

# **CITY OF BARRE**

  

## **2003 MUNICIPAL PLAN**

Adopted by Municipal Council  
February 18, 2003

Note: The 1994 Economic Development Plan with amendments is adopted as part of the 2003 Municipal Plan. Economic Development Plan is available at the Barre City Planning and Zoning Office and is not available in digital form.

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. Municipal Plan Definition and Purpose**

The Barre City Municipal Plan is a document that can be used by the elected and appointed officials and all of the citizens of the Barre to help to plan the future of this community. It is a guide for future improvements as viewed at this point in time. However, changing circumstances in the future will require that it be constantly reviewed and modified at regular intervals, so that it can be useful. This Plan is a flexible guide for future action and should not be considered to be a regulatory document. Any recommendations in this Plan should be considered, in context, as part of the entire plan.

Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, Section 4382 requires that municipal plans include the following elements:

- A statement of objectives, policies and programs ...;
- A land use plan ...;
- A transportation plan ...;
- A utility and facility plan ...;
- A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources ...;

- An educational facilities plan...;
- A recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan...;
- A statement indicating how the plan relates to the development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, the area and the region ...;
- An energy plan ...;
- A housing element which includes a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs ...;

The Barre City Planning Commission decided that the plan should also include:

- An economic development plan ...;

These elements are all addressed in various sections of the Barre City Municipal Plan.

Barre City's previous Master Plan was adopted in 1985. The Vermont planning laws were changed extensively in 1988. The amended laws expanded the content and purpose of municipal plans. This plan is intended to meet the requirements of the state law, but, more importantly it is designed to accomplish the following:

- Review the current condition of the community
- Serve as a guide for future planning decisions

- Outline the community's future goals
- Help to provide direction about how to achieve these goals

## **B. The Need for Planning**

The need for planning is often controversial in a community. Some people feel that such things as municipal plans and zoning laws excessively infringe on the rights of the people in the community. There are others who feel that everything should be planned to the most minute detail. This often results in thick documents that are never used and projects that are never completed.

A municipal plan should be a document that is concise and useful and it should be something that helps to preserve the rights of the majority of the people in the community and to make it a better place to live.

Planning helps to establish a basic set of rules to guide future actions. The leaders and the citizens of Barre City saw the need for such things as zoning laws, subdivision regulations and building codes many years ago. Proper planning allows a community to be prepared for the changing times and to amend its ordinances and regulations to fit the needs of the ever changing community. A community, such as Barre City, that has a completed municipal plan, ordinances and regulations is informing residents that there are certain standards of development that must be met.

The planning process gives the residents of a municipality an opportunity to participate in the process and to help make decisions about the future of their community. Although the majority of people do not participate in the process, it is important to provide them with this opportunity. The input of those that do participate is very important.

Planning helps to preserve the quality of life in a community by providing an opportunity to review the best locations for such varying land uses as industrial development, housing and natural recreation areas. Without proper planning, these different land uses can adversely impact on one another. Providing adequate separation of these uses also helps to preserve property values.

### **C. Barre City Municipal Plan Process**

The previous Barre City Master Plan was adopted in 1985 and readopted in 1990. The process for creating a new municipal plan began in 1989 with a conscious effort to maximize public participation in the process of creating the new plan. The process began with public hearings that were conducted by the Barre City Planning Commission. The Commission heard from citizens and interested parties on various elements of the plan including land use, housing, utilities and facilities, transportation and energy.

Additional input was obtained in 1990 through the use of a planning survey that was distributed to the citizens. Subsequently, the City Manager distributed a detailed questionnaire in 1991 to the people who serve on the many City committees. Another planning survey was

distributed with the mailing of the water bills in 1992 to obtain additional information. Although this could not be considered a scientific opinion poll, the input does represent the opinion of several hundred Barre City residents.

In 1992 the Planning Commission utilized funds from a state planning grant to contract with a consultant to assist in compiling and reviewing the information that had been gathered as well as assist in writing the plan. The planning commission split into three subcommittees that then gave the consultant specific guidance and input on various elements of the plan. The consultant gained additional input by interviewing various appointed and elected officials and department heads of City government. The consultant also met with a number of City committees as well as the City council. Additional public input was sought on three occasions through the use of large block ads in the Times Argus newspaper which outlined the purpose and the elements of the Plan and sought public comment on any related issues.

State law requires that the Planning Commission hold at least one public hearing regarding the municipal plan to obtain additional public comment. The draft document is available for public review prior to the hearing. Once the Plan has been adopted by the Planning Commission, the City Council is required to hold two additional public hearings. The Plan may be amended based on input from the public, the Planning Commission, the City Council or other agencies at any time throughout the process. The Plan document and amendments continue to be available to the public throughout the adoption process. The maps that are included in this plan are part of a valuable resource of many maps and other documents that are housed in the City Engineer's office. This

resource should be enhanced and maintained to ensure its availability for future planning.

## **II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **A. History of Barre**

Much of this historical perspective was extracted from “BARRE IN RETROSPECT 1776 – 1976” which was published by the Friends of the Aldrich Public Library in 1975. On November 6, 1780, 19,900 acres of land which was west of the New Hampshire Grants and east of New York was chartered to William Williams and 60 others and given the name of Wildersburgh. This chartered land encompassed the area that is now known as the City of Barre and the Town of Barre. In 1788 John Goldsbury and Sameul Rogers brought their families here and began to settle the area. They were eventually joined by other people from New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

On March 11, 1793, the first town meeting was held in the community. The name of the community was eventually changed to Barre. There is some debate about whether this occurred by auctioning off the right to the highest bidder or by means of a fist fight.

After the initial process of settling the community, the basic manufacturing enterprises of the day (saw mill, grist mill and bartering of food) were established. Barre started to develop in a different manner of than the surrounding communities after the granite industry was established soon after the War of 1812. The development of this industry and other factors led to some population growth up until 1830. However, this growth leveled off for some fifty years thereafter. There were 2,012 residents in 1830 and just 2,060 in 1880.



The arrival of the railroad in Barre helped the granite industry become a major industry. The fame of this vast deposit of granite, which some geologist say is 4 miles long, 2 miles wide and 10 miles deep, soon spread to Europe and Canada. Large numbers of people migrated to Barre from Italy, Scotland, Spain, Scandinavia, Greece, Lebanon, and Quebec and a number of other countries. The population increased from 2,060 in 1880, to 6,790 in 1890, to 10,000 in 1894.

Over time, a major portion of the population came to reside in the lower valley portion of the Town which included different villages. For reasons best known to the people of the time, just under four square miles of the more populated area of the town was carved out in 1895, and the City of Barre was created by the action of the voters and the charter which was granted by the state legislature. The City of Barre has continued to exist as a separate governmental entity from the Town to this date.

## **B. Review of 1985 Master Plan Goals and Objectives**

The 1985 Barre City Master Plan was written prior to the major overhaul of the state planning law. However, many of the points that were discussed and the objectives that were established in that plan are still pertinent today. The following goals (brief subtitles) and objectives (statements listed under the goals) were extracted from the 1985 Master Plan:

### Economic growth

- Encourage diversity in the City's downtown retail sector to strengthen the City's commercial district.
- Determine steps required to maintain competitive advantage over regional malls. Work toward creating that environment.
- Actively seek industrial expansion and new development to maintain high employment of our quality labor force.

### Improvement in the quality of life

- Assure that Barre provides its regional, fair share of safe, affordable and attractive housing for all ages, physical, emotional and mental abilities and all income levels.
- Carry out land use changes to conform with this Master Plan, which will protect and strengthen neighborhoods and economic districts.
- Improve the quality of drinking water provided by the City's public water system and eliminate low pressure problems.
- Seek methods to attract a broader range of cultural and recreational offerings within City facilities.

### Rational development of remaining land resources

- Provide for expansion of utilities and public facilities, as demanded in those areas which will result in least disruption to existing settlements.

- Provide for ongoing review of zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations to assure the City's orderly transition to the future in accordance with this Master Plan.

#### Conservation of natural, human and built resources

- Improve and protect the quality of streams running through the City.
- Encourage clustering and planned unit developments to preserve open space amenities.
- Identify and seek methods to preserve and protect all structures of historic importance.
- Recognize, honor and preserve the diverse ethnic heritage from which the City was fabricated.

#### Improved governmental services

- Elicit broader citizen participation in local and regional affairs.
- Encourage regional efforts, especially in areas of education, recreation, ambulance service, police and fire protection, solid waste disposal, water and waste water treatment, the environment and transportation, for cost effective methods for provision of services.
- Encourage participation by City employees in educational programs to maintain state of the art competence in each job area.

### Traffic improvements

- Improve levels of service on arterial streets traversing the City.
- Broaden critical intersection to facilitate truck traffic.
- Make road bed improvements as required to upgrade road surface conditions.
- Eliminate through traffic in parking and loading areas.
- Provide for additional off street parking as required.

## **C. Demographics and the 2000 Census**

### Population Size and Estimates

Barre has experienced an overall population decline of 15% since 1940 as shown in the table below. However, since 1960 the decline has been gradual. The decline from 1970 to 2000 can be contributed to a decline in household size. Between 1970 to 2000 the household size declined from 2.9 to 2.2 persons per household. If the 2000 household size was still 2.9 as in 1970, the population would be over 12,000 persons. The average 2000 household size for Central Vermont and Vermont overall were both 2.4.

In contrast, the Central Vermont area had a 6.2% increase in population from 1990 to 2000 while the state overall population increase for 1990 to 2000 was 8.2%.

### City Population Change from 1940 to 2000

Year	Population	Absolute Change	% Change
Over Decade			
1940	10909	N/A	N/A
1950	10922	13	0.1%
1960	10387	-535	-4.9%
1970	10209	-178	-1.7%
1980	9824	-385	-3.8%
1990	9482	-342	-3.5%
2000	9291	-191	-2.0%

The population projections prepared for the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission for Barre City and Barre Town combined is an increase of only 1% between 2000 and 2010. In summary, given that there is limited land available for development and that the household size will probably not continue to decline as much as in past decades, the overall population for Barre City will remain stable or only slightly decline.

### Age Composition

The table below compares the age composition in 1990 and 2000. As might be expected from general national trends, there was a slight increase in the percent of population between 30 to 64 and a slight decrease in the percent of population between 19 to 29. However the percent persons under 19 years old and the percent of population over 65 years old changed only slightly. Barre City has a similar percent of persons under 18 years old and a higher percentage of elderly population than the region and state. Compared to Central Vermont and the Vermont state overall, in 2000, the percent persons under 18 years old was 25% and 24%, respectively, and the percent over 65 years old was 13% for both.

	<b>Age Composition</b>			
	<b>1990</b>	<b>Percent Population</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent Population</b>
18 and Under	2319	24%	2138	23%
19 to 29	1727	18%	1304	14%
30 to 49	2486	26%	2844	30%
50 to 64	1198	13%	1355	15%
65 and Over	1752	18%	1650	19%
Total Population	9482		9291	

### Race Composition

Overall, Barre City's population is predominately white. Only 5% of the population listed their race as something other than all white. Overall, throughout Vermont, about 3% of the population is non-white.

### Income Characteristics

The table below indicates the income distribution for families and households. By Census definition households include all persons sharing a household unit. A family is a subset of household and includes only households with two or more related individuals. 54% of all households are considered families by the Census.

Income Range	1999 Income Distribution			
	Households	%	Families	%
Less than \$10,000	640	15%	174	8%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	748	18%	253	11%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	699	17%	345	15%
\$30,000 to \$39,000	572	14%	325	14%
\$40,000 to \$49,000	387	9%	273	12%
\$50,000 to \$59,000	404	10%	316	14%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	336	8%	285	12%
\$75,000 to \$99,000	267	6%	222	10%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	97	2%	73	3%
Over \$124,999	79	2%	40	2%
Total	4229		2306	
Median Income	\$30,393		\$42,660	

72% of the households earn less than \$50,000 although all income classes are present. In comparison, 60% of the Central Vermont households earned less than \$50,000. One-third of the households earned under \$20,000 compared to the Central Vermont region that had 21% of the households earning under \$20,000. Approximately 13% of the Barre City residents live at or below poverty compared to only 8% for the Central Vermont region. 18% of the children live in poverty. In addition, 17% of the population received food stamps in 1998 and 10.5% received public assistance income in 1999.

As would be expected, due to more two-income households, families have a higher household median income.

### Martial Status

Of the families, 71% are married couples, and 29% are families without a husband and wife present. There were 446 families, or 19% that included children with only one-parent present. 87%

of the single-parent families were headed up by a female. For comparison, in Central Vermont, 13% of the families included children with only one parent present.

<b>Family Status</b>		
<b>Total Families</b>	<b>2306</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Married-couple Family</b>	<b>1642</b>	<b>71%</b>
With own children under 18 years	746	32%
No own children under 18 years	896	39%
 <b>Other Family Types</b>	 <b>664</b>	 <b>29%</b>
Male Householder, no wife present	128	6%
With own children under 18 years	55	2%
No own children under 18 years	73	3%
Female Householder, no husband present	536	23%
With own children under 18 years	391	17%
No own children under 18 years	145	6%

In married families, 80% of the husbands and 63% of the wives were in the labor force. Within other family types, 71% of the household heads were in the labor force. No statistics are available to identify how many families with children under 18 years old had parents in the labor force.

### Education

As shown below, 18% of the population over 25 years old did not hold a high school diploma. This is higher than in Central Vermont overall where 12% did not hold a high school diploma. 40% of this population group has had some type of education beyond high school compared to 54% for Central Vermont overall.



## Education of Population Over 25 Years Old

Population Over 25 Years Old	6477	%
No Schooling Completed	68	1.0%
To Grade 4	12	0.2%
Grades 5 to 8	466	7.2%
Grades 9 to 12, No diploma	648	10.0%
High School Graduate	2658	41.0%
Some college, no degree	1031	15.9%
Associate Degree	446	6.9%
Bachelor's Degree	827	12.8%
Master's Degree	215	3.3%
Professional Degree	69	1.1%
Doctorate Degree	7	0.1%

17% of the population over 25 years old had a bachelor's degree or higher. In Central Vermont, 30% of this population group had a bachelor's degree or higher.

### Employment

There is almost an even mix between male and females employed and over 16 years old. The table below also shows the Census industry groups where persons are employed. Education, health, and social services industry is the largest employer group employing 22% of the population. The industries of manufacturing, retail, and public administration were the next three dominate categories with each employing between 10-15% of the employed population over 16 years old. The industry employment categories for Barre residents is very similar to those in Central Vermont overall. Within Central Vermont education, health, and social services industry also employed 22% of the employed population over 16 years old. In addition, the industries of

manufacturing, retail, and public administration also employed between 10-15% of the population.

### **Employment Status**

<b>Population 16 Years and Over</b>	7448	
In Labor Force	4727	63.5%
Not In Labor Force	2721	36.5%
<b>Employed Population 16 Years and Over</b>	4515	
Male Employed	2298	50.9%
Female Employed	2217	49.1%
<b>Areas of Employment for Employed Population 16 and Over</b>		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining Industry	55	1.2%
Construction Industry	262	5.8%
Manufacturing Industry	558	12.4%
Wholesale Trade Industry	175	3.9%
Retail Trade Industry	618	13.7%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities Industry	132	2.9%
Information Industry	168	3.7%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, Leasing Industry	286	6.3%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services Industry	232	5.1%
Education, Health, and Social Services Industry	1004	22.2%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services Industry	307	6.8%
Public Administration Industry	507	11.2%
Other Service Industries	211	4.7%

### Commuting Patterns

One-third of the workers over 16 years old reported that their employment was within Barre City. Most workers commuted by motor vehicle. About 7% walked or biked to work. More people

carpooled rather than used public transit when commuting with other persons.

### **General Work and Commuting Patterns**

<b>Workers 16 Year and Over</b>	4464	
Work in Barre City	1486	33.3%
Work at Home	165	3.7%
Work Outside Barre City	2978	66.7%
Commute by Motor Vehicle	3991	92.8%
Drive Alone	3295	76.6%
Carpool	686	16.0%
Commute by Public Transportation	30	0.7%
Commute by Bicycle, Foot or Other Means	278	6.5%
Reported Minutes to Work		
Less than 5	248	5.9%
5 to 19	2703	63.9%
20 to 39	872	20.6%
40 to 59	323	7.6%
60 to 89	84	2.0%
Over 90	69	1.6%

70% of the workers traveled less than 19 minutes to work and another 21% traveled between 20 to 39 minutes. In comparison, in Central Vermont workers traveled slightly more with 53% of the working people commuting under 19 minutes and 31% travelling between 20 to 39 minutes.

### Housing Change and Projections

Although the population has slightly declined since 1940, the number of housing units has had small increases of less than 7% during the same time period except for the 1970's. In the 1970's 458 housing units were added. 44% of these units, or 204, were newly built subsidized

housing units. Another 120 units can be accounted for by the construction of Highgate Apartments which in 1991 became subsidized housing. Without considering the subsidized housing and Highgate construction, only 134 units were added in the 1970's. This is a 3.6% increase which is similar to other decades. Without considering subsidized housing units in the 1980's, only 50 units were added between 1980 and 1990, or about only 1%.

### Housing Unit Changes

Year	Total Housing	Absolute Change	% Change Over Decade
1940	3151		
1950	3392	241	7.6%
1960	3608	216	6.4%
1970	3693	85	2.4%
1980	4151	458	12.4%
1990	4321	170	4.1%
2000	4477	156	3.6%

### Subsidized Housing

Complex	Year Built/Converted to Subsidized Housing	Number Units
Green Acres	1971	50
Washington Apts.	1970	51
Tilden House	1973	79
Jefferson	1976	24
North Barre Manor	1982	120
Highgate *	1991	<u>120</u>
Total Subsidized Units		444

\* Highgate was constructed in 1970 but was converted to subsidized housing in 1991.

In summary, given the past trends and the available land, it is projected that there will not be

large increases in housing units.

### Rental Unit Composition

Approximately 53% of the housings units are rentals. Despite the addition of 324 subsidized housing units between 1970 to 1982, there has been a slight decline in the percent of rental housing units.

Year	Owner Occupied vs. Renter Occupied			
	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Total Occupied	% Rental
1940	1246	1812	3058	59.3%
1980	2006	1997	4003	49.9%
1990	1967	2081	4048	51.4%
2000	1993	2287	4280	53.4%

40% of the housing units were detached dwellings. Smaller multiple dwelling buildings of 2 to 9 units make up 45% of the overall housing units and 76% of the attached housing units. Larger multiple dwelling buildings of 10 or more units made up 12% of the housing units and 21% of the attached housing units. Within the larger category, there are 444 subsidized housing units, or about 80% of this category.

### Type of Housing 2000

Type	Number	%
Detached Housing Units	1801	40.2%
Attached Housing Units	2651	59.2%
1 Unit	74	1.7%
2 Units	667	14.9%
3 or 4 Units	679	15.2%
5 to 9 Units	673	15.0%
10 to 19 Units	137	3.1%
20 to 49 Units	117	2.6%
50 or More Units	304	6.8%
Mobile Home	25	0.6%

Over half of Barre City's housing units were constructed prior to 1939 with the remaining construction occurring mostly from 1940 to 1979 with slightly less being built since 1980. Barre's housing stock is slightly older than Central Vermont overall where 35% of the housing stock was built before 1939.

### Year Housing Unit Built

Year	Number	%
1980 to 2000	471	10.5%
1960 to 1979	746	16.7%
1940 to 1959	714	15.9%
Prior to 1939	2546	56.9%

### Household Size

Year	Population	Occupied Housing	Household Size
1970	10209	3523	2.9
1980	9824	4003	2.5
1990	9482	4048	2.3
2000	9211	4220	2.2

The average household size for Barre City in 2000 was 2.2 which is slightly less than the overall state household size of 2.4. This would be expected given the number of rental units.

The drop in housing size can not be attributed to a change in housing composition since the percent of rental units has not changed drastically since 1970. On a national level, the drop in housing size is due to families having less children and an increase in households without children due to the overall aging of the population. It is assumed that this would be similar for Barre City.

#### **D. Regional Context/Adjacent Municipalities**

In accordance with the state planning laws, copies of this draft plan will be sent to the adjacent communities and the regional planning commission for input regarding its consistency with the other local plans and the regional plan which is currently being developed.

#### Regional Context

Barre City has played an important role as an urban center in Washington County throughout the twentieth century. The downtown commercial center and the various granite manufacturing plants and other types of industries have made Barre a place where many people come to shop and to work. In recent years, the addition of the new District Court Building and the state offices that it houses as well as the addition of a variety of attorney, real estate and insurance offices have given Barre City a more varied work environment as compared to its traditional reputation as an industrial center. Its location at a major highway intersection and its proximity to the interstate highway have helped Barre City to remain a regional hub.

The City also plays a major role in the region through its involvement in such regional organizations as the Capital District Mutual Aid Fire Fighting Organization, the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District and the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce.

Barre City is the largest community member of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission which includes 24 municipalities in Washington and Orange counties. The CVRPC was created in 1967 and is responsible for such things as providing assistance to member municipalities with local planning, development of a comprehensive regional plan and review of development proposals in the region, and a variety of other functions. Recently the Regional Planning Commission has been given additional responsibilities through planning law changes, and its role in transportation planning and other areas has been enhanced.

As the largest community member of CVRPC, Barre City has an important responsibility to be an active participant in the ongoing activities of the regional planning commission through its appointed representative and input from the City's appointed and elected officials

Some municipalities, including Barre City, have some interest in seeing representation on the CVRPC board be determined by population rather than the current one town – one vote method. This issue has been debated previously, but no changes have been made as of August, 1992.



## Adjacent Municipalities

The City of Barre is almost entirely surrounded by the Town of Barre except for a portion of the western boundary which borders with the Town of Berlin.

### BERLIN

Except for a narrow strip, which is commercial, industrial and planned residential land, most of the Barre City land that borders the Town of Berlin is open land that is designated as a Conservation Area. The land uses of Barre City land that borders Berlin are generally consistent with the adjacent land in Berlin.

There was some debate in the late 1970's and early 1980's about the construction of the proposed Berlin Mall, which is in operation today. However, the officials of the City of Barre made a conscious decision not to actively oppose the mall based on the assumption that the City should not interfere in economic development activities in adjacent communities.

A more recent issue has resulted from the reapportionment of Vermont's legislative districts. The 1990 census shows Barre City's population declining from 9824 in 1980 to 9482 in 1990. This occurred during a time when the total Vermont population showed a net increase. It should be noted that the City has appealed the accuracy of the census, but there has not been any change in the official figures as of this date.

The decline in the official population of the City resulted in a change in the City's legislative districts. For the past ten years, the City has had three legislative districts that were self contained within the boundaries of the City of Barre. The City Council's ward lines were identical to those of the legislative districts.

The recent reapportionment would give Barre City one legislative district in the southeastern section of the City and another district that would include the rest of the City and the entire Town of Berlin which would be represented by two members of the legislature.

This has become a controversial issue because the City is appealing the census numbers and because the Town of Berlin is concerned that Barre City's far greater population in the new district will ensure that the residents of Berlin will find it extremely difficult to elect a representative from their community.

Other than reapportionment, the planning issues between the Town of Berlin and the City of Barre are limited at this time.

#### BARRE TOWN

Barre Town: The City of Barre has a long historical relationship with the Town of Barre. The two communities, which were once one, share many things. Many of the people in each

community have previously lived in the other. There are numerous people that live in one community and work in the other. There are also Barre City business owners who live in the Town.

The City and the Town have had a number of cooperative efforts over the past several years including the following:

- Waste water treatment facility
- Water supply/ purchase
- Spaulding Union High School
- Joint planning efforts
- Barre Youth Sports
- Municipal Swimming Pool cost sharing
- Aldrich Public Library
- Barre Area Development
- Joint recreational programs/facilities
- Coordinated law enforcement
- Barre Housing Authority services
- Shared use of special equipment
- Animal Control Officer (no longer joint function)
- Barre Regional Ambulance Service (no longer joint function)

Some of the planning issues which are currently shared by the City and the Town

are as follows:

- Water: City taxpayers recently approved a major bond issue to construct a water filtration facility in accordance with federal Environmental Protection Agency regulations. This project will allow for a long term source of clean water which will help to encourage development in both the City and the Town. It should be noted, however, that the cost of this facility will essentially triple the cost of water which has been extremely inexpensive in the past.

- Wastewater Treatment: The wastewater treatment plant in Barre City has been a joint effort with the Town for many years. The Town has a contract with the City which allows for the treatment of 931,000 gallons of wastewater to be treated on a daily basis, and also provides for the Town to share in the cost of operation and capital improvements to the plant. The availability of adequate wastewater treatment capacity is instrumental for future development in the City and the Town. A proposal is currently underway to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant to improve the quality of the effluent which flows into the Stevens Branch from the plant. This will allow for the wastewater treatment plant to operate at its original design capacity of 3.5 million gallons per day which will provide for future development in both the City and the Town.

- Economic Development: There are ongoing efforts to direct new and expanding businesses to appropriate areas of the City and the Town. The City continues to be the primary commercial/retail center while industrial development areas are shared by the City and various areas of the Town such as Wilson Industrial Park. Barre Area Development is a joint effort by

people from the City and the Town to promote industrial development in the two communities.

- Planning: There is a continued effort to evaluate planning and zoning change proposals in the City and the Town in light of the potential impact on the other community. The current land uses along the boundary between the City and the Town are considered to be compatible.

- Transportation: There are many arterial routes that feed traffic from the Town into and through the City. Therefore any new major developments or highway modifications in one community normally have a substantial impact on the other. The town managers and public works directors of the two communities are instrumental in ensuring that there is ongoing liaison to ensure that joint impacts are considered. Also a volunteer group is currently promoting a bike path that would run from Barre Town through Barre City and eventually through Berlin and Montpelier.

- Public Safety: The police departments of the City and the Town continue to work together on various fronts. The Town is currently considering Barre City, among other options, as a potential provider of dispatch services. As noted above, the EMS (ambulance) services of the two communities are currently separate, but there is some question as to whether separate services are best for the financial viability of the operations and the overall service to the citizens.

- Recreation: There are efforts toward further cooperation in recreational programs and sharing of facilities between the two communities. The city has the municipal pool, the BOR ice arena and the municipal auditorium. Both communities have tennis courts and ball fields. The cost

of operation of the BOR and the Auditorium for joint recreational programs is a current point of discussion between the City and the Town.

- Storm water runoff: There are discussions ongoing between the planning and public works offices of the two communities about the impact of storm water runoff from developments in the Town that flows into the City.

- Potential for consolidation of services or merger: As indicated above the City of Barre and the Town of Barre have a long history of working together on various projects. Throughout the years there have been times when elements of one community or the other would call for the consolidation of other municipal operations or even a total merger of the two communities. For obvious reasons, total merger has been a very controversial issue. Political and financial considerations, concern about loss of individuality and levels of trust have been deterrents to this process. There are several people in both communities who support the idea of merger, but, as of this date, there has not been an overwhelming community demand for merger. In the 1992 Barre City planning survey, of the 277 people who responded to the question, 215 said that the City should merge with the Town. Substantial majorities also responded in favor of merging a variety of individual municipal services. However, as noted previously, this survey was not a scientific poll of community sentiment.

In a 1989 document entitled "An Analysis of Future Growth Forecasts and Intermunicipal Planning Options" (Joint Barre City/Barre Town Planning Study), consultants from the firm of

Humstone Squires Associates listed five organizational options for joint efforts on the part of Barre City and Barre Town. These five options and their primary components are outlined below:

- Informal Communication:

- Separate municipal plan, staff and planning commissions
- Occasional, informal communications at the staff level
- City services provided to portions of the Town for a fee: limited Town involvement in administration and/or capital financing

- Enhanced Communication:

- Separate municipal plans, staff and planning commissions
- Periodic, formal meetings between staffs and planning commissions
- City services provided to portions of the Town for a fee; services that are shared with the Town are administered and financed by the City with Town involvement in capital planning
- Exchange of data, notice of hearings and notice and consultation on projects with projected intermunicipal impact
- Proposed mitigation developed jointly prior to Act 250 hearings; ACT 250 as primary vehicle for mitigation

- Coordinated Planning:

- A single City-Town Plan

- A City-Town Planning Council
  - Separate staff, bylaws and planning commission
  - Exchange of data, notice of hearings and notice and consultation on projects with projected municipal impact
  - City services provided to a portion of the Town for a fee, based on a jointly developed Capital Program and Allocation Policy
  - Mitigation of intermunicipal impacts through local as well as Act 250 permits
- Joint Planning:
- Single City-Town Municipal Plan, staff, bylaws and planning commission
  - Services planned jointly; financing an administrative relationships vary depending on type of service
  - All impacts of development on the community deemed local; Act 250 serves as a secondary vehicle for impact mitigation
- Merger: a unified Barre:
- Unified plan and planning program
  - Single legislative body, manager and staff
  - Single tax base

The process currently ongoing between the City and the Town would have to be considered



"informal communication". The options outlined by the 1989 planning study provide a guide to either a phased or total merger of services, but the financial and political environment and the level of trust that exists between the communities are more apt to be the deciding factors in this age old discussion. It is important for both communities that they evaluate the potential for shared services every time that some municipal service is added or existing ones are changed so that no opportunity is missed. Any decision to go forward without the involvement of the other community should only be made after a thorough analysis, and it has been determined that a joint effort is not feasible.

### **REGIONAL CONTEXT/ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES RECOMMENDATIONS**

**- City officials should ensure that they play an active role in the decisions made by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission in order to ensure that local needs are properly addressed; the City of Barre should play a leadership role in the activities of the Commission.**

**- All activities of City municipal government should be evaluated in regard to their potential for shared services with the Town; this evaluation should focus on the financial impact and the impact on the efficiency of the operation; after this evaluation, the political impact should be considered prior to making any proposal to the Town.**

**- The City of Barre should continue to participate with other Central Vermont communities in regional activities.**

### **III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic development is vital to the future of the City of Barre. Even though a relatively large portion of the City is not developed, the total acreage available for development is relatively small compared to the more rural towns in the area. Therefore, the City does not face some of the development issues that are common in other communities. However, there is a constant need to evaluate the existing land resources and the use of the buildings that already exist in the City.

Some of the data used in this section was extracted from the Humstone Squires Associates 1989 "An Analysis of Future Growth Forecasts and Intermunicipal Planning Options" and the 1988 "Barre Central Business District Survey and Plan" which was written by Spruce Mountain Associates.

Economic development efforts in Barre City need to be diverse in order to maximize the resources that are available and to ensure that there is not excessive dependence on a particular business. For many years the granite manufacturing industry was the major economic focus in Barre City. This industry still plays a vital role in the City's economy, but, as machines have made the industry less labor intensive and the market for the products has leveled off, there has been a substantial reduction in the number of jobs involved in this industry.

Manufacturing jobs of all types declined in number by over thirty seven percent from 1980 to 1991 while service sector jobs increased by over ninety two percent (see figure 5). Barre still

functions as a commercial and industrial center, and the city's economy remained relatively stable through the 1980's, but the recession of the 1990's has been felt in Barre just as it has in every community in Vermont.

A community's property tax rate has an effect on the economy in that a high property tax can be a deterrent to development if there are less expensive options available in neighboring communities. Barre City was distinguished as having the highest effective property tax rate in Vermont in 1992. The following factors play a major role in this situation:

- There is a demand for many municipal services by the citizens of the community
- The City has experienced a very slow real growth rate in the grand list which is utilized to determine property taxes
- Much of the City's infrastructure is approaching 100 years of use and there are many maintenance/replacement needs
- Many social service functions which were originally funded by direct federal assistance or federal revenue sharing funds are now funded by local property taxes
- The City is doing more than its fair share to provide social services and housing for the people of the region
- The City, Like most of the urban centers in Vermont, contains a substantial amount of tax exempt property

The City's real annual growth rate in the grand list has only averaged between one and two

percent for the past decade. The City budget has generally increased enough to cover inflation, the cost of some equipment that was originally funded by revenue sharing and the addition of the aforementioned social programs. However, even four percent budget increases required tax rate increases because of the slow growth in the tax base. This situation has caused City officials to take a hard look at the programs in the municipal budget in recent years. They have the difficult task of minimizing the cost of municipal services while ensuring that the needs of the citizens are met.

The percentage of residential grand list in the City has remained relatively constant (65-66%) since 1980 (See figures 7 and 8). Therefore, the residential tax burden has continued to be relatively high throughout the past decade. There does not appear to be any perfect ratio of commercial/industrial property to residential property in a community. There is a substantial variance amongst communities in Vermont, but most of the urban centers of under 10,000 have residential grand list ratios in the same range as that of Barre City. Some studies indicate that communities with a higher percentage of commercial/industrial tax base actually have a higher residential property tax burden. However, city's such as Barre City, that already have an established infrastructure, can generally benefit from a residential grand list closer to 50-55%. This better distributes the community's tax burden.

It is obvious that the City Manager and the City Council and the School Board and the Superintendent cannot cut the budgets enough to stabilize the tax rate indefinitely if the three percent gap in need and resources continues. The only way to stabilize the tax rate is to pursue a continuous rate of modest, sustainable economic growth in the City. The City Council recently

appointed an Economic Development Committee that will be working towards this goal.

Economic development efforts in Barre City need to focus on the following objectives:

- Creation of jobs (through the following activities)
- Expansion of existing commercial businesses
- Expansion of existing industrial businesses
- Introduction of new commercial enterprises into the City
- Introduction of new industrial enterprises into the City

The expansion of the housing supply in the City is not a primary objective because there is adequate housing in the City at this time and more housing without an expansion of the commercial/industrial tax base will simply result in a greater demand for services and a higher tax rate. There is still an adequate amount of open land in the City for more housing in the City should the need arise due to more jobs resulting from successful economic development efforts.

Even though Barre City is an active commercial/industrial center, there are a variety of available commercial and industrial sites which are readily available for new or expanding businesses. They include the following:

- A few open store fronts on Main St. in the downtown area
- An underdeveloped commercial area between Main St. and Summer St.
- The Jones Brothers Property on North Main St. (Comm./Ind)
- The Allen Street light industrial property

- Vacant industrial land off Center St.

There are a variety of organizations that focus on various aspects of economic development in Barre City. They include The Barre Merchants Bureau, Barre Area Development, the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, and the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce. A new group was recently formed to look at ways to improve Barre (City and Town) overall. This group is called "Good Morning Barre." The City Council, the City Manager, the Planning Commission and the staff of the Planning and Zoning Office are also involved in economic development activities in the City. The Planning/Zoning Officer and the City Manager share the responsibilities of "community development." However, both of them have an array of other responsibilities which occupy their time so that they cannot be expected to give economic development the attention that it warrants in a City the size of Barre.

The only time that the City had the services of a full time community development director was when large federal/state community development grants were being administered and the grant funds were paying the full salary of the staff. Obviously, in a community that is Barre's financial situation, the idea of a locally funded community development/economic development director has not been too popular. However, as noted previously, economic development is vital to Barre's future. The City needs one person to be responsible for such things as:

- Staffing the newly formed Economic Development Committee
- Coordinating the activities (in the City) of the various economic development organizations

- Acting as a one stop information center for people that are interested in expanding existing businesses or bringing new ones into the City
- Facilitating the various permit processes for these businesses
- Act as a promoter of the City through networks throughout the state and the nation
- Obtain grants to help promote economic development in the City
- Establish a revolving loan fund to help expanding and new businesses
- Coordinate activities to promote and improve the downtown commercial business district

It should be noted that, over time, a major goal for an economic development director would be able to bring in enough tax base increases and grants to more than pay for the cost of the position. Stable and sufficient community services are important factors in retaining existing businesses and attracting new ones. Therefore it is important to do a detailed evaluation of the need for services rather than just look at the cost. The availability of public water and sewer disposal systems is a major positive factor in Barre City's effort to retain and attract businesses. The recent approval of the bond for the water filtration plant and the upcoming proposal for an upgrade of the waste water treatment plant will enhance these resources.

An additional resource is the Barre City and Central Vermont labor force. The area is known for having a hard working, quality work force which has been an asset in attracting businesses in the past. The July, 1992 unemployment rate in the Barre labor market area is 7.5% which indicates that there are a number of available workers should more jobs become available.

The City's tax stabilization program and lack of an inventory tax are also valuable economic development tools. State law was recently changed to allow municipalities to also eliminate the personal property/business equipment tax. There should be an evaluation of the economic benefits and potential impact on the City of eliminating this tax to determine whether this is an option that should be pursued.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Barre City Economic Development Committee should work to develop a City economic development plan which should address the specific objectives of:**

- **Creation of jobs through the following activities**
- **Expansion of existing commercial businesses**
- **Expansion of existing industrial businesses**
- **Introduction of new commercial enterprises into the City**
- **Introduction of new industrial enterprises into the City**
- **The City should encourage responsible economic development through such programs as tax stabilization**
- **The City should employ an economic development director**
- **Any proposals to reduce or eliminate municipal/school services should be evaluated as to their impact on the economic health of the community**



- An evaluation of the potential benefits and adverse impacts of eliminating the personal property/business equipment tax should be conducted

## IV. UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

Barre City is a full service community with a number of publicly owned buildings and a complex utility infrastructure. This system of structures and utilities is in constant need of upgrade and repair. Some of the buildings and infrastructure are approaching the one hundred year mark in age. For many years the City did not spend much money in maintaining and upgrading its utilities and facilities. This deferred maintenance, in conjunction with normal maintenance needs and functional obsolescence, have brought the City to a point where there is need of a lot of capital investment in a relatively short period of time. Many of these needs are discussed in the following sections of this document

The City is in great need of a capital budget plan for the repair, upgrade and replacement of equipment, utilities and facilities. Such a plan is currently being prepared and will be completed prior to the final review of the FY 94 City budget. The approval and funding of this capital budget plan will be necessary if the City is to progress into the twenty first Century in reasonably good condition. If the capital needs of equipment, utilities and facilities are not met over the next few years, it will only cost more later when there is no choice in the matter.

This section contains a brief outline of the City's utility and facility issues by individual category. The map on the next page identifies the location of the existing and proposed facilities

that are discussed in the following pages.

## **A. WATER SUPPLY**

The Barre City water supply is located in the Town of Orange about four and one half miles from the City. The watershed is approximately 11.1 square miles in total area. The source of water is a surface water collection system which consists of three reservoirs; the Dix Reservoir, the Upper Orange Reservoir and the Lower Orange Reservoir. The average yield of the system is approximately 6.0 million gallons per day. The more conservative "safe yield" (worst case scenario) estimate is 3.33 million gallons per day. The current water demand is approximately 2.7 million gallons per day.

The City water system serves the 3,820 users who are located in the City of Barre and parts of the Town of Barre. This source and the City's distribution system of pipes has been used for several decades. The City has taken over a variety of private water systems which were located in the City. This has required the replacement of a number of pipes in addition to the ongoing replacement of old pipes in the City's system. The newest addition to the City's water supply system was the construction of a 350,000 gallon water storage tank off of Bailey Street with associated main pipe lines. This storage tank has helped to resolve problems of low pressure and volume for properties that are located on the higher elevations in the northwest part of the City. The tank also allows for development at higher elevations in this area.

The City's water system has been plagued for several years by problems with "turbidity." This refers to excess quantities of suspended particles in the water. Although these problems were normally associated with short term heavy rains, they have often necessitated boil water notices which have made it difficult for residents and commercial enterprises that need drinking water.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has changed the requirements for surface water systems. They now require that surface water systems include filtration. The EPA and the Vermont Environmental Conservation Department have been pressuring the City to comply with these regulations for the past few years. In 1991, the voters approved a bond of over eight million dollars to pay for the local share (35% funded by the state) of a water filtration system and the associated storage tanks, pipes and equipment. The City plans to begin construction in the spring of 1993 with completion during the Fall/Winter of 1993. This project will result in water rates that are approximately three times the current rate. However, the 1991 rates are comparatively low and the improved water quality will help to encourage economic development.

The planning and engineering in preparation for the construction of the water filtration plant has reinforced some other water system related issues that have been previously identified:

- The need for approximately 8,600 feet of main line pipe to further address fire flow needs; 14 areas are below the Needed Fire Flow as recommended by the Insurance Service Office (Rate and statistical gathering agency of the insurance industry)
- There appears to be a substantial amount of water being lost in the distribution system each day, however, leak detection surveys will be utilized to determine the

quantity

In addition to these issues, the water department has the ongoing need to allocate the necessary money for utility upgrades each year.

### **WATER SUPPLY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **The primary need has been addressed by the approval of the water filtration facility; this project should continue to be a priority**
- **Efforts to identify and control leaks in the existing system should continue in order to minimize costs for filtration**
- **Preserve watershed lands and discourage any use of its reservoirs/lands for recreational purposes or any other use which will adversely impact the watershed**
- **Increase the line item in the water department budget for system replacement and improvements as required**
- **Continue efforts to market water to other municipalities**
- **Evaluate the potential need for an ordinance to prohibit drilling of wells in the City or develop fees for those landowners who drill them but still have the benefit of fire protection from the City Hydrants**
- **Review current hook up fees to determine whether they are adequate**

## **B. WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND SEWER SYSTEM**

The wastewater from properties in the City of Barre and from a portion of the Town of Barre runs through a system of sewer lines to the Barre Wastewater Treatment Facility. The treated water from the facility then flows into the Stevens Branch of the Winooski River.

The wastewater treatment facility is a conventional activated sludge plant with a design capacity of 3.8 million gallons per day. There have been questions in recent years about the ability of the Stevens Branch to accommodate the flow from the plant with its current quality of effluent. The ability of the plant to accept flows up to the original design capacity are very important as it relates to future development in the City and the Town.

The current average daily flow is approximately 2.7 million gallons per day of which approximately 645,000 gallons comes from the Town of Barre. The existing contract with the Town allows them 931,000 gallons per day of treatment capacity. The Town pays a percentage of the cost of operation and capital improvements to the plant. If the city and the Town are successful in attracting future development, they will both need more capacity than is currently allowable.

In an effort to respond to environmental regulations and to attain adequate reserve capacity, the City has contracted with an engineering firm to conduct an Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facilities Planning Study. This is a detailed review of the existing system and of the future needs

up to the year 2010. Once this document is approved it will be used to guide the design of the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plan upgrade, subject to approval of a bond by the voters in November of 1992.

The original wastewater treatment plant design capacity of 3.8 million gallons per day is expected to be downgraded to a permitted capacity of 3.4 million gallons per day after the upgrade is accomplished. The 1992 needs analysis indicates that this capacity will be adequate, but it seems that every effort should be made to obtain a permit for 3.8 million gallons per day in order to maximize future economic development potential.

In addition to the planned upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant, the City public works department staff have to maintain and upgrade, on an ongoing basis, a maze of sewer lines that run throughout the City. Many of these pipes are 90+ year old clay tile lines that are subject to breakage and are in need of replacement. The most prominent example of this is a 24 inch sewer main that runs under Main Street. This line is being scheduled for replacement when Main Street is reconstructed in 1996. Due to the condition of some sewer lines, there is a significant amount of infiltration of underground water into the system. This means that, even though the City has gone to great lengths to separate storm water from domestic sewer lines, an amount of underground water is being treated at the wastewater treatment plant on a daily basis.

## **WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND SEWER SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Pursue the approval of a bond to fund the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant
- Continue to identify and repair the sewer lines that are allowing infiltration into the system
- Increase the line item in the sewer department budget as required for the replacement and upgrade of lines and facilities
- Continue to pursue all possible alternatives to obtain the highest possible permitted capacity for the wastewater treatment plant
- Review hook up fees to determine whether they are adequate
- Maintain an environmentally sound wastewater collection system which meets water quality discharge standards promulgated by the State of Vermont and the federal Environmental Protection Agency

### **C. STORM WATER RUNOFF**

With its miles of paved streets and its many hills, the City of Barre has an extensive storm drain system to control runoff. As noted in the previous section, the City has made a major effort to separate runoff from the domestic sewer system. This helps to avoid the cost of treating water that does not really require treatment.

Another issue related to runoff concerns the impact of streams running into the City from Barre Town during times of heavy rains and spring snow melt. Several years ago, some property



owners along these streams extended their yards and thereby narrowed the stream channels. This process has aggravated flooding problems in some areas of the City when the water is very high. The City makes an effort to keep the channels of these streams clear, but does not maintain the privately owned walls and banks along the streams.

### **STORM WATER RUNOFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Continue the policy of separating ground water/water from roof drains from domestic sewers and do not pursue the costly process of storm water treatment**
- **Continue the policy of keeping the channels of the City's streams clear and not maintaining privately owned walls and banks**
- **Continue to work with Barre Town to reduce the storm water runoff from higher elevations in the Town into the City**

### **D. CEMETERIES**

In conjunction with its reputation as "Granite Center of the World", Barre is known nationwide for its showplace Hope Cemetery (73 acres). This cemetery, in addition to serving the traditional role of a burial place, contains a variety of unique monuments, mausoleums and sculptures which are examples of some of the finest works Barre craftsmen's. The Elmwood (27 acres) and St. Monica (18 acres) Cemeteries provide the additional burial space required in the City.

The St. Monica Cemetery was the original catholic cemetery of Barre. Eventually the church could no longer afford to operate it and the City agreed to take it over. This cemetery does not have any more lots available for sale although there are still some in which there have not been burials. St. Monica Cemetery does not have any provision for so called "perpetual care" to pay for the maintenance needs of the property.

The Elmwood Cemetery also does not have any remaining lots for sale. There are some perpetual care funds available from prior lot sales in this cemetery, but it really is not self supporting.

The Hope Cemetery is the one cemetery in the City that still has available land for new lot sales. It has a stable perpetual care fund which is supported by 20% of the revenue from lot sales. The price of lots in the cemetery was recently raised 10% in an effort to cover increasing costs. The developed area of Hope Cemetery has adequate space for another five years of lot sales. The cemetery staff are beginning to develop another section which would provide adequate space for another fifteen years.

The Cemetery Department operates as a separate entity with an enterprise fund from lot sales and burial fees which provide the bulk of the operating funds. The Department recently had to increase all of their fees due to increasing costs. The City paid \$12,500 in general fund money towards the operation of the cemeteries in 1992. The increasing cost of operation and equipment, the need for capital to open new sections and to repave the roads and the fact that two of the

cemeteries operate at a loss will eventually require the City to provide additional funds for this essential function.

It should also be noted that the Cemetery owns the house and associated buildings where the Cemetery Director lives, and there is an office/storage facility near Hope Cemetery as well.

### **CEMETERY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **That the City ensure that the Cemetery Department has adequate resources to continue to its operations for this essential service**
- **That a portion of the aforementioned be utilized to continue the expansion of Hope Cemetery as necessary**

### **E. CITY HALL AND THE OPERA HOUSE**

City Hall, which is located in downtown Barre, was constructed at the turn of the century after the original city hall burned. The vast majority of the interior space of this large building is occupied by the Barre Opera House. The opera house, which had not been regularly used for over three decades, was renovated and eventually used for productions during the 1980's.

The Barre Opera House group has been successful in obtaining over four hundred thousand dollars in donations and pledges to make the opera house handicap accessible, to improve the

entrance, provide additional space and to upgrade the balcony to comply with the various codes. The proposed project would also modify the municipal office space on the first floor and in the basement of the building. The project is now estimated to cost a substantial amount more than was originally projected and a municipal bond issue was approved by the voters cover the added costs.

The Opera House is a major cultural and historic asset to the City, and its expanded use in the future should help the City with its economic development efforts by attracting people to the community.

Unfortunately, although the Opera House is a major asset, its existence limits the amount of available space for the municipal offices on the lower level. In their current configuration, these offices are not very efficient or comfortable. Many offices do not have windows and the temperature in the building is difficult to control because of an aging heating system and very high ceilings. The proposed renovations, which are part of the Opera House proposal, will help to some degree, but the City staff will still be housed in limited space which will not be very efficient.

### **CITY HALL/OPERA HOUSE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Barre Opera House is an asset to the City which should be supported by the community as determined by the voters**
- Regardless of the status of the renovation project, there should be an evaluation of**

**all possible alternatives for the municipal offices to make them more functional and to improve the working environment and accessibility; these needs should be addressed in the capital budget plan**

## **F. PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Barre City Police Department is a full time department that is located in a portion of City Hall. The Department's office space will be affected by the proposed renovations to the Barre Opera House. There will be a small net gain of space with the renovation project, but the Department will still be functioning in somewhat limited space. The Department's ongoing need for replacement police cruisers and other equipment should be met by inclusion of these needs in the capital budget.

The Barre City Fire Station was constructed in 1904, and it houses the City ambulance service as well as the fire department. This building needs a number of repairs if it is going to continue to be utilized to house the ambulances and fire trucks. One of the most immediate problems with the building is that the floor is deteriorating due to years of supporting heavy trucks and the road salt that is brought in, primarily by the ambulances, during the winter. This problem may soon require the replacement of the floor.

There is no current means by which to replace fire and ambulance equipment which is worn out. These equipment needs should be included in the capital budget plan.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**- Although the police department has some funds available for equipment needs in the near future, the equipment needs of the Fire Department and the ambulance service should be included in the capital budget plan**

**- The necessary repairs and renovations of the fire station should also be included in the capital budget plan**

**- Before any substantial building improvements are begun, there should be a detailed evaluation by the City staff to ensure that the renovation of the existing buildings is preferable to constructing a new combined public safety building which would also allow more space for the municipal offices**

### **G. RECREATION**

The City of Barre has a wide range of recreational facilities which include the following:

- The Municipal Swimming Pool
- The North Barre Pool (not currently used)
- The B.O.R. (enclosed ice arena)
- The Municipal Auditorium
- Alumni Hall

- Tennis courts
- A variety of ball fields
- A number of playgrounds including Playground 2000

The primary issues regarding these facilities deal with use, cost of operation and the ongoing need for repairs and improvements. Input from the City Recreation Board and from the public does not indicate any substantial demand for additional recreation facilities. Some facilities are currently being improved, but there is an obvious need to plan for major capital improvements for some of the facilities.

The municipal swimming pool is operated on a cost sharing basis with the Town of Barre. It serves a number of people from both communities. The pool will require a variety of improvements in future years and should be included in the capital budget plan. The upgrade of the tennis courts at Rotary Park is currently being planned in response to previous resident requests for these facilities. The tennis courts adjacent to Spaulding High School are in a state of total disrepair and the property is owned by the school district. There are no current plans to improve this facility which was never really designed properly for use as a tennis facility. The availability of additional tennis courts in Barre Town reduces the need for additional courts in the City.

There are a number of playgrounds in the City. Some of them are located at the current elementary schools. These schools will be vacated during or after the 1993-94 school year when the new elementary school is constructed. Some of these playgrounds will probably be lost

when the buildings are sold for other purposes, although the Lincoln ball field and the Mathewson Playground will be retained regardless of the disposition of the school buildings.

The City, with the help of some of the local service clubs, has made a major effort to increase the number of ball fields in the City over the past decade. It is generally accepted that these fields, in conjunction with those in Barre Town are sufficient to meet the needs of the community. In addition, a volley ball court is planned for an area adjacent to the municipal pool.

The "City Cow Pasture" is a sizable piece of undeveloped land that is owned by the City. It has some potential for cemetery use in the distant future, but today it serves as an undeveloped recreation area for such activities as walking, cross country skiing and sliding. This property has the potential to serve a variety of other recreational purposes, and could do so if a plan was developed for it.

The major planning concern regarding recreation facilities is operation, maintenance and use of the three buildings on Seminary Hill (B.O.R., Auditorium and Alumni Hall). The fees for the use of these facilities were recently increased substantially in an effort to make their operation more cost effective. However, there is a limit to how high these fees can be raised in the future. The City has begun discussions with the Town of Barre about cost sharing for the operation of these facilities. The Recreation Board and the Civic Center Committee are reviewing alternatives for other uses which might generate additional revenue.



There will be major capital improvements required in the future in order to preserve the three buildings on Seminary Hill. There are only minimal funds currently reserved for Capital improvements.

## **RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **The long term capital needs of all recreation facilities should be included in the capital budget plan**

- **The City should continue discussions with the Town of Barre regarding the potential of cost sharing for recreational facilities in addition to the municipal pool**

- **In conjunction with the disposition of the old elementary school buildings, the Recreation Board should verify that there will be an adequate number of playgrounds in the City once the buildings are converted to other uses**

- **A recreation plan should be developed for the expanded use of the City Cow Pasture with the knowledge that a portion of it may someday be necessary for use as a cemetery**

- **Evaluate the recreational potential of the City's streams and make the best possible use of them**

- **Expand recreation services to meet the needs of all of the citizens of the City**

## **H. SOLID WASTE**

The City of Barre has not had a solid waste disposal facility since the City landfill was

closed in 1975. Since that time, the majority of the City's solid waste has been disposed at what is now known as the C.V. Landfill. The City has been a member of the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District since it was formed in 1985. The District conducted a detailed search for potential landfill sites in thirty two towns. Due to the fact that Barre City is only about one eighth the size of most of the towns in the solid waste district, there were no acceptable sites in the City.

Since the solid waste district was not successful in siting a landfill, the City will continue to depend on the private landfills in the region for solid waste disposal in the near future.

The solid waste district is now pursuing other long term disposal options for its member communities, as well as managing recycling operations, public education programs and assisting with hazardous waste diversion programs.

The solid waste district operates a recycling facility in Barre City, in conjunction with local volunteers, behind a local beverage store on North Main Street. The location of this facility is not optimum and the City's solid waste district representative and the district staff are looking for an alternative location.

As the most populous community in the region, the City of Barre generates a relatively large amount of solid waste in a small geographic area. Due to these circumstances, the City has the most potential for success at recycling efforts because the collection can be more cost effective than in the larger, more sparsely populated surrounding towns. The City is in a position to lead by

example in the area of recycling. The current voluntary recycling efforts do help to reduce the amount of the City's solid waste that has to be ultimately disposed in a landfill, but the amount that is being collected is only a small fraction of the potential total. Past experience in other states indicates that an ordinance of some kind is probably the only way to substantially increase the amount of materials that is recycled.

### **SOLID WASTE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **The City should continue to play a leadership role in working to find a regional long term solid waste disposal alternative that is environmentally sound as well as cost effective**
- **Explore alternatives, including an ordinance, that will lead to increased recycling of materials in the City**
- **Continue to work to find a more suitable recycling center location in the City**
- **Amend zoning regulations to include provisions for recycled materials containers at apartment buildings**

### **I. LIBRARY**

The Aldrich Public Library is operated by a separate board of trustees and is funded through donations and money that it receives annually from the City and the Town of Barre. The primary facility need of the library is that it needs to meet handicap accessibility requirements in order to

better serve the community and to meet the requirements of the American Disabilities Act. The City recently received a grant of which \$5,000 is allocated for an engineering review of this structure in regard to accessibility.

Additionally, the library could use more space. There is room for an addition to the building, but financial constraints will probably prohibit any major addition in the near future. It should be noted that the City and Town of Barre support the Aldrich Library at about one half of the state average for municipal library support.

### **LIBRARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**- The City should proceed with the engineering evaluation, and the funding for the proposed improvements should be resolved by joint discussions between the library trustees, the City Council and the Barre Town Board of Selectmen**

**- Pursue options for expanded support of the Aldrich Library**

### **J. OTHER PUBLICLY OWNED BUILDINGS AND LAND**

Public Land: The City owns a variety of parcels of vacant land in the City, most of which are quite small and of limited value (this does not refer to utility easements, street rights of way, etc.). The City staff has identified these parcels and plans to evaluate their potential with input from Public Land Committees which is about to be formed. The map on the next page shows these

lands.

The City also owns some much larger parcels outside of the City. Most of this land is either part of the city forest, the watershed for the existing reservoir or related to other water supplies that are no longer used. This land is located in Barre Town, Orange and Williamstown. Most of this land is serves some purpose to the City.

Public Works Facilities: The "City Barn" and the associated building provide work areas, equipment storage space and space for storing parts and materials for the Street Department, the Water Department and the Sewer Department. These buildings are located on Burnham Street. These buildings will require capital improvements in the future if they are to continue to serve their purpose. The Public Works Department has a large amount of equipment that needs to be replaced on a regular basis in order to serve the needs of the City's infrastructure. There are no funds reserved for these capital needs, and they should be included in the capital budget plan.

MacFarland House: The MacFarland House nursing home is owned by the Central Vermont Hospital and not the City of Barre. This brief discussion is included in this plan because the building will be vacated by the hospital next year and, because of its size, its future use will have a major impact on the community. This building was once the Barre City Hospital, and, due to its configuration, its future alternatives for use may be somewhat limited. A portion of a recently received planning grant is going to be used to hire a consultant to evaluate the building's future potential.

## **OTHER BUILDINGS AND LAND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **All City owned land that is not currently being used for a specific purpose should be evaluated as to its current and future value to the City and either disposed of or retained accordingly**
- **The capital needs of all other City buildings, including the public works facilities should be included in the capital budget plan**
- **The City should continue to work with the Central Vermont Hospital to ensure that the future use of the MacFarland House property helps to suit the needs of the community**
- **City owned lands that are located outside the City should also be managed intensively for the long term benefit and use of the community**

## V. LAND USE PLAN

The zoning map on the next page outlines the current zoning of land in the City of Barre.

The zoning districts are as follows:

CA - Conservation Area

CB - Commercial Business

R-10 - Residential

LI - Light Industrial

PR - Planned Residential

I/C - Industrial/Commercial

C - Commercial

I - Industrial

These zoning districts are generally consistent with the development patterns in the City , most of which preceded the zoning regulations. (See Educational Facility Section in regard to possible zoning changes for the elementary school properties)

Barre City, because of its urban center character and its small geographic size, is generally considered to be almost entirely developed. However, a recent study by the City's staff indicates that almost 40 percent of the City's land area is not yet developed. Some of this area will be reserved for recreational purposes and other portions are not suited for development due to the topography. However, a substantial amount of the City's total land could be developed in the future. This fact demonstrates a need for some very careful planning in the future in order to ensure orderly growth in the City.

A substantial portion of this undeveloped land is already zoned either R-10 Residential or Planned Residential. However, the largest area of undeveloped land in the City, approximately 390 acres, is currently zoned as Conservation Area.. The property is made up of three large parcels of land, all of which are privately owned. The Conservation Area designation protects them from intensive development at the moment, the City recognizes that they are essentially rural islands in an urbanized area, and therefore of questionable viability for long term production due to isolation from support services and gradual intrusion of incompatible uses. Consequently, the City wishes to remain open to the possibility of site sensitive future development proposals for these properties. The construction of a golf course or an office park for this area represents an ideal compromise wherein open space benefits are preserved, agricultural soils remain largely undisturbed, and property owners are able to realize a reasonable economic return on their long term investment.

In summary, it is the City's position that "encouraging agricultural and forest industries" such as per Goal No. 9, of 24 VSA, Chapter 117, is not relevant or attainable under this Plan. Such efforts would be approximately directed toward mor viable properties outside of City limits. However, this position should not be construed to imply that the City is uninterested in maintaining the natural and scenic qualities of the Conservation zone or discouraging agricultural or forestry activities therein.

The City of Barre respects maintaining the rights of the land owners and recognizes the burdens of open space within the urban areas. Further, the City supports the economic benefit of their investment and long-term ownership.



Some lots in the City are split by zoning districts. This situation can cause problems if the buildings on these properties are expanded or there are proposed use changes. Consideration should be given to revising the zoning districts to conform to the property lines in these areas.

LAND USE PROPOSALS: The planning commission discussions regarding land use did not generate proposals for major land use/zoning changes to be recommended in this plan. However the following three areas were discussed:

**FARWELL STREET:** The commission has previously discussed a request from a property owner to change the zoning in this area from Planned Residential to Commercial which would return it to its previous designation. The proposed zoning change would affect the property between Farwell Street and Gunner Brook to the Barre Town line. It is expected that this request will come before the Planning Commission again, but the proposal has not been approved as of this time.

**GABLE PLACE:** There is a request to rezone the Gable property from Industrial to Industrial/Commercial as most of the uses in the area are retail. The zoning change would be limited to this property as there is an industrial use on the abutting property.

**BISSON FARM:** This property is one of the two parcels mentioned previously, which make up the majority of the Conservation Area District. This property is a large operating farm. The owners have approached the Planning Commission about the possibility of changing the zoning so that

there would be more permitted uses should they decide to cease the farming operation. At this time, the Planning Commission's general opinion is that they are open to proposals from the owner for specific rezoning requests for a particular project, but they have not made a decision at this time based on the available information.

UPPER MERCHANT STREET: One property owner has requested that the zoning designation of a portion of the land on the westerly side of Upper Merchant Street be changed from Planned Residential to Commercial. The Planning Commission has heard this request before and is willing to consider it again in the future.

ACT 250: The City of Barre has very specific regulations regarding zoning, building and subdivisions. The Planning Commission spends a great deal of time reviewing the various development proposals to ensure that the needs of the community are met. There are sometimes overlapping reviews when projects in Barre are subject to the state environmental review process - Act 250. In these instances, it appears that the review of the local Planning Commission should be adequate in regard to criteria five through ten of Act 250. These criteria are as follows:

- (5)- Will not cause unreasonable transportation congestion
- (6)- Will not place an unreasonable burden on educational facilities
- (7)- Will not place an unreasonable burden on municipal services
- (8)- Will not have an adverse impact on the scenic or natural beauty of the area
- (9)- Is in conformance with a capability and development plan

(10)- Is in conformance with any local or regional plan

It should be noted that the planning commission reviews these same issues when they evaluate a proposed project. Any change in this Act 250 process could only be accomplished at the state level.

### **LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**- The planning commission should undertake a review of the lands that have been identified as undeveloped to ensure that the long range goals of the community can best be accomplished with properties zoned in their current configuration; obviously there will be changes over the years, but it would be helpful to undertake a preliminary review at this time**

**- If the planning commission decides that they want to take responsibility for Criteria 5 - 10, they should pursue a change in the law through their elected representatives**

**- Evaluate the benefits of revising zoning district lines in areas where they split properties to determine if following the property lines would be more appropriate**

**- All proposed developments should be evaluated as to their long term impact on the City as well as the demand for services that they will generate**

## **VI. NATURAL SCENIC AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Natural and Scenic Resources: Although the City of Barre is only about one eighth of the land area of many of the surrounding rural communities, there are scenic and natural resources in the City that should be preserved. The Sevens and Jail Branches of the Winooski River and Gunner, Potash and Edgewood Brooks, although not large bodies of water, provide recreational opportunities and a bit of scenery in this urban center. Continued efforts to maintain the channels of these streams and ongoing volunteer efforts to keep them clean of trash will ensure that these waterways provide pleasure for future generations of Barre residents.

The air quality in Barre has a direct relationship to the relative health of residents. Efforts will be made to assess these and other pollution issues by gathering data, educating citizens, and organizing community clean-ups and green-ups.

The terrain of the City is such that there are some beautiful scenic vistas of surrounding mountains and the City itself, especially from the hills that make up the western and eastern borders of the City.

Ethnic Resources: One of the City's greatest resources is its people. This mix of ethnic cultures, that continues to preserve many of their families' original traditions, helps to make Barre an active and vital community. It is important that the City officials continue to encourage the preservation of these ethnic resources.

Buildings and Monuments: The architecture of many of the City's turn of the century buildings is another scenic resource. They display fine workmanship in stone and brick. The statues in the City are historic reminders and scenic wonders. Bobby Burnes at Spaulding Graded School, The Italian American Memorial in Dente Park and the War Memorial in City Park are reminders of the past and examples of the work of the fine sculptors that still work in the City. These man made structures and monuments all provide a welcome scenic opportunity in the City's downtown area.

Historic Preservation: The Barre Downtown Historic District is now part of the federal historic register. This rich array of architecture is a valuable asset which links the residents of the City to their past. Some of the facades of these buildings were modified or covered during past decades, but there has been a recent effort by property owners, when renovating some of these structures, to restore the former appearance of these buildings. The state Office of Historic Preservation has been assisting with these projects. Within reasonable limits, this practice of historic preservation should be encouraged by City officials. The assistance of a historic preservation committee could be helpful in this process. A Historic Preservation Committee will be formed to assist in this process.

Realizing the river and streams that run through the City as a source of natural beauty will encourage preservation. Water quality is of great concern to all citizens and preservation of banks and vegetation is necessary. Planting trees and other preservation activities should be encouraged

and supported by municipal services.

Parks and Street Trees: The City's parks are also valuable resources which provide a place for people to relax and experience a little bit of nature. The parks are maintained by the cemetery and parks staff, but there have been limited resources to provide the type of landscaping that would improve the appearance of some of these green spaces. These parks could benefit from recommendations from a landscape architect as was done several years ago. The general fund resources are limited, but there may be available resources from some of the service clubs or other private sources. There should also be a volunteer who would provide liaison between the City and the Merchant's Bureau to coordinate such things as Christmas decorations, downtown promotional activities and improvements to the streetscape. These duties could become the responsibility of an economic development director if the city decided to hire one.

Entrances to the City: The entrances to the City on Routes 302 and 14 are not well defined and some are not particularly scenic except for the one granite sign on the west end of U.S. 302. Several years ago, four service clubs were prepared to each take financial responsibility for a sign at each primary entry into the City. The project did not get completed because the City officials did not finalize the designs of the signs. The service clubs should be approached again about the possibility of sponsoring such a project. There should also be a systematic approach to improving the scenic beauty of the area adjacent to the entry streets.

## **NATURAL, SCENIC AND HISTORIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Efforts should continue to preserve the City's brooks, scenic vistas, parks and monuments**
- **The City should form an advisory historic preservation committee to provide insights to restoring historic facades when buildings are being renovated**
- **The City's service clubs should be approached about the possibility of taking responsibility for improving and maintaining the primary entries to the City and funding the erection of a welcome sign for each entry**
- **A volunteer should be designated to provide liaison between the City, the Merchants Bureau and downtown businesses to coordinate promotional activities and decorations in the downtown**
- **Contract with a landscape architect (perhaps volunteer services or a private group to recommend improvements to the City's parks and the downtown streetscape**
- **A street tree ordinance should be adopted and funds should be allocated to maintain the existing trees and to add other trees as required**

## **VII. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

The City of Barre had been served by seven elementary schools (Spaulding Graded, Lincoln, Mathewson, North Barre, Ward 5, Ayer Street and Brook Street) until the early 1980's when the Ayers Street School was closed. The remaining six elementary schools and Spaulding High School have served the community's educational needs since that time. However, the six elementary schools, which were built between 1891 and 1914, now all need substantial renovations in order to comply with accessibility requirements, health and safety codes and Public School Approval Standards. In addition, the buildings are difficult to heat and costly to maintain.

After years of study and discussion, the voters of Barre City recently voted (on two separate occasions) overwhelmingly in favor of constructing a new elementary/ middle school. This new facility will house all students (kindergarten through eighth grade in three separate schools under one roof near the Municipal Swimming Pool off of Parkside Terrace. The new school will allow the City school district to provide a complete and varied educational program in an efficient manner.

There are already indications that people with young families are more interested in remaining in and moving into Barre City now that the new school is about to become a reality. This improvement in educational opportunity will help the future growth potential of the community.

One major facility issue resulting from the construction of the new school is the disposition



of the six old buildings once the students move into the new facility. The City Council has appointed a School Disposition Committee to study this issue. The Committee has been provided with detailed information about the buildings, and they have met with representatives of the state historic preservation office as well as tour the buildings. Once all of the permits for the facility have been obtained and the time table for vacating the old buildings has been established, the committee will finalize a request for proposal to solicit bids for the old buildings. The successful bidders will be those that can demonstrate the greatest long term benefit to the community resulting from their acquisition of the property.

The zoning districts that some of the schools are located in could become an issue, depending on the new proposed use. In most cases these zoning changes could be accomplished by simply extending the abutting zone, if necessary. It will be important for the Planning Commission and the City Council to seriously consider approving these zoning changes if requests are made by the potential buyers of the property, and the proposed projects can demonstrate long term benefits to the community.

Spaulding Union High School and the attached Barre Regional Vocational Center provide secondary education programs for Barre students. For several years, the high school has been cited for an inadequate library. The voters also recently approved the funding for the construction of this facility. The vocational students, with the assistance of their instructors and a local contractor, have now constructed the library and the school will be able to meet the accreditation and Public School Approval requirements.

## **EDUCATIONAL FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**- That zoning changes be approved for the old elementary school sites if there are demonstrated long term benefits to the community and no major adverse impact on the adjacent neighborhoods**

**- That the School Disposition Committee continue to work in conjunction with the City Manager and the City Council towards disposing of the old school properties in such a way as to maximize the benefits to the community**

## VIII. TRANSPORTATION

The transportation needs of the residents of the City of Barre are met by a system of streets, pedestrian ways, a bike path, bus service, taxi service and rail service. A comprehensive transportation planning effort will address the needs of the residents and visitors to the City. A complete transportation network includes access to and connection between the various types of transportation and links the community with adjacent municipalities. The City of Barre has many of these elements, but there are still a variety of transportation needs that need to be addressed.

Streets and sidewalks: The City of Barre, because it is a city, takes responsibility for the maintenance of all of the streets in the City, including those that are state and federal highways. U.S. 302 and Vermont Route 14 run through the City, and they are maintained by the City as are the other nearly 45 miles of streets. For many years, due to budget constraints, the City's streets received very little maintenance and there was major deterioration in many areas.

In 1985 the voters of the City approved a ten year street restoration plan. This plan allocated \$150,000 per year for the first five years and \$200,000 per year for the second five year period for the restoration and paving of the city streets. These funds were to have been combined with \$100,000 per year of general fund money, but the general fund allocation was cut every year in the budget process. The goal of the project was to make lasting repairs to the streets. There was not sufficient money to remove all of the sub-base and totally reconstruct every street, but the deteriorating pavement was removed and recycled, some new drainage was installed, pockets of

substandard material were removed and new pavement was applied. On some streets, such as Main St. and Washington St., where there is a concrete base, skin coats of asphalt were applied to smooth out the bumps until total reconstruction could take place as part of state and federally funded projects.

The City Public Works Department has successfully restored a number of streets through this program which is scheduled to continue through fiscal year 1995. It is apparent that these improvements would not have been made without this program as the general fund monies were always cut. Therefore it is very important that the program be renewed before the authorization expires in 1995.

The vast majority of the City's street restoration efforts are within the existing road beds and rights of way. However, there are detailed public works specifications which guide the construction of new streets and sidewalks by developers.

The sidewalks of the City provide a means of pedestrian transportation through the areas of high traffic and along some of the outlying residential streets. These pedestrian ways are an important component of the transportation system of the City. In general, most sidewalk installation in the City is to replace existing walks that have deteriorated. However, there is one major sidewalk planned for Prospect Street. This project was approved as a state highway safety project in 1985, but design backlogs at the Agency of Transportation have delayed it until 1994.

One issue regarding sidewalks/pedestrian ways in the Central Business District is that there are numerous curb cuts in a particular area which impact on pedestrian safety during peak traffic hours. Future problems of this sort can be minimized by keeping the pedestrian needs in mind when requests for new projects are reviewed.

A state highway project, which will involve the reconstruction of Main Street, is planned for 1996. This project will involve the removal of the existing road bed and portions of the sidewalks as well as a new sewer main, new water line, new sewer and water connections, storm drains and street lights. The project will pose both opportunities and problems.

The planning process for the project has involved merchants, City staff, the Traffic Committee, the City Council and other residents. This reconstruction design will give the City the opportunity to set a new environment in the downtown area. The involvement of a number of people will be essential to ensure that the project meets the needs of the community.

The Main Street project will also pose problems for the merchants on Main Street and the people that want to drive, walk and shop in the downtown district. Planning has already begun as to how to provide access to the stores that are adjacent to the project. It is imperative that there is adequate signage and access to all of the stores. Everyone involved should make every effort to minimize the financial impact of the project on the merchants and the community

There have been a variety of ideas over the years about redirecting traffic to reduce the

impact of truck traffic in the downtown as well as the impact of the 16,000+ cars that pass through the City each day. However, the general consensus of the merchants and residents seems to be that the current traffic pattern is still the best alternative.

Air Transport: The Knapp Airport in Berlin provides air service for private aircraft in and out of the area. There has not been any commercial air service at this airport for several years. There is a planned expansion of the airport, but there has not been any indication that commercial air service will return to the airport. Commercial air service is available at the Burlington International Airport in South Burlington.

Rail Transport: There is freight rail service via the Washington County Railroad from Barre to Montpelier where it connects with the Central Vermont Railroad. The railroad is about to receive a \$200,000 grant from the state to upgrade the tracks. This should allow for future passenger service for the Christmas Santa Train and the possibility of tourist trains running from downtown Barre up to the Rock of Ages quarries. There does not appear to be any substantial demand for daily commuter rail service between Barre and Montpelier or Chittenden County.

Bus Transport: C.V.T.A. Wheels provides bus service between Barre and Montpelier as well as from Barre to the Central Vermont Hospital. (C.V.T.A. Wheels also coordinates volunteer drivers and ride sharing opportunities for people that don't have their own transportation) Coordination between C.V.T.A. Wheels and the City in regard to the potential need/location of bus stops is important in order to ensure that these locations are safe and accessible.

Bus service provides a convenient, economical and environmentally sound transportation alternative for commuters between Barre and Montpelier. Bus service (based on demand) can help to reduce traffic congestion in the Barre-Montpelier area and provide accessible transportation for some of the City's disadvantaged population. Therefore, the City can benefit from promoting bus transportation.

The construction of the new elementary school may also provide additional opportunities for the coordination of bus transportation between C.V.T.A. Wheels and the City school district.

Bike Paths: Bike paths can help to provide a seasonal alternative to motorized transportation. The City of Barre has one short Bike path that runs from Fairview St. to the Municipal Swimming Pool. This path can be used for recreational purposes, but it does not connect any primary transportation routes. There is a group of volunteers in Barre City that is working with people from nearby communities to promote the construction of a bike path that would provide a transportation alternative from Barre Town to Montpelier. The group hopes to obtain a grant to fund 90% of the cost. The local share for Barre City could be between \$40,000 and \$100,000. The group hopes to do some fund raising, but the project would undoubtedly require a financial commitment from the City in order to be successful.

The route of the path through the City would have to be resolved as well. The volunteer group hopes to find a way to locate the bike path along some portions of the Stevens Branch to provide a scenic route. Portions of the path that would follow City streets might have to be

coordinated with existing traffic patterns and on street parking in some areas. Another consideration regarding the proposed bike path is that, if it were built, there should be a plan for the long term maintenance of the path.

Bridges: There are a number of bridges in the City that cross the Stevens Branch that were constructed after the 1927 flood. The Granite Street, Blackwell Street, Willey Street, Parkside Terrace and Prospect St. bridges are all in need of repair. The City is in the process of obtaining funding to repair the Granite Street Bridge which is currently restricted to minimum loads and one way traffic. Funds will be necessary to make repairs to the other bridges.

## **TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Another ten year street reconstruction program should be developed and presented to the voters in March of 1994**
- The City should continue to work with the Merchants, residents and the Agency of Transportation to ensure that the Main Street Reconstruction project has minimal impact on the economy of the City**
- Future developments should be evaluated in regard to their potential impact on the pedestrian way as well as the streets**
- The City should continue to coordinate with CVTA Wheels to in regard to the location of bus stops**
- The proposed bike path should be evaluated based on its benefit to the community,**



**the demand for the facility and the manner in which it will be funded and maintained**

- **The local share of the anticipated bridge repairs should be included in the capital**

**budget plan**

- **Evaluate the potential of including bike storage and parking facilities in future**

**highway/parking lot projects**

- **Evaluate the need/potential for additional parking areas in the City's downtown**
- **Increase signage to direct people to parking areas**

## **IX. HOUSING**

According to the 1990 census, Barre City has 4321 housing units of which over 2500 (59%) are rental units (see figures 9 and 10 – next page). The City's urban center characteristics are demonstrated once again by its housing stock. Barre City has 501 assisted housing units and 149 Section 8 certificates throughout the City. The City has a higher percentage of assisted units than other communities in Central Vermont. Local housing officials have stated that there are an adequate number of subsidized units in the City to meet the needs of low and moderate income people in the community. Additionally, some private landlords have indicated that they have higher than average vacancy rates during the recession of the early 1990's.

These factors indicate that future housing projects should be carefully evaluated based on the housing demand of the people that they are designed to serve. Every effort should also be made to ensure that future projects pay local property taxes to help to ensure economic stability for the City.

Barre Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. is a private non-profit organization which was organized in 1984 to help administer community development block grant funds. BNHS also receives funds from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation as well as from private donations. Some of the BNHS programs include neighborhood revitalization projects, low interest housing rehabilitation loans, affordable home ownership programs and technical assistance.

The Barre Housing Authority is the City Public Housing Authority that has been operating since 1964. The BHA operates 281 units of assisted elderly housing and 50 units of family housing in the City. They also provide housing services in the Town of Barre. The BHA is currently seeking funding to upgrade some of its older units and to make some of them wheelchair accessible.

Highgate Housing Inc. is a new organization that was formed to help retain the 120 units at Highgate Apartments as affordable housing. This project was originally constructed by a private investor with HUD assistance. A number of housing, financial, community and state organizations helped to facilitate the sale of the property to the new non-profit organization and to subsequently begin the renovation of the project.

All of these organizations help to provide housing opportunities for people in the community that might not otherwise be able to afford it.

In 1987, BNHS conducted a survey of Barre City housing conditions. The results of the survey were as follows:

- Excellent condition - 29%
- Minor Rehabilitation - 42%
- Moderate Rehabilitation - 25%
- Major Rehabilitation - 4%

These figures indicate that there is a need for housing rehabilitation assistance in the City,

but the majority of the units (71%) are in good to excellent condition.

A 1989 study projected that the City would require between 400 and 800 additional housing units by the year 2000. However, these figures were based on projections of a decline in the number of persons per unit and an increasing population. Since that time the 1990 census has indicated that the population of the City has actually declined. There are some vacancies now, and if the population remains stable, there would not be a need for a substantial number of additional units. However, if the City is successful in its economic development efforts in conjunction of the new school, it could result in some increased population in the next eight to ten years. This could result in a moderate demand for additional units.

Another housing need that has been identified is an affordable home ownership program. It is extremely difficult for people who currently occupy subsidized family units to eventually move to home ownership. A successful program of this type would probably require some sort of grant funding in addition to support from such organizations as the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and the Central Vermont Community Land Trust. There may also be a future need for a congregate housing facility for older citizens who are no longer able to live alone.

The City helps to protect the occupants of housing units in the City through building codes, zoning ordinances and enforcement of health and safety regulations. These efforts will continue to apply to existing and new units.

## **HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **The City has assured that there is adequate housing in the community for residents of all income levels**
- **The City will continue to ensure that all new and existing housing is safe and sanitary**
- **Housing project proposals which indicate that the projects will pay local property taxes will be given priority consideration subject to state and federal regulations**
- **As the City develops its priorities for future grant applications, a grant for an affordable home ownership program should be considered**
- **Every effort should be made to encourage surrounding communities to construct adequate housing for their own citizens so that the City does not have to continue to do more than its fair share in providing subsidized housing for these people**

## **X. ENERGY**

There are no commercial energy generating facilities in the City of Barre, but there are a variety of energy sources located in and around the community. The Green Mountain Power Corporation provides electricity to homes and businesses in the City. Representatives of GMP attended a public hearing regarding the energy element of the municipal plan. At that time they stated that their energy distribution plan indicates that there is adequate available electricity to meet the needs of Barre City and the surrounding communities for the next several years. GMP has an ongoing maintenance program to replace lines and poles in the City as required. Additionally, the street lights in the City's downtown will be replaced as part of the Main Street reconstruction project in 1995. In recent years, GMP has been replacing some of the street light fixtures with new energy efficient ones.

There are companies in the City that sell coal, petroleum products and wood for fuel. The coal and oil and motor fuel supplies are subject to out of state sources and transportation resources, but there are no major problems obtaining these fuels presently. There are abundant supplies of wood throughout Vermont.

City codes encourage the use of energy efficient building practices and proper lighting. Most of the City owned buildings were built long before there were concerns about energy efficiency. The public works staff has been burning wood at the City Barn for several years in order to reduce the City's fuel oil consumption. There have been energy audits in the past and updates

will continue in an ongoing effort to improve the energy efficiency while minimizing the financial impact on the taxpayers.

The City's relatively small geographic area encourages the use of bicycles and pedestrian travel as a means of energy efficient transportation within the City. As noted previously, a bike path from Barre Town through the City to Montpelier is currently being proposed.

The City should continue its efforts towards energy efficiency through the many small changes that can have a large combined impact on overall energy use.

### **ENERGY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Continue regular energy audits of City owned buildings and make cost effective modifications**
- **Continue to encourage energy efficiency through building and zoning codes, specifically to encourage compact development.**
- **Continue to work with area non-profit housing agencies which include energy-efficient renovations in their housing needs strategies.**
- **Future municipal projects and school facilities expansions should include energy-efficient construction and utilities.**
- **Continue to encourage subdivisions which effectively utilize building orientation and landscaping to address energy conservation measures.**

**- Continue to work with Green Mountain Power to upgrade street lights with energy efficient fixtures**

**- Make energy conservation education materials available in public place**



## **XI. POLICIES, OBJECTIVES, PROGRAMS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The planning policies and objectives of the City of Barre are included in the body of this document and in the stated recommendations which follow. These recommendations also include the programs and the implementation methods to achieve the objectives.

### **REGIONAL CONTEXT/ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES**

**- City officials should ensure that they play an active role in the decisions made by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission in order to ensure that local needs are properly addressed; the City of Barre should play a leadership role in the activities of the Commission**

**- All activities of City municipal government should be evaluated in regard to their potential for shared services with the Town; this evaluation should focus on the financial impact and the impact on the efficiency of the operation; after this evaluation, the political impact should be considered prior to making any proposal to the Town**

**- The City of Barre should continue to participate with other Central Vermont communities in regional activities**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**- The Barre City Economic Development Committee should work to develop a**

**City economic development plan which should address the specific objectives of:**

- **Creation of jobs through the following activities:**
  - **Expansion of existing commercial businesses**
  - **Expansion of existing industrial businesses**
  - **Introduction of new commercial enterprises into the City**
  - **Introduction of new industrial enterprises into the City**
  - **The City should encourage responsible economic development through such programs as tax stabilization**
- **The City should employ an economic development director**
- **Any proposals to reduce or eliminate municipal/school services should be evaluated as to their impact on the economic health of the community**
  - **An evaluation of the potential benefits and adverse impacts of eliminating the personal property/business equipment tax should be conducted**

## **WATER SUPPLY**

- **The primary need has been addressed by the approval of the water filtration facility; this project should continue to be a priority**
  - **Efforts to identify and control leaks in the existing system should continue in order to minimize costs for filtration**
  - **Increase the line item in the water department budget for system replacement and**

**improvements as required**

- **Continue efforts to market water to other municipalities**

**- Evaluate the potential need for an ordinance to prohibit the drilling of water wells in the City or develop fees for those landowners who drill them but still have the benefit of fire protection for the City hydrants**

- **Review current hook up fees to determine whether they are adequate**

**- Preserve watershed lands and discourage any use of its reservoirs/lands for recreational purposes or any other use which will adversely impact the watershed**

#### **WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND SEWER SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS**

**- Pursue the approval of a bond to fund the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant**

**- Continue to identify and repair the sewer lines that are allowing infiltration into the system**

**- Increase the line item in the Sewer Department budget as required for the replacement and upgrade of lines**

**- Continue to pursue all possible alternatives to obtain the highest possible permitted capacity for the wastewater treatment plant**

**- Review hook up fees to determine whether they are adequate system which meets water quality discharge standards promulgated by the State of Vermont and the federal Environmental Protection Agency**

## **STORM WATER RUNOFF**

- **Continue the policy of separating ground water/roof drain water from domestic sewers and do not pursue the costly process of storm water treatment**
- **Continue the policy of keeping the channels of the City's streams clear and not maintaining privately owned walls and banks**
- **Continue to work with Barre Town to reduce the storm water runoff from higher elevations in the Town into the City**

## **CITY HALL/OPERA HOUSE**

- **The Barre Opera House is an asset to the City which should be supported by the community as determined by the voters**
- **Regardless of the status of the renovation project, there should be an evaluation of all possible alternatives for the municipal offices to make them more functional and to improve the working environment and accessibility; these needs should be addressed in the capital budget plan**

## **RECREATION**

- **The long term capital needs of all recreation facilities should be included in**

**the capital budget plan**

- **The City should continue discussions with the Town of Barre regarding the potential of cost sharing for recreational facilities in addition to the municipal pool**
- **In conjunction with the disposition of the old elementary school buildings, the Recreational Board would verify that there will be an adequate number of playgrounds in the City once the school buildings are converted to other uses**
- **A recreation plan should be developed for the expanded use of the City Cow Pasture with the knowledge that a portion of it may someday be necessary for use as a cemetery**
- **Evaluate the recreational potential of the City's streams and make the best possible use of the**
- **Expand recreation services to meet the needs of all of the citizens of the City**

## **SOLID WASTE**

- **The City should continue to play a leadership role in working to find a regional long term solid waste disposal alternative that is environmentally sound as well as cost effective**
- **Explore alternatives, including an ordinance, that will lead to increased recycling of materials in the City**
- **Continue to work to find a more suitable recycling center location in the City**
- **Amend zoning regulations to include provisions for recycled materials containers**

**at apartment buildings**

## **LIBRARY**

- **The City should proceed with the engineering evaluation, and the funding for the proposed improvements should be resolved by joint discussions between the library trustees, the City Council and the Barre Town Board of Selectmen**
- **Pursue options for expanded support of the Aldrich Public Library**

## **OTHER BUILDINGS AND LAND**

- **All City owned land that is not currently being used for a specific purpose should be evaluated as to its current and future value to the City and either disposed of or retained accordingly**
- **The capital needs of all other City buildings, including the public works facilities should be included in the capital budget plan**
- **The City should continue to work with the Central Vermont Hospital to ensure that the future use of the MacFarland House property helps to suit the needs of the community**
- **City owned lands that are located outside the City should also be managed intensively for the long term benefit and use of the community**

## **LAND USE**

**- The Planning Commission should undertake a review of the lands that have been identified as undeveloped to ensure that the long range goals of the community can best be accomplished with properties zoned in their current configuration; obviously there will be changes over the years, but it would be helpful to undertake a preliminary review at this time**

**- If the Planning Commission decides that they want to take responsibility for Criteria 5 – 10, they should pursue a change in the law through their elected representatives**

**- Evaluate the benefits of revising zoning district lines in areas where they split properties to determine if following the property lines would be more appropriate**

**- All proposed developments should be evaluated as to their long term impact on the City as well as the demand for services that they will generate**

## **NATURAL, SCENIC AND HISTORIC**

**- Efforts should continue to preserve the City's brooks, scenic vistas, parks and monuments**

**- The City should form an advisory historic preservation committee to provide insights to restoring historic facades when buildings are being renovated**

**- The City's service clubs should be approached about the possibility of taking**

**responsibility for improving and maintaining the primary entry points into the City and funding the erection of a welcome sign for each entry**

**- A volunteer should be designated to provide liaison between the City, the Merchants Bureau and downtown businesses to coordinate promotional activities and decorations in the downtown**

**- Contract with a landscape architect (perhaps volunteer services or paid for by a private group) to recommend improvements to the City's parks and the downtown streetscape and street trees**

**- A street tree ordinance should be adopted and funds should be allocated to maintain the existing trees and to add other trees as required**

## **EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

**- That zoning changes be considered for the old elementary school sites if there are demonstrated long term benefits to the community and no major adverse impact on the adjacent neighborhoods**

**- That the school disposition committee continue to work in conjunction with the City Manager and the City Council towards disposing of the old school properties in such a way as to maximize the benefits to the community**



## **TRANSPORTATION**

- **Another ten year street reconstruction program should be developed and presented to the voters in March of 1994**
- **The City should continue to work with the merchants, residents and the Agency of Transportation to ensure that the Main Street Reconstruction project has minimal impact on the economy of the City**
- **Future developments should be evaluated in regard to their potential impact on the pedestrian way as well as the streets**
- **The City should continue to coordinate with CVTA Wheels to in regard to the location of bus stops**
- **The proposed bike path should be evaluated based on its benefit to the community, the demand for the facility and the manner in which it will be funded and maintained**
- **The local share of the anticipated bridge repairs should be included in the capital budget plan**
- **Evaluate the potential of including bike storage and parking facilities in future highway/parking lot projects**
- **Evaluate the need/potential for additional parking areas in the City's downtown**
- **Increase signage to direct people to parking areas**

## **HOUSING**

- **The City has assured that there is adequate housing in the community for residents of all income levels**
- **The City will continue to ensure that all new and existing housing is safe and sanitary**
- **Housing project proposals which indicate that the projects will pay local property taxes will be given priority consideration subject to state and federal regulations**
- **As the City develops its priorities for future grant applications, a grant for an affordable home ownership program should be considered**
- **Every effort should be made to encourage surrounding communities to construct adequate housing for their own citizens so that the City does not have to continue to do more than its fair share in providing subsidized housing for these people**

## **ENERGY**

- **Continue regular energy audits of City owned buildings and make cost effective modifications**
- **Continue to encourage energy efficiency through building and zoning codes**
- **Continue to work with Green Mountain Power to upgrade street lights with energy efficient fixtures**
- **Make energy conservation education materials available in public places**