recommends that both Alternatives A and B represent worthwhile investments to address the project purpose and need. Alternative B, the Alternative Alignment (Vergennes Economic Corridor), is a large project (estimated $39 million value) that will take ten to 15 years to complete. However, it will provide very substantial and positive impacts for downtown Vergennes virtually eliminating all truck traffic passing through on Main Street. Downtown

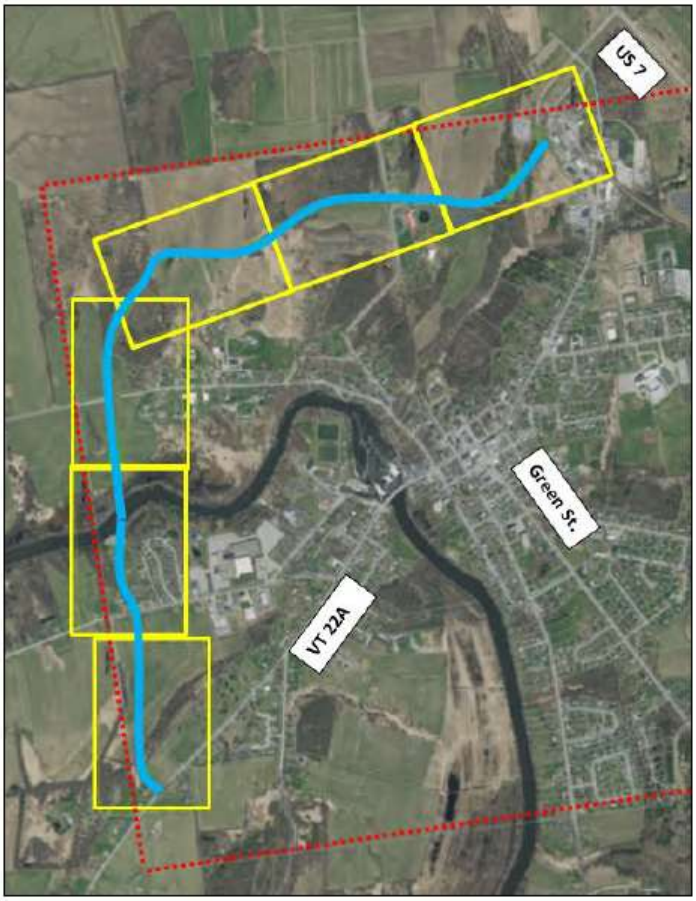
property values, retail revenues, and dining revenues are expected to increase significantly with the truck traffic removed. The value of potential new development that could occur along the new roadway could reach $130 million. New tax revenues generated by this level of development would approximately match the annualized cost of the new roadway. This project would likely score very well against the large project prioritization criteria currently being developed by VTrans. Accordingly, it is recommended by the findings of the study that the City of Vergennes, the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and its member communities formally endorse this proposal and petition VTrans to include it in its Capital Plan.

Given the extended timeframe to implement Alternative B, and the opportunity to immediately make certain Main Street improvements as part of planning VT Route 22A repaving project, it is recommended that the City, ACRPC, and member communities also formally endorse and pursue funding for the Alternative A improvements. These proposed improvements will not substantially change the volume of truck traffic in downtown Vergennes; however, they will create a more comfortable environment for residents, pedestrians, and bicyclist circulation. This added comfort level should also provide a slight stimulus to downtown businesses. Even the modest economic stimulus assumed in this study results in a positive benefit/cost ratio for Alternative A. Most importantly, the Alternative A improvements can be implemented in as little as a five-year timeframe providing near-term relief from the impacts of truck traffic.

Section 6.1.6 Potential Impacts and Opportunities from the Vergennes Economic Corridor

- Develop process/plan to secure the rights of way on parcels crossed by the Vergennes Economic Corridor.
- Affected parcels will need to be re-zoned/re-districted into more appropriate Industrial/Commercial/Residential districts contingent upon the progress of Vergennes Economic Corridor project.
- Explore methods to expand housing opportunities in the re-districted areas.
- Explore methods to expand industrial/commercial opportunities in the re-districted areas.
- Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District to help fund the project.
- Secure financing by applying for a Better Connections Grant or a Municipal Planning Grant to develop a more detailed plan for expanding these new areas.

Possible alignment for the Vergennes Economic Corridor:



Source: "Vermont Route 22A Truck Route Study" (2019)

Section 6.2 Goals

A. Pursue actions that shift through-truck traffic out of the Central Business District.
B. Increase public transportation and multi-modal connectivity.
C. Maintain and improve a comfortable environment for pedestrians and bikers.

Section 6.3 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Support and pursue relationships with neighboring municipalities and the next planning phases of the Vergennes Economic Corridor.
2. Develop bike and walking paths.
3. Work with VTrans to re-route truck traffic away from the historic downtown area.
4. Continue to pursue the Vergennes Economic Corridor.
5. Maintain or improve the current level of service on all roads in Vergennes and give priority to maintenance and rehabilitation of roads that are experiencing increased traffic.

6. Prepare and implement a downtown parking plan, including the creation and implementation of loading areas that would not create traffic hazards on Main Street, and a requirement of a parking plan for new development.
7. Develop and incorporate a long-term road improvement program that accounts for potential impacts from development. Identify key intersections for improvement.
8. Develop and implement an enhancement plan for the gateways identified in the Land Use section of this plan.
9. Work to support improvements in rail service by state and federal agencies and the private sector in order to:
    a. Divert hazardous materials from the downtown area.
    b. Support local businesses and industrial lands located on the rail line.
    c. Extend passenger rail service to Vergennes as a component of economic revitalization if feasible.
    d. Support development of passenger rail facilities at the Ferrisburgh Park and Ride.
10. Provide a range of transportation options, including roads, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, to accommodate Vergennes' current and anticipated population. Focus on improved pedestrian and bicycle-friendly development. Support the development and expansion of the Ferrisburgh Multi-Modal Transportation Facility.
11. Improve and expand the City's system of sidewalks, crosswalks, and recreational pedestrian/bike paths, including the provision of signage to facilitate its use. Encourage new development to implement "pedestrian-friendly" designs and to integrate into the City's existing pedestrian network. Evaluate and propose changes to the local regulations and ordinances that will give greater effect to this policy.
12. Work with VTrans to implement traffic calming measures (i.e. bump-outs, textured crosswalks, "green" strips), especially in our downtown, in order to create a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment. Identify key areas in the downtown that would benefit from traffic calming measures.
13. Promote use of access management techniques, like shared driveways and parking, and carefully review traffic patterns, access points, and parking areas proposed for new development or redevelopment to ensure coordination between adjacent uses. Restrict the number of curb cuts per parcel to one, or none if alternative access exists through a secondary road or a shared driveway, where applicable.
14. Participate in Act 250 and other state review processes for projects that would affect the City's road network.
15. Seek to fund and implement, through public or private funding, the preferred alternatives and recommendations identified in the Sidewalk and Bridge Modification Feasibility Study, as well as the Multi-Use Path and Planning Feasibility Study.

Excerpt from the “Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan” on transportation priorities

Priority		Category	Recommendation/Action Item	Time---frame	Estimated Order of Magnitude Cost	Potential Constraints	Anticipated Maintenance Needs
	3.1	Wayfinding	Develop a Comprehensive Wayfinding System for the City that Includes Signs, Maps, Visitor Info, and Key Destinations	<5 years	>$100,000	None	Maintain signs: clean, repair, and replace as needed
	3.2	Gateways	Create Gateways to Downtown Through Visual Cues to Slow Traffic and Improve Safety	<5 years	>$10,000	None	Regular weeding, upkeep of signs
	3.3	Street Improvements	Improve Multimodal Safety and Access on Macdonough Drive	5-10 years	>$100,000	None	Regular road maintenance; regular sidewalk and pavement marking inspections to document condition and identify needed repairs
	3.4	Intersection Improvements	Improve Intersection at Main Street and Macdonough Drive/South Water Street (Multiple Phases)	Phase 1: <5 years Phase 2: 5-10 years	Phase 1: >$10,000 Phase 2: >$100,000	None	Regular road maintenance; regular but infrequent signal maintenance and upkeep
	3.5	Street Improvements	Improve Main Street Pedestrian, Vehicular, and Bicycle Access and Safety (Multiple Phases)	Phase 1: <5 years Phase 2: 5-10 years	Phase 1: >$10,000 Phase 2: >$100,000	Possible public resistance to parking change	Clean, repair, and replace signs, pavement markings, and sidewalks as needed; signal maintenance
	3.6	Trails	Construct a Boardwalk in Macdonough Park	<5 years	>$10,000	Floodplain	Repair and replace boardwalk as needed, trim vegetation
	3.7	Trails	Build a Trail Connecting Macdonough Park to the Park---n---Ride and Train Station	5-10 years	>$100,000	Terrain, right - of-way/ easements, railway crossing	Upkeep of path surface, trim vegetation
	3.8	Street Improvements	Improve Otter Creek Bridge Safety Through Traffic Calming Measures	10+ years	>$1M	Access/right-of-way to Pumphouse Island	Regular bridge, pavement markings, and sidewalk inspections to document condition and identify needed repairs
	3.9	Intersection Improvements	Improve Main Street and Canal Street Intersection by Extending Curb to Reduce Road Crossing Distance	5-10 years	>$10,000	None	Regular road maintenance; regular sidewalk and pavement marking inspections to document condition and identify needed repairs
	3.10	Intersection Improvements	Improve West Street and Canal Street Intersection Through Realignment	5-10 years	>$100,000	None	Regular road maintenance; regular sidewalk and pavement marking inspections to document condition and identify needed repairs
	3.11	Shuttle System	Develop Shuttle or Transit System that Connects Basin to Resources in Downtown and Beyond	<5 years	Depends	None	Vehicle maintenance, bus stop signage maintenance

Chapter 7. OUR LAND USE

In order to protect our open spaces, promote and enhance our downtown, provide adequate and affordable housing options, and offer more transportation choices, the City promotes the following **Land Use Principles** to encourage well-planned growth:

- Define a mix of land use districts and objectives that accurately reflect the community's diverse character
- Provide standards and incentives to encourage quality development and redevelopment consistent with community character
- Provide for a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Promote and enhance walkable neighborhoods
- Foster a distinctive, attractive community with a strong sense of place
- Preserve the community's natural, cultural, and historic resources
- Guide growth that reflects the community's capacity and plans for infrastructure and services
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Administer City plans and regulations in a manner that is fair, predictable and in full compliance with its standards
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

~derived from the *Smart Growth Network*

Section 7.1 Character of the Area

Since its incorporation in 1788, our City has maintained a distinct and traditional New England development pattern of a centralized downtown, arranged around a common green, and surrounded by compact residential neighborhoods. Another favored aspect of our traditional small city is the open space that exists around the edges and scattered throughout the community. Industry at the falls and lower basin of the Otter Creek was the primary driving force for the establishment and pattern of development in Vergennes, and it has been growing and evolving ever since. Gradually, compact residential development, with some commercial/industrial uses, were built along the major roads leading out of the City. Between these roads were open areas consisting of farms, forested lands, and the Otter Creek with its steeply sloped tributaries.

Since World War II, some of the agricultural fields developed with a more suburban pattern of housing based on the greater use of cars for mobility. Development in these neighborhoods has been less compact with bigger yards and deeper setbacks from the street. Although slowly suburbanizing, there still remains a substantial amount of open space within our small city.
Our current pattern of development continues to allow easy access and transition between the natural areas, agricultural fields, residential neighborhoods, and the downtown core. From this development pattern, there are areas of the community that have achieved a unique, recognizable character that is different from neighboring areas. These differences may be the result of topography, age and style of housing, built environment, land use patterns, landscaping, street patterns, open space, or streetscapes. By defining the special character of these areas, it offers an expression of our community goals and priorities and helps guide the decision-making of our local, regional and state leaders. The special and unique neighborhoods that have developed over time and help characterize our city are defined in the next section.

Section 7.2 Our Land Use Designations

Our city anticipates, and welcomes, well-planned growth and development in the years to come – primarily in the form of infill, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment. In an effort to facilitate future growth, and to continue to encourage appropriate densities and land use patterns within our city, we have defined the following districts or land use categories (see Land Use Districts Map).

Section 7.2.1 Low Density Residential District (LDR)

The principal characteristics of a **traditional New England development pattern** include the following features:

- Compactness and tighter form
- Higher density
- "Downtown" centers with street-edge buildings, mixed-uses, gathering places, public buildings, parks, and other open spaces
- Commercial premises meeting everyday needs (grocery, newsagent, drugstore, hardware, etc.)
- Residential neighborhoods close to the downtown center, sometimes with house lots abutting commercial premises
- Civic open spaces within and rural open space at edges
- Pedestrian-friendly but also auto-accessible
- Streets scaled for typical uses (rather than being oversized and over-engineered to accommodate "worst-case scenarios")
- Incremental growth outward from core

~Excerpt from "*Rural by Design: Maintaining Small Town Character*",

The Low Density Residential District (LDR) encompasses two considerable areas of undeveloped/underdeveloped lands that remain open in Vergennes.

Farms and views along Comfort Hill illustrate the rural development pattern in this district.

The largest area of this district covers much of the northwest quadrant of the city and is bordered on the east by Potash Brook, on the north and west sides by the town of Ferrisburgh, and by Otter Creek to the south.

The other significant area covers much of the southwest quadrant of the city, and is bordered by Otter Creek on one side, VT Route 22A on another, and by the town of Panton on the third side.

The purpose of designating the Low Density Residential District is to allow for additional clustered residential growth at the edge of the developed core of the city, while preserving the natural and scenic qualities of remaining open lands in Vergennes. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Clustered or planned unit developments (PUD) are required, except in the case of residential use as an adjunct to agricultural use.
- In addition to designated open space, development in this district shall incorporate one or more areas of formal recreational open space, such as a neighborhood green, park, or playground.
- Uses in this district are limited to agricultural and one-family residential uses, with outdoor recreational and agricultural accessory uses permitted as conditional uses. These areas are also called out in our enhanced energy plan as preferred sites for solar energy projects.

Section 7.2.2 Historic Neighborhood District (HN)

The Historic Neighborhood District (HN) contains several older neighborhoods dating from the 1700s through World War II, which are located adjacent to the downtown. These high-density neighborhoods are fully developed and are typically characterized by a number of historic homes, usually with small lots, short setbacks and yard depths, and tree-lined sidewalks. Pedestrian access to the downtown is easy from these neighborhoods, perhaps with the exception of West Main Street residents' access over the Otter Creek Bridge.

Historic homes in this district help tell the story of our City's history.

The buildings, structures, and sites in this district are important in portraying our city's history, architecture, culture, and community spirit. Some of the residences immediately adjacent to major streets and to the downtown have experienced pressure to convert to commercial uses or multiple-family residential uses. Maintaining the historic character of these neighborhoods while recognizing current economic realities will be a challenge.

The **purpose** of our Historic Neighborhood District (HN) is to distinguish our city's older neighborhoods and protect their historic value and integrity while permitting future residential development and redevelopment that is compatible with the existing historic character and development patterns of the area. The following policies shall apply to the HN District:

- All new development and redevelopment within the HN district must reflect the historic residential character and development pattern of existing neighborhoods, including density, lot coverage, setbacks, footprints, scale, mass, and height.
- Dimensional standards that replicate existing historic development patterns, including higher density, shorter setbacks and yard depths, and increased lot coverage shall be maintained for this district.
- All new development and redevelopment shall uphold and respect the character-defining features and historic integrity of homes in this district including small lots, minimal setbacks, yard depths, and tree-lined sidewalks. Responsible historic preservation practices should be promoted. The demolition of historic structures is strongly discouraged and should be considered only as a last resort if no other feasible option is possible. It is specifically not the intent of this plan to regulate windows, siding, roofs, color, etc.
- Low-intensity business activity, including retail businesses, may be considered at residential scale if it fits within the character of the neighborhood and does not interfere with the quality of residential life in this district, and require conditional use review.
- The pedestrian-oriented environment shall be maintained and improved. Street trees and sidewalks should be replaced and enhanced when necessary.
- On-street parking, shared parking, and public parking should all be maximized and encouraged for this district, where appropriate.

Section 7.2.3 Medium Density Residential District (MDR)

The Medium Density Residential District (MDR) typically contains residential neighborhoods created after World War II, which are predominately characterized by larger, one-family houses on bigger lots with deeper setbacks, looped streets, and cul-de-sacs. Most of these neighborhoods are located on major arteries leading into the city or on old farmlands further out from downtown. Some limited future development will be possible in these neighborhoods and should reflect the existing and desirable patterns of size, scale, footprint, and massing.

The MDR district is characterized by primarily residential development with larger setbacks and lot sizes.

The **purpose** of our Medium Density Residential District (MDR) is to provide suitable residential housing in areas and at densities consistent with the utilities provided, while preserving as many of the significant natural and cultural features as possible. This district may also serve as a transitional area between higher intensity and lower intensity uses, or adjacent to districts of higher or lower residential densities and non-residential uses. The following policies shall apply to the MDR District:

- Density, lot coverage, setbacks, footprints, scale, mass, and height are expected to reflect and maintain the development pattern of the neighborhood.
- Larger homes shall be designed and sited in a manner that reflects and is sensitive to the scale and massing of the existing or desired neighborhood patterns and to reduce the overall bulk and visual impact of new residences.
- The pedestrian-oriented environment shall be maintained, improved, and extended. Street trees and sidewalks should be established where feasible and appropriate.
- Conversion of one-family dwellings to two-family or multiple-family dwellings or commercial uses shall be limited in order to retain the character of the neighborhoods.
- Low-intensity business activity will be allowed at residential scale that fits within the character of the neighborhood and does not interfere with the quality of residential life in this district.
- Preservation of open space, protection of flood prone areas, protection of wetlands and woodlands, and preservation of other natural features is encouraged.
- New subdivision developments should provide an area of common open space, such as a park or playground.

Section 7.2.4 High Density Residential District (HDR)

The vacant lands in this district generally have limitations that require careful siting and design.

The High Density Residential District (HDR) is comprised of areas that are generally undeveloped, often bordering the Historic Neighborhood District, can be serviced by public utilities, and generally held in large parcels. However, these vacant lands generally have one or more limitations that require careful site and building design including severe topography, utility locations, as well as areas of significant natural resources. A second area of the district is located in the vicinity of Armory Lane.

The **purpose** of our High Density Residential District (HDR) is to allow the continuation and expansion of residential and related uses while permitting higher clustered densities to accommodate topographical and natural resource constraints. All development should provide easy multi-modal connectivity to connecting districts and downtown. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Due to limitations of severe topography in this district, it is expected that development will occur through planned unit development (PUD) guidelines and shall include performance standards regarding light, sun exposure, privacy, provision for recreational open space, noise control, utility and vehicular servicing, egress and other planning and design factors stipulated by state regulations.
- Permitted uses in this district are limited to one- and two-family dwellings.
- Dimensional standards that replicate existing development patterns, including higher densities, shorter setback, and yard depths.
- Multiple-family dwellings and other uses shall be allowed by conditional use and will require site plan review and performance standards to limit impact on environmental resources and to ensure their compatibility with the prevailing character of the neighborhood.
- Pedestrian-oriented environment shall be maintained and improved.

Section 7.2.5 Residential/Limited Business District (RLB)

The Residential/Limited Business District (RLB) contains a mix of commercial uses and older historical residences, which extends along both sides of Main Street from City Hall to the Northern Gateway District (NG). Large historical residential buildings, many of them mansions built in the 1800s, and a tree-lined streetscape, are distinctive features in the RLB. Long, narrow yards behind the buildings on the north side of the street extend to the steep slopes of Potash Brook. Because of the large size of some of these buildings, it has been difficult to maintain occupancy, and some have been converted to offices, professional services, and apartments. It is an area in transition, but is also a vital part of the northern entrance to the city. Maintaining the historical integrity of the buildings and streetscape will be a challenge over the next years. There are also three parcels on Meigs Road included in this district as they fit the character of the Residential/Limited Business District. These parcels would be considered non-conforming uses if they were to be included in the surrounding Industrial District.

Large historic residences in this district have been converted into professional offices and apartments.

The **purpose** of our Residential/Limited Business District (RLB) is to provide a transition between commercial uses and residential uses, while preserving the historic character of this established residential neighborhood. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Development shall be focused on creating a mix of residential and small business uses that maximize use of the buildings and preserve their historic character.
- Conversion of older homes shall be permitted into the following uses: one-family dwelling, two-family dwelling, home occupation, and enclosed accessory use.
- Other uses may be allowed after issuance of conditional use approval by the Development Review Board providing they maintain historic character of the neighborhood. Appropriate examples include: multiple-family dwelling, medical services, clinic or nursing home, professional studio, professional office, professional service, office, boarding house, bed and breakfast, and inn.

Section 7.2.6 Central Business District (CBD)

Much of our Central Business District (CBD) is designated on the National Register as a Historic District and has received designation by the State as a Downtown Development District, which entitles us to a number of special benefits. Many buildings are multiple storied and were established primarily in the 19th century. Uses consist of a mix of stores and services, restaurants, bars, governmental services, churches, residences, and the Vergennes Opera House. Upper stories, valued for providing efficient and diverse use of our limited downtown land area are used primarily as apartments, studios, and offices. The historic, commercial, and aesthetic character of the downtown remains intact and is a

vital component of what attracts both residents and visitors to our city. The maintenance, improvement, and further utilization of these historic buildings, as well as the streetscape and the City Green, are very important to our future and every effort shall be made to preserve them.

The **purpose** of the Central Business District (CBD) is to promote the development and redevelopment of the downtown core and to foster an economically healthy commercial district that is vibrant, walkable, clean, safe, and sustainable. The following policies shall apply to this district:

The CBD has historically been the commercial center of the community.

- Development and redevelopment shall preserve and enhance the unique and historic character of our livable downtown.
- Standards shall be established for all development and redevelopment in the CBD that help maintain the look, feel, and scale of our current downtown. It is specifically not the intent of this plan to regulate windows, siding, roofs, color, etc.
- Small lot sizes, high-density development, and minimal setbacks are required for development and redevelopment.
- Building heights shall be maintained similar to those seen historically on any given lot. For undeveloped lots, no building shall be less than two stories. Parking requirements for commercial uses in existing and proposed high bulk buildings shall be considered for waiver. For multiple-family buildings and where parking requirements are not waived on commercial structures, ownership of private accessory lots, within a reasonable distance of the primary lot, may be considered for parking.
- Textured crosswalks with bump-outs where pedestrians cross are encouraged.
- Residential uses are prohibited at the ground level. Residential apartments in combination with professional or artistic businesses as a conditional use shall be encouraged, above ground-floor commercial uses.
- There should be a variety of uses in this district that provide our residents with a mix of retail, commercial, and professional services to meet everyday needs. Examples of appropriate uses includes: retail store, retail service, personal service, professional service, office, financial institution, club, indoor recreation, public assembly, restaurant, bar, hotel, public, and semi-public uses, and enclosed storage as an accessory use.

Section 7.2.7 Commercial District (COM)

There are three separate areas of our city outside of downtown that are not appropriate for industry, but have served commercial need in Vergennes. These commercial areas lie on major streets and junctures: (1) Monkton Road and Main Street, (2) along New Haven Road, just south of Green Street, and (3) at the termination of Armory Lane, which includes the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh shopping complex. Their uses require vehicular loading and carefully designed parking and street access. The businesses provide vital services that help to keep our city a destination point for northern Addison County residents.

The **purpose** of our Commercial District (COM) is to provide for low intensity retail, service, business, office, residential, and entertainment uses which complement, enhance, and support residential and other vital uses and services. The following polices shall apply to this district:

Businesses in this district serve a necessary purpose in the City, like the Community Bank seen here.

- Development and redevelopment shall not create an undue burden with adjacent residential areas.
- Ensure that site requirements and amenities, including vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation and parking, landscaping, sensitive areas protection, lighting, public areas, utilities, and other necessary and desirable elements are integral parts of all commercial projects.
- Unless authorized by the Development Review Board, all business, servicing, storage or processing shall be conducted within a completely enclosed building except where the nature of the activity makes it impossible, for example, off-street loading, automobile parking for customers while on the premises, and the sale of automobile fuel at service stations.
- Performance standards shall be applied for the general health, safety, and welfare of the area and any effect on the amenity of adjacent or nearby residential area. This means that uses, processes, or equipment employed shall be limited to those which are not objectionable by reasons of odor, dust, bright lights, smoke, noise, or vibrations.
- All commercial uses in this district require conditional use review.

- All residential uses in this district require conditional use review.
- Any approved residential uses shall not impede the commercial interests in the district.

The City owns a number of parcels such as this one, which houses the public works garage

Section 7.2.8 Northern Gateway District (NG)

The Northern Gateway District (NG) is located at the north end of Main Street encompassing the Kennedy Brothers Marketplace from the railroad tracks, extending south to the Vergennes Animal Hospital. It includes a combination of professional offices, retail, and service uses, some residences, and the new police station. Development of individual parcels in the Marketplace area has been relatively disconnected from each other and the downtown, especially in regard to road access, pedestrian connection to the Ferrisburgh Park and Ride, and the positioning of the electric power substation. This district is the "gateway" into our city from the North.

The NG is a "gateway" into the City and includes a mix of land uses that welcome residents and visitors.

The **purpose** of our Northern Gateway District (NG) is to provide a compatible mix of commercial and residential uses that welcome our residents and visitors to our city. The district should allow for the establishment of residential and low intensity retail, service, business, office, and entertainment uses which complement, enhance, and support residential uses and our downtown. Because it serves as the northern gateway into the city, development and redevelopment should be compatible with the distinct qualities and historic integrity of the settlement the traveler is about to enter. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- A mix of land uses shall be developed in the Northern Gateway District that conveys a positive image of the city to residents and visitors. Appropriate uses would include multi-level buildings that contain specialty retail stores, restaurants, galleries and studios, offices, craft shops, personal service, instructional service, and similar uses.
- Flexible, performance-based zoning standards shall be maintained that allow mixed-use development in which residential uses are integrated with commercial, employment, and civic uses.
- No project or parcel shall be used entirely for residential purposes.
- Residential uses are prohibited at the ground level in buildings within 150 for the edge of the public right of way of Main Street/Route 22A.

- Residential apartments in combination with professional or artistic businesses as a conditional use shall be encouraged above ground-floor commercial uses.
- Buildings should be designed for aesthetic appeal, pedestrian comfort, and compatibility with other land uses.
- Businesses that are proposed for existing buildings, infill locations, or as stand-alone structures must employ an architectural design that either reflects the local setting or can be demonstrated to fit in a contextual, harmonious manner with the distinct qualities and historic integrity of the City.
- Designs should produce a desirable relationship between individual buildings, the circulation systems, and adjacent residential areas.
- Access points shall be clearly delineated and limited.
- Textured crosswalks with bump-outs where pedestrians cross are encouraged.
- Shared access and parking shall be promoted, with internal road connectivity within the site(s).
- Internal parking lot organization should promote efficiency, safe access, and aesthetic design options that include walkways within parking lots.
- The development of visual and physical, functional and aesthetic enhancements that link, unify, welcome, and define this area as a gateway should be considered.
- Ensure that site requirements and amenities, including vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation and parking, landscaping, sensitive areas protection, lighting, public areas, utilities, and other necessary and desirable elements are integral parts of all commercial projects.
- Uses, processes, or equipment employed shall be limited to those, which are not objectionable by reasons of odor, dust, bright lights, smoke, noise, or vibrations.

Section 7.2.9 Industrial District (IND)

The Industrial (IND) District is located on Panton Road on the west side of the city and a small portion north of the railroad tracks in the northeast corner of the city. It comprises areas with, or adjacent to existing manufacturing on the edge of, or separated from, the densely settled areas. Existing uses include light industry, manufacturing, and services. Lots are generally large in this district to allow for bigger structures, parking, storage, and buffering from adjacent uses. The area on Panton Road offers excellent business growth opportunities for our city.

The **purpose** of our Industrial (IND) District is to support and encourage a wide range of light industrial and commercial enterprises that strengthen the economic vitality of our city while maintaining the rural character of the surrounding area and protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods from adverse impacts associated with incompatible uses. The following policies shall apply to the IND District:

LIGHT INDUSTRY: A use providing for the manufacturing predominately from previously prepared materials of finished products or parts, including research and development activities, processing, fabrication, assembly, treatment, packaging, incidental storage, sales and distribution of such products or components, but excludes basic industrial processing. Light industry activities are capable of operation in such a manner as to control the external effects of the manufacturing process, such as smoke, noise, soot, dirt, vibration, odor, etc. Finished or semi-finished products may be temporarily stored outdoors pending shipment. Examples of light industry include textile work and clothing manufacture, food processing, plastics manufacture, electronics and computer hardware manufacture, precision instrument manufacture, gemstone cutting, or craft work.

- Light industrial uses help maintain and promote the economic vitality of our city and are expected to continue in this district.

One of the industrial enterprises that helps to strengthen our City's economic vitality.

- Developments shall be comparable to existing uses in the Industrial District and in keeping with Vergennes' small-city character.
- No industrial use shall be permitted that is engaged in the storage or manufacturing of products or processes that are harmful to the environment or pose significant risks to our residents, such as: explosives, radioactive materials, petroleum refining, steel and iron manufacturing, rock quarrying, cement production, or paper and pulp manufacturing.
- Industrial uses engaged in the storage or manufacture of products or processes including large quantities of poisons, herbicides, pesticides, or hazardous materials shall undergo a comprehensive safety and environmental impact review.
- All uses require conditional use review and approval to ensure there are no undue adverse impacts on municipal services and infrastructure, surrounding residential properties, and the character of the area.
- Review of waste water loading in terms of volume, peak, and pollution shall be made part of performance standard regulations.
- Development shall be visually contained and environmental impacts minimized.
- Standards or guidelines should be developed for this district that help maintain and promote existing development patterns and uses such as guidelines for appropriate truck traffic, noise levels, and hours of operation.

Section 7.2.10 Public District (PUB)

Nearly twenty-five percent of our city is publicly owned. There are approximately sixty-six acres leased to the U.S. Department of Labor for Northlands Job Corps Center of the over two hundred acres owned by the State of Vermont. Vergennes owns a number of parcels for recreation purposes, along with parcels for City Hall, the public works garage, police department, and wastewater treatment plant. There is an approximate five-acre parcel owned by the Vergennes-Panton Water District in the southeast corner of the city where the concrete storage tank is located. The Vergennes Union Elementary School and the Vergennes Union High School own more than fifty acres between Monkton Road and East Street. Since the land area and capital investment in the PUB District are large, changes in use have the potential of high impact on our city.

The **purpose** of the Public District (PUB) is to provide for the zoning and common classification of most publicly-owned land within Vergennes, such as City and State facilities and offices, parks, schools, and school facilities. The following policies shall apply to the PUB District:

- Any property or structure shall be for public use.
- Uses in this district shall provide direct benefits to the citizens of Vergennes, including education, municipal services, public recreation, community centers, and community gardens.

- Uses are subject to conditional use and development site plan review, minimum lot size, and parking regulations.

Section 7.2.11 Otter Creek Basin District (OCB)

The Otter Creek Basin District (OCB) occupies approximately 36 acres at the junction of VT Route 22A and Otter Creek. Perhaps the most scenic area of our city, the basin boasts one of the most beautiful falls in the state. The Otter Creek dramatically drops 37 feet at the falls, which is the last impediment to direct access to Lake Champlain. The waterpower and lake access provided by the Otter Creek influenced the economic growth of Vergennes throughout the nineteenth century. Many of the existing and past buildings were built to harness the industrial and commercial potential of the falls.

Traditionally, this area has been divided into the Upper and Lower Basin. The Upper Basin consists of the falls, the Otter Creek Bridge, Settlers' Park, and several historic buildings. Beginning in 1992, the City in collaboration with Green Mountain Power Corporation, restored the exterior of the historic Vergennes Pumphouse located in the middle of the falls, as well as rehabilitating the grounds of the surrounding area.

The Grist Mill on the falls has been restored and converted into housing and offices, and there are plans to restore and convert the Shade Roller buildings on the west shore into residential units. On the east shore there is a mix of commercial and residential uses. The L. F. Benton Company building, originally the window sash factory, has seen recent renovations. Settlers' Park to the southeast is used primarily as a boat launch and parking.

Currently, the Lower Basin includes a hydroelectric plant and the Green Mountain Power Corporation substation and transmission lines along the northwest shore. North of the substation are the wastewater treatment plant, public works facilities, and Vergennes Falls Park. The northeast shore has a privately owned natural area adjacent to the falls. The owner allows public access and the City has constructed a trail and footbridge here that will be connected into the rail trail being planned between the Lower Basin and the new Ferrisburgh Park and Ride lot near Route 7. This trail will connect into the upper basin through the "Gateway" improvement plans. The City now owns or controls by lease all properties from the base of the falls to the municipal docks.

North of this property is Macdonough Park. The City has reconstructed the municipal dock with the

addition of floating docks, and improved electrical service, picnic sites, and potable water supply. The dock is used extensively by boaters and residents during the summer and is an important asset for the future of the city.

The **purpose** of our Otter Creek Basin District (OCB) is to encourage environmentally-sensitive mixed-use development with a particular emphasis on adaptive re-use of existing historic structures and retention and expansion of recreational opportunities. This shall be accomplished by the following policies:

- The Lower Basin area is to remain open.
- Lands currently in public ownership shall remain open for public use and access.
- Development and redevelopment shall be sensitive to the unique environmental qualities of the area and shall not detract from or create an undue adverse impact on the area. This includes impacts to historic structures and context, natural resource values, aesthetic and visual quality, and public enjoyment.
- The natural beauty of the Upper and Lower Basin shall be preserved and enhanced for public enjoyment.
- The architecture and archaeological heritage of the historic buildings in the basin shall be preserved, restored, and enhanced in order to encourage appreciation by city residents and support for cultural tourism.
- Continue to support the improved identity and prominence of the Otter Creek basin for public and private enjoyment.
- As a result of the Community Visit program held in 2014 conducted by the Vermont Council on Rural Development, a community-based task force formed to explore redevelopment of the Vergennes Falls Basin and to determine the feasibility of opening a Riverwalk.
- As a result of the Community Visit program held in 2014 and conducted by the Vermont Council on Rural Development, a community-based task force formed to explore ways to improve transportation and parking throughout the city, including improvements to pedestrian, vehicular, and educational linkages between the Upper and Lower Basins, across the Otter Creek Bridge, and between the basin and historic downtown Vergennes, Lake Champlain, and other historic place in Addison County.

Section 7.2.12 Flood Hazard Overlay District (FHO)

The Flood Hazard Overlay District includes all areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as Zone A on the current Flood Insurance Map for the City of Vergennes. Details of the flood-prone area shall be as designated now or at some future date by this agency. It is the policy of this plan to prohibit new habitable or flood restrictive structures in the floodplain district and to prohibit expansions of existing structures in the floodplain. It is recommended that the City maintain current flood hazard bylaws as required by the National Flood Insurance Program so that flood insurance protection at reasonable cost will be available to owners of improved property in the flood hazard area. Generally,

The improved municipal dock with floating docks, electrical service, picnic sites and potable water supply.

uses in the FHO should be limited to outdoor recreation, agriculture, and public utilities.

The **purpose** of the FHO is to prevent increases in flooding caused by the uncontrolled development of lands in areas of special flood hazard. It is further designed to minimize losses due to floods by restricting or prohibiting certain uses that are dangerous in times of flood or cause excessive increase in flood heights or velocities. Land classified in an FHO shall also be classified in one or more of the other districts in this section.

The FHO generally follows the shores of the Otter Creek.

Section 7.2.13 Archaeological Overlay District (AO)

This archaeologically sensitive area encompasses eighteenth and nineteenth century historic sites. This district is superimposed over other land use districts.

The **purpose** of the Archaeological Overlay District is to identify Fort William (A), Macdonough's Shipyard (B) and the two, (C) and (D), assumed locations of the batteries erected during the War of 1812 (see the Land Use Districts map for these locations). The Planning Commission drafted and the City Council adopted regulations in 1985 that do not prohibit development within the district but provides for notice to the City Council or the appointed representative of any proposed development. The purpose of the regulations is to encourage the disclosure of archaeological items for the public.

Section 7.2.14 Solar Energy Overlay District (SEO)

The Solar Energy Overlay District includes areas designated as prime locations for the siting of solar energy projects greater than 15 kW. This district is superimposed over other land use districts.

The purpose of the Solar Energy Overlay District is to identify prime locations for the siting of solar energy projects greater than 15 kW. The areas within the SEO have been selected in terms of impact to natural resources, proximity to existing power infrastructure, aesthetic impact, topography, and potential generation.

Areas within the district do not have any Level 1 or Level 2 constraints. Level 1 constraints are physical conditions which would make development unfeasible and includes FEMA floodways, river corridors, federal wilderness areas, rare and irreplaceable natural areas (RINAs) vernal pools, and class 1 and 2 wetlands. Level 2 constraints are conditions which could impact development, but which would not necessarily prevent it and includes class 3 wetlands, conserved lands, hydric soils, deer wintering areas, special flood hazard areas, agricultural soils, and habitat blocks.

Land classified in the SEO shall also be classified in one or more of the other districts in this section.

FORMULA BUSINESS: A retail store, restaurant, hotel, or other establishment that stands alone as a principal use or with another use as an accessory use, and which is required by contractual or other arrangements to maintain any one or more of the following standardized features that causes it to be substantially identical to 30 or more other businesses located within the United States, regardless of the ownership of those businesses: name; if food is served, menu, ingredients, uniforms; trademark; logo; symbol; architectural design; signage; color scheme; merchandise, or any other similar standardized features.

Section 7.3 Goals

A. Plan for our community's current and future land use needs in a thoughtful adaptive manner.

Section 7.4 Policies and Recommended Actions

1. Expand the Residential/Limited Business District along Main Street.
2. Change dimensional standards and densities to enhance thoughtful housing opportunities.
3. Convert the Agricultural and Rural Residential District to Low Density Residential District other appropriate designation.
4. Apply for the state's Neighborhood Development Area designation as a way to enhance lifespan housing opportunities in the City.
5. Prepare for potential changes in land use along the Vergennes Economic Corridor.
6. Proposals for formula businesses shall be required to undergo a comprehensive community and economic impact review, which includes examination of traffic, scenic and historic resources, tax revenue, city services, employment, the Central Business District, and the character of the City.
7. Add the areas near Comfort Hill and Armory Lane to the High Density Residential District.

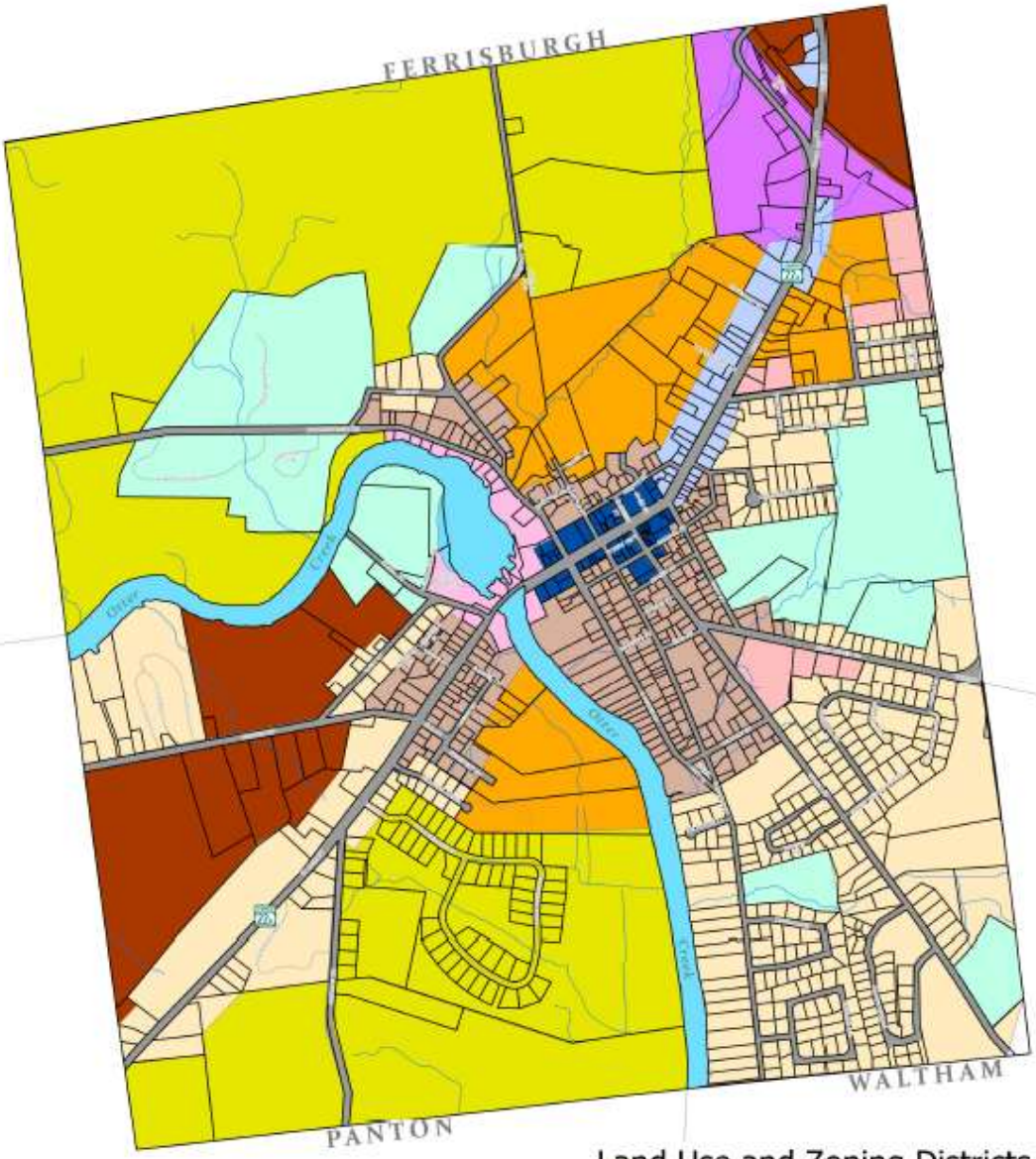
Chapter 8. RESPECTING OUR NEIGHBORS

Section 8.1 Compatibility with the Region

Vergennes is a regional center for employment, housing, education, social services, industry, and commerce for much of the northern half of Addison County and the southern portion of Chittenden County. In general, the policies and strategies of the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan are compatible with those adopted by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission on December 14, 2011. Some elements of the regional database and policy directives have been used in the preparation of the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan. To highlight a few of the Addison County Regional Plan elements, the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan concurs with the importance of maintaining a strong downtown, preserving the natural resources in the Otter Creek Basin and the historic structures in the city, and supporting inter-modal transportation by road, water, and rail. Vergennes is an active member of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and will continue to participate in its deliberations and utilize its staff resources as needed.

Vergennes borders the towns of Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham (see aerial photo on page 77). The Ferrisburgh highway commercial district on the City's east side along Route 7 and its industrial corridor to the north generally concur with this plan for city land use. As so in Panton, residential densities along the southern and western borders are generally compatible, each supporting low density residential or agricultural uses. Lastly in Waltham, highway commercial and residential districts adjoining the city's southeast border are compatible with the medium density residential and public districts proposed in this plan. Vergennes is thriving and growing in the midst of a vibrant revival of appreciation for small and connected communities, surrounded by the model landscape that is Addison County. We look forward to what may come.

City of Vergennes
Land Use and Zoning Map



Land Use and Zoning Districts

- Central Business District (CBD)
- Residential/Limited Business District (R/LBD)
- Commercial District (C)
- Northern Gateway District (NGD)
- Industrial District (IND)
- Historic Neighborhood District (HN)
- High Density Residential District (HDR)
- Medium Density Residential District (MDR)
- Low Density Residential (LDR)
- Otter Creek Basin District (OCBD)
- Public District (PUB)

Sources:
Zoning Districts: Adopted by the City Council, March 10, 2020.

Land Use Map: Adopted under the Municipal Development Plan by the City Council, March 10, 2020.

Parcel Boundaries: Vermont Center for Geographic Information, 2023.

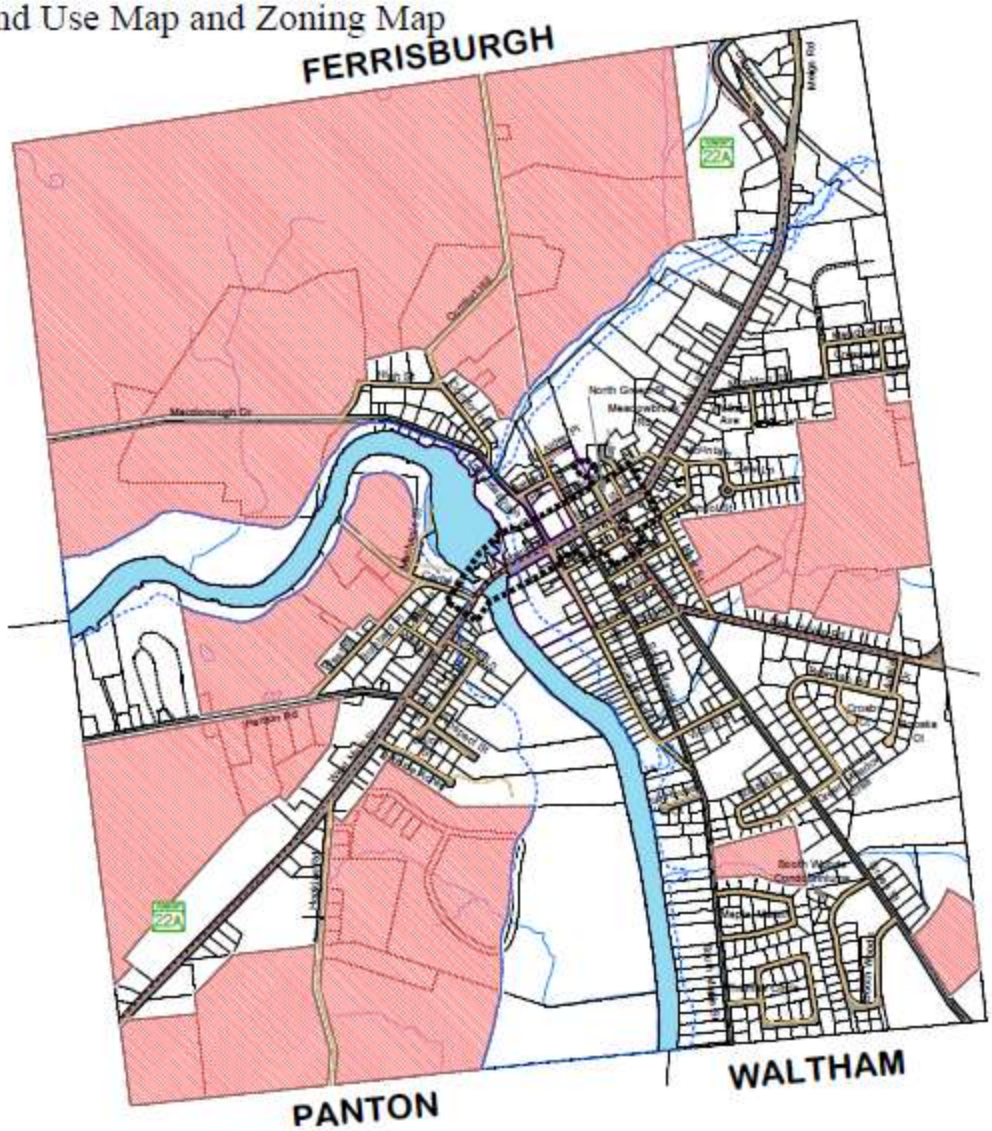
See Zoning Administrator for current information.

ACRPC 12/2020

Addison County
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

City of Vergennes

Land Use Map and Zoning Map



Land Use and Zoning - Overlay Districts

- Designated Downtown District
- Archaeological Overlay; AO
- Solar Energy Overlay; SEO
- Flood Hazard District (100yr); FHO

Sources:
Zoning Districts: Adopted by the City Council, Sept 25, 2018.
Land Use Map: Adopted under the Municipal Development Plan by the City Council, Sept 30, 2014; updated 7/18/2017.
Downtown District Designation; revised and adopted, Sept, 2019
Parcel Boundaries: Prepared under State contract, 2017.

See Zoning Administrator for current information.

ACRPC 10/2019

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

FERRISBURG
VERGENNES
PANTON
WALTHAM

APPENDICES (appendices may be found at www.vergennes.org)

Appendix 1: Enhanced Energy Plan

Appendix 2: Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan

Recommended Resources

Cultivating Community through Sustainable Transportation: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements in Vergennes, Vermont

Vermont Council on Rural Development – Vergennes Community Visit Report

Vergennes Falls and Otter Creek Basin Plan

Selected Resources

DeBonis, Mike. 2019. "Organized Recreation Trail Networks: Anchoring Vermont Communities." Green Mountain Club. https://www.greenmountainclub.org/organized-recreation-trail-networks-anchoring-vermont-communities/.

Parks & Trails New York, and Hudson River Valley Greenway. n.d. "Getting Started: A Guide to Planning Trails in New York State." https://www.americantrails.org/images/documents/getting-started-guide.pdf.

Addison County Regional Planning Commission. "Regional Transportation Plan Update." 2018. http://acrpc.org/programs-services/transportation/.

City of Vergennes. "Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan." 2016. http://vergennes.org/vergennes-downtown-basin-master-plan-final-report-is-complete/.

City of Vergennes Planning Commission. "Vergennes Sidewalk Inventory." 2016. Walk-Bike Addison. https://www.walkbikeaddison.org/vergennes_sidewalk_inventory.

ENVS 401 Senior Seminar, Fall 2012, Middlebury College. "Cultivating Community through Sustainable Transportation: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements in Vergennes, VT." 2012. http://go.middlebury.edu/vergennesbikeped .

Stantec. "VT 22A Truck Route Study Addison County, Vermont Final Report." 2019. http://acrpc.org/programs-services/transportation/transportation-projects/.

Stantec. "VT 22A Truck Route Study Response to Public Comments." December 10, 2018. http://acrpc.org/programs-services/transportation/transportation-projects/.

Vermont Agency of Transportation. "Vermont General Highway Map: City of Vergennes." 2017. http://vtransmap01.aot.state.vt.us/Maps/TownMapSeries/ADDISON_Co/VERGENNES_CI/VERGENNES_CI_MILEAGE_2017.pdf

Wilbur Smith Associates. "Multi-Use Path and Sidewalk Planning and Feasibility Study for the City of Vergennes and the Town of Ferrisburg, Vermont." 2006. http://acrpc.org/communities/vergennes/.