

## Draft - Barre City Flood Resiliency Plan

### Submitted by:

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To the City Council, City Manager, and Barre Community -

This draft document begins a plan for Barre City's long term flood recovery and future resiliency. In recent weeks, Council has identified a need to aggregate the programs/initiatives that the City is already pursuing, along with a way to plug in and to explore other opportunities in the following five critical areas:

- Grant/Funding Opportunities
- Information/Data Gathering
- Community Readiness + Staff Capacity
- Infrastructure + Flood Mitigation
- Housing Development + Repair

Throughout this document, Councilors Gustin and Waszazak aim to provide the Council and the community with a high-level view of what the City has done/is doing, options that the City already has its eye on, and add potential new opportunities to address these critical needs.

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## **Guiding Principles**

Barre City seeks to center the perspectives and experiences of its residents in a collaborative planning process toward a more flood-resilient future.

Barre City will work with local, statewide, and federal partners to leverage funding, collaboration, and creative solutions.

Barre City will emphasize an understanding of climate, watershed, and natural resources in its planning.

## *Grant/Funding Opportunities*

### **Vermont Emergency Management Grant - Hazard Mitigation Funding Programs:**

- [Vermont Emergency Management has \\$90 million available](#)
- Eligible projects include:
  - Buyouts
  - Structural Elevation & Mitigation Reconstruction
  - Natural resource projects - i.e. dam removal or floodplain restorations
  - Infrastructure projects - i.e. upsizing bridges or culverts
  - Floodproofing of municipal or commercial buildings
  - Road relocation, elevation, or soil stabilization
- Pre-Application due by 11:59pm, on August 16th
  - Information requested for pre-application:
    - Applicant's entity type
    - Applicant point of contact
    - Project Type
    - Details for projects:
      - Problem to be addressed by Project (i.e., what is the natural hazard and what are the impacts of the hazard in your project area)
      - Project Description (i.e., what are you proposing to do)
      - Project Location (e.g., address, latitude/longitude, general location of project)
      - Estimated Project Cost
      - Source of estimated cost (e.g., professional quote, qualified government official, past projects, etc.)
      - History of Damages from the natural hazard
      - Current Status of Project Development (e.g., design level, Benefit Cost Analysis, schedule, budget, etc.)
- Some municipal application support available to Barre City through the Rivers program.

### **EPA Community Change Grants:**

- [The EPA has \\$2 billion available in environmental and climate justice projects](#)
- Eligible entities include:
  - A partnership between two community based non-profit organizations
  - A partnership between a community based non-profit organization and one of the following:
    - A federally recognized tribe
    - A local government
    - An institution of higher learning
- Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until November 21st, 2024

- Depending on the scope and vision for the project, there are two tracks for submission:
  - Track I: Community-Driven Investments for Change, to fund 150 projects at \$10-20 million per project
  - Track II: Meaningful Engagement for Equitable Governance, to fund 20 projects at \$1-3 million per projects
- \$200 million is available for Technical Assistance for municipalities to help guide them through the process. T.A. is available in all stages of this grant, including application.

**Other potential funding sources:**

- **Congressionally Directed Spending requests.** Pat Moulton has submitted a CDS/earmark request to Senator Sanders office, representing broad scale redevelopment in the North End. Regardless of whether or not this is successful, Barre City will surely have needs extending through the next round of Congressionally Directed Spending. The City should remain in active conversation with the federal delegation, and routinely submit these requests for large-and-mid sized projects over the coming years.
- **VEM Flood Resilient Communities Fund (State of Vermont).** Funding for this program is currently limited, but there are hopes that the Legislature will allocate more funding to this program during the next legislative session. The City could submit additional projects to this fund, to get on the list if more funding becomes available.
- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grants (FEMA).** The Window to apply for FY23 funding has passed, but this is an annual grant program which will open again in the fall of this year. This is for Hazard mitigation projects that do NOT have to be directly tied to a disaster.

## *Information/Data Gathering*

### **What we're doing/have done:**

- **Barre Up Forums - Vermont Council on Rural Development:** In the aftermath of the Floods, Barre City officials reached out to the Vermont Council on Rural Development to convene and facilitate city-wide meetings to discuss the impact of the floods on our community, listen to what worked and what didn't work in the immediate response to the floods, and to begin preparation for the work of long-term community recovery. These meetings culminated in the Barre Up Report from the Vermont Council on Rural Development (Oct. 2023), which can be accessed here: <https://www.vtrural.org/barre-up-report-2023/>
  - Key Takeaways:
    - Housing - Address short-term housing needs for flood affected families; support rebuilding/renovating flood affected housing; support long-term new housing development
    - Social and Community Wellbeing - Support community connections; creation of a recovery resource hub; improve the image of Barre City in the rebuilding
    - Infrastructure and Planning - Focus on City, regional, and statewide flood/hazard assessments and planning; Identify and implement City infrastructure improvements to support flood resiliency; Deeper and more inclusive emergency services planning and communication; Advance river corridor and watershed mitigation and restoration plans
  
- **City of Barre/State of Vermont Neighborhood Meetings:** Following the Barre Up process through VCRD, the State of Vermont partnered with the City of Barre to conduct neighborhood/Ward meetings, multiple events held throughout the City. Pat Moulton, Central VT Recovery Officer, worked with the City Manager and Tess Taylor, Homelessness and Housing Liaison, to organize these meetings. The meetings featured river scientists, City Councilors, City Staff, and other experts convened by the State. Community Members were encouraged to share their opinions on potential flood mitigation efforts, housing developments, and future disaster planning. The City's report on these meetings can be found here: <https://shorturl.at/txR3m>
  - Key Takeaways:
    - Housing priorities:

- Mixed use developments with nearby services, housing for those navigating buyouts, development of vacant lots/infill in downtown, financial support for repairs to damaged homes
- Resiliency priorities:
  - Fix the low bridges, remove the trestle, upsize culverts, remove defunct/unnecessary dams, work with regional and state partners to take a macro look at the Watershed (what our neighbors upriver do affect us, as what we do affects those downriver, etc

**Other opportunities to pursue:**

- **Citywide inundation modeling.** Gaining a clear understanding of where, how, and when water flows within the city based on most recent trends will underpin all updated floodplain planning.
- **Culvert identification and upsizing.** Systematically analyzing all culverts across the city for capacity relative to expected flow to ensure they remain clear during flood events.
- **Continued outreach around infill development and downtown vacancies.** Committing to ongoing knowledge-gathering around potential for development within the City, both for housing and for mitigation. The City and partners can conduct surveys, track changes, and use technology and data modeling to get a better real-time picture of possibilities.
- **Citizen-led neighborhood flood knowledge.** Barre City residents are often best placed to know precisely how their neighborhoods flood. Structures across the city - even those at elevation - flooded in July 2023, and some of those could be alleviated by small, hyperlocal fixes.
- **Resident education.** Following on the idea of hyperlocal fixes, the City can lead workshops and informational gatherings to educate residents about small flood mitigation improvements to their own properties in keeping with good stormwater planning and water flow.

## *Community + Staff Capacity*

### **What we're doing/have done:**

- The City of Barre has committed additional resources to our staff capacity and community readiness over the past year. On top of the many hours that City Staff have spent on flood recovery over the past year, the City Council is aware that staff capacity remains extremely limited, and that additional resources are needed to leverage the state and federal funding that is needed for Barre City to rebuild in a flood resilient way.
- The City has earmarked \$200,000 in ARPA funding for a grant writer/project manager to support the planning department in pursuing whatever State or Federal grant opportunities are available.
- The City has hired a Housing and Homelessness liaison, who has been working closely with the Central Vermont Flood Recovery Officer to identify funding opportunities, conduct outreach, and represent the City with community partners such as the Housing Task Force and Barre Up.
- Directly and indirectly, the City of Barre has supported the foundation and launch of a non-municipal Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG), Barre Up.

### **Other Opportunities to pursue:**

- **Ward meetings and street captains.** Whatever the final form, a more cohesive program of neighborhood connections will help build community resiliency in future disaster scenarios.
- **Communications upgrades.** Adding in more timely, effective communication systems to alert residents quickly and clearly in case of emergency. Making a commitment to sharing full information in an easily accessible form builds community trust and buy-in.
- **Continued investment in City Staff.** 1-time use of ARPA funding to get grant applications out the door is necessary at this time, however the long term resiliency of the City and the long-term grant management needed to ensure that resiliency will require permanent staffing additions to the planners office.
  - Recommendation: Increase the salaries for the vacant planner positions in next cycle's budget, or FY26, considering the ARPA funding for the grant writer/project manager detailed above.
- **Funding opportunities for community building.** The City can pursue grant funding opportunities in partnership with community organizations to support programs that knit residents together.

## *Infrastructure + Flood Mitigation*

### **What we're doing/have done:**

- The City of Barre has been working with multiple property owners who have indicated an interest in buyout. The City Manager has identified these groupings of parcels as potential sites of development.
  - 8 lots in the Vine/Scampini/Berlin St area - Buyout est. \$2.5mil
    - Grand List Impact: \$40,000
  - 5 lots in the Gunners Brook area - Buyout est. \$2.5mil
    - Grand List Impact: \$35,000
  - 7 lots in the River/Granite St area - Buyout est. \$2.1 mil
    - Grand List Impact: \$34,000
  - 5 lots in the North End area - Buyout est. \$4mil
    - Grand List Impact: \$65,000
  - 5 lots across the City due to landslides - Buyout est. \$1.35mil
    - Grand List Impact: \$21,300
  - In total, the buyouts that we are already requesting funding from VEM/FEMA represent \$12,450,000, with Grand List Impact of \$195,300
  - <https://shorturl.at/cUna7>
- Mayor Lauzon worked with the Agency of Transportation in the weeks immediately following the flood to expedite the repaving of North Main St/VT-302.
- The City has invested in the repair of damaged sewer lines that were discovered following the July 2023 floods
- Repaired the Public Safety Building and City Hall, identified improved access to the Public Safety Building in the case of Main Street flooding
- Hauled hundreds of tons of debris away at no charge to residents
- The City of Barre supported the Friends of the Winooski in their applications for Watershed study, as well as a dam removal study/project

### **Other opportunities:**

- **Working with the Central Vermont Recovery Officer and river experts to submit an application to the Community Change grants, for the below properties which have requested buyouts.** These properties have demonstrated a viability for being a flood mitigation project, while also having the potential to develop future, flood resilient housing. The City should work with the State to hire a firm to develop plans for these properties to be bought out and redeveloped. That redevelopment could include flood resilient housing, or increased flood plain with alternate, non-housing developments (parks, playgrounds).

- 3 lots on Brooklyn St - Buyout est. \$750,000
  - Grand List Impact: \$10,000
- 3 lots on Washington St - Buyout est. \$500,000
  - Grand List Impact: \$5,800
- <https://shorturl.at/cUna7>
- **Relocate DPW garage out of floodplain.** Identify funding to build a new DPW garage that meets Barre City's 21st century needs. - **Potentially eligible for VEM grant or EPA grant.**
- **Find solutions for Willey & Berlin Street bridges.** Working with the Central Vermont Flood Recovery Officer, conduct engineering work to determine if elevation, redesign, or removal is appropriate, and follow through on recommendations. - **Eligible for VEM grant.**
- **Remove railroad trestle.** Advocate for the state to remove and not replace the defunct railroad trestle. - **Potentially eligible for VEM grant.**
- **Upgrade windows and doors at City Hall.** Replace previously-breached spaces with floodproof upgrades. - **Eligible for VEM grant.**
- **Commit to upgrades to the Barre Auditorium.** As the regional emergency shelter, the Barre Auditorium represents a crucial resource; while the City has already committed to some upgrades through a CDS grant, they should continue to pursue property improvements that make the building a more functional shelter and a revenue-generating opportunity for the city.

## *Housing Development and Repair*

### **What we're doing/have done:**

- The City of Barre has supported the proposed Prospect Heights project, which could bring up to 128 units of housing, including pathways to home ownership and rental opportunities.
- The City of Barre has entered into a tentative agreement to develop two parking lots on Seminary St into housing units, in partnership with Downstreet Housing and others. These lots would have ground floor parking, with the housing structures built above ground level.
  - 28-30 housing units generated, plus Grand List growth
- The City Council has tentatively allocated \$250,000 to a Housing Trust Fund/Revolving Loan Fund, the details of eligibility and use of this funding will be coming in the form of recommendations to the Council from the All in for Barre Housing Task Force, in partnership with the City of Barre Housing and Homelessness Liaison.
- The City Council posted additional RFPs to develop vacant lots in several areas, including Wobby Park. Those RFPs have not yet been filled but the sites remain identified as potential locations.
- Barre Up is working with residents to repair flood-damaged housing in the near- and long-term, working closely with the City.
- Planning commission is pursuing a series of ordinance updates to ease density and development in compliance with recently passed state law.

### **Other Opportunities:**

- **North End “Clusters”**
  - The Council should approve the buyout of the so-called “North End Clusters” of housing units, and prepare an RFP for the development of two, six unit buildings in that footprint, build to flood resilient standards (utilities on the 1st floor, etc)
  - Eligible for Community Change Grant.
- **Wobby Park**
  - The City should submit a proposal for the Community Change Grant which includes the development of flood resilient housing units.
- **The “One Big Thing”**
  - The Council is awaiting a proposal from the Central Vermont Recovery Officer, Pat Moulton, on a 30-40 unit development in the North End.
- **Congressionally Directed Spending.** On behalf of the City of Barre, Central Vermont Recovery Officer Pat Moulton submitted an earmark request to Senator Bernie Sanders office, around the Governor’s proposed “Gateway” project. The

earmark represents a \$51.4 million-dollar ask, and encompasses the redevelopment of the entire North End en-masse, including the Wobby Park property, the North End “Clusters”, increased floodplain, and playgrounds.

- **Additional parking lot development.** In addition to the Seminary Street lots, the Council should direct the City Manager to determine which other parking lots, regardless of whether The City owns them, could be potential spots for development. If the Manager determines that potential development could occur on privately owned lots, the Council should direct the Manager to engage the property owners in discussion for potential purchase.