

SECTION 2: STRATEGIC PLAN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

planning for economic development

Barre City recognizes the connection between the health and well-being of our local economy and of our residents. To achieve our vision for a healthy future, Barre City continues its efforts to attract and retain businesses that pay a living wage, provide health insurance benefits, and match existing levels of workforce education or provide job training.

A vital, balanced and resilient local economy is essential for community well-being. Studies have shown that a strong economy is a good indicator for the health of community residents. By strengthening the local economy, we can create and retain desirable jobs that provide a good standard of living for workers and their families. Increased business activity, personal income and wealth will increase our tax base, allowing the city to provide affordable community services and amenities.

What creates a good environment for economic development? Some common themes emerge when you ask business owners and economic development specialists that question:

- Lower taxes
- Less regulations
- Fair and efficient permitting
- Economic development incentives and programs
- Quality, availability and affordability of appropriate space/land
- Quality, availability and affordability of housing
- Quality, availability and affordability of infrastructure (transportation, water/sewer, communications, electricity, etc.)
- Workforce availability and skill, and workforce training opportunities
- Quality of life needed to attract and retain skilled/trained workers
- Level of commitment to and investment in the community's future by the municipality, residents and other business owners
- Childcare quality, affordability and resources.

key points

1. **Facilities and Infrastructure.** The contraction of the industrial and manufacturing sectors has left our city with some vacant, obsolete or under-utilized land and buildings. While clearly a challenge, these sites and buildings also present an opportunity for new uses and revitalization. The basic facilities and infrastructure needed to support a healthy local economy already exist in Barre City.
2. **Downtown Revitalization.** Downtown Barre serves as a regional commercial center. The second half of the 20th century saw changes including the decline of the granite industry, and weakening vitality of the downtown business district as retail activity shifted away from Main Street. As a

result of our sustained downtown revitalization efforts, a turnaround has begun on Main Street, which the city hopes to bolster through the completed North Main Street (“Big Dig”) reconstruction project. With the construction of the City Place building, we now have office space, a rehabilitation gym, and a professional services office. The redevelopment of Enterprise Alley with its accessory parking lot, the private Metro Way parking lot redevelopment, and future plans for further reinvestment in the downtown’s public infrastructure and spaces will continue with this revitalization.

3. **Labor Force.** Barre City’s granite heritage has resulted in a community that takes pride in and has great respect for the work of our skilled labor force. The city also has a strong tradition of entrepreneurship and successful home-grown businesses. In addition to the physical resources – infrastructure, space, transportation – needed to support economic development, the city has human resources – labor force, skills, work ethic – that are needed to re-fit and re-tool our economy. There are a number of programs offered within the city and region to assist with workforce training and education.
4. **City Government.** Barre City is business friendly — a great place to start and grow a business. City government actively supports downtown revitalization and economic development efforts, as demonstrated by our tax stabilization program and streamlined permitting process.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following economic development challenges and issues that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Downtown Vitality.** Some of Barre City’s downtown buildings and spaces have suffered from neglect over many years. While this trend is reversing, issues remain with property maintenance and vacant storefronts. The Unified Development Ordinance, formerly the zoning and subdivision ordinances, rewritten in 2019 should assist in maintaining the quality of the downtown, as well as the revised Vacant Building and Minimum Housing Standards Ordinances.
2. **Walkability and Parking.** Barre City is not as pedestrian and bicyclist friendly as it could be. The North Main Street Reconstruction project addressed some of these issues, but the effort needs to be continued throughout downtown and throughout the neighborhoods. There is an adequate amount of parking downtown, but it needs better management and signage as it is not always easy to find, as well as improvements to make these areas a more attractive part of our downtown. A more pedestrian-friendly City will also encourage people to park and walk from place-to-place, rather than driving to and parking at each destination. We have a bike path that has not been connected in some sections, so that access to the downtown is limited using this method. And, if using a bicycle, there are not ample opportunities to rest the bicycle so that shopping and walking around is accomplished.
3. **Building Stock.** The city has a substantial amount of historic industrial space that continues as granite sheds, or has been subdivided for use as smaller spaces for further industrial uses. Should the use of these industrial spaces discontinue, these buildings will require substantial investment to be modernized, renovated and re-fitted to suitable for new uses and occupants. The city’s industrial spaces could be redeveloped in a manner that will allow them to be easily adapted to a variety of uses as demand and economic conditions change over time. Industrial spaces need to

be able to be easily subdivided for lease as small incubator spaces and be easily converted back to larger spaces as businesses expand or markets change. Spaces also need to be flexible in their use so that they can be efficiently converted from commercial to office or to light industrial and back as the market demands.

4. **Unemployment and Workforce Development.** Barre City's unemployment rate is about the same rate as the immediate region. A portion of residents are unprepared for or not competitive in the current job market. These residents will need further training and/or education to find and keep stable employment that pays a living wage.
5. **Educational Attainment.** 23% of Barre City residents hold a Bachelor's degree or higher as compared with 37% of Vermonters on average. People with more education are likely to live longer, healthier lives. Barre City needs to support educational attainment to improve the health and well-being of our economy and our residents.
6. **Access to Healthy Food.** Barre City does not currently have a full-size grocery store, although there are a few small, neighborhood markets. This makes access to healthy foods difficult for residents, particularly those who do not have reliable transportation. Research has shown that individuals who live in environments where there are no nearby grocery stores and high concentrations of fast food alternatives have more health problems than those who live within close proximity to a grocery store. Keeping food growth, production, and sales within the city would also benefit our local economy. Every time money changes hands within a community, it boosts income and economic activity, and it fuels job creation within that community. A full-size grocery store would be an anchor business for downtown and would support our revitalization efforts.
7. **Reputation and Perception.** Barre City was often viewed from the outside as a run-down community in decline. The condition of some buildings and properties in the city also contributes to a poor impression of the community. These negative perceptions have eroded residents' sense of community pride and over the years have become self-reinforcing. However, most of these negative perceptions of Barre City are based on an apples-to-oranges comparison. When we are compared to other urban areas in Vermont it is evident that conditions in Barre City are not unusual and that the city's reputation is not deserved. We must continue to promote more positive messages about our community and counter any negative perceptions with factual information about current conditions in Barre City as compared to other urban centers in Vermont.

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already acted to promote economic development, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Taxes.** Barre City implemented a local options tax in 2018, and has local tax stabilization programs for both residential and non-residential properties being substantially improved by locking-in their lower pre-renovation assessments for up to 10 years. Barre City is the only community in the state with a local tax stabilization program that applies to both the municipal property tax and the education property tax. Additionally, within the state-recognized designated

downtown, property owners may be eligible for state income tax credits for building improvements. Barre City applied for and received a tax increment financing (TIF) district in 2012, which has allowed the city to capture the increased property tax revenues generated in a portion of our downtown over the next 20 years and to use those tax dollars to fund the improvements needed to support redevelopment.

2. **Regulations and Permitting.** The city has a zoning administrator available to assist applicants with navigating the regulatory and permitting system. Barre City created a Development Review Board (DRB) in 1997 to eliminate the need for some projects to be reviewed by two separate boards; now projects that require more than one type of permit or approval can be reviewed in a combined hearing in front of a single board. Barre City has increased what development activities can be reviewed administratively by staff and be approved without requiring a DRB hearing. Since Barre City has zoning and subdivision regulations known as the Unified Development Ordinance rewritten in 2019, it is classified as a “10-acre town” under Act 250 (Vermont’s state land use law). Therefore, development on most parcels within the city will not require state review and approval under Act 250.
3. **Public Infrastructure and Services.** Unlike most Vermont municipalities, Barre City has public water and sewer infrastructure, and both systems have capacity available. Three-phase electric service is available in many parts of the city, and is already serving most existing industrial sites. Cell phone service and broadband internet service are both available throughout the city. Route 62 is a limited access highway that provides a direct connection from downtown Barre City to Interstate 89. There are a number of industrial sites in Barre City that have direct rail access and freight traffic on the rail line is utilized.
4. **Support and Programs.** Two economic development organizations with paid staff are available to assist existing and potential businesses – Barre Area Development Corporation (the local economic development organization) and the Barre Partnership (the downtown revitalization organization). Barre City has a state Designated Downtown, which provides benefits (including the tax credits mentioned above) to businesses and property owners within the district. Barre City and Barre Area Development can help administer economic development programs, funding and grants (such as federal Community Development Block Grant and state brownfield clean-up and redevelopment funding). Barre City could seek state designation as a growth center, which could provide benefits to the city and landowners within the designated area in support of new growth and development. The city could also seek an expansion of its federally designated Historic District, which would make more property owners eligible for tax credits when they invest in rehabilitation of their buildings.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following economic development goals and strategies in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **For Barre City to establish and maintain a diversified and vibrant local economy, which provides jobs that can sustain the city’s residents, and which revitalizes and redevelops the city’s industrial sites, commercial areas and downtown business district.**

- A. Invest in the public infrastructure and services needed to attract and retain businesses in the city.
 - A-1. Continue efforts to improve and beautify the city’s streetscapes, gateways and public spaces in order to provide the attractive and well-maintained physical environment needed to support successful businesses, particularly within the downtown business district.
 - A-2. Explore opportunities to increase wireless internet service throughout the downtown business district.
- B. Implement the city’s land use strategies as set forth in this plan, which identify and establish policies for the downtown business district, commercial zones, neighborhood commercial zones, industrial zones and mixed-use zones.
 - B-1. Implement this plan’s land use policies, which call for development of a dense, attractive, mixed-use downtown business district that particularly seeks to attract tenants from the business and professional services sector, and that provides “anchor” retailers such as grocery, hardware, pharmacy and clothing so city residents have convenient access to basic goods.
 - B-2. Build on Barre City’s heritage, historic resources and existing arts institutions to attract both residents and visitors to the downtown, particularly in the evenings and on weekends, which will expand the customer base for downtown retailers and restaurants.
 - B-3. Adopt the ordinances needed to address issues with the appearance and maintenance of downtown storefronts and building facades, including vacant storefronts and buildings.
 - B-4. Continue to plan for and construct the improvements needed to make Barre City more pedestrian friendly.
 - B-5. Implement a clean streets policy in Barre City to remove graffiti and to keep the streets and sidewalks free of dirt and litter.
- C. Recognize that a large percentage of land in the city suitable for commercial or industrial use is already developed but that much of this land has potential to be used more productively or intensively.
 - C-2. Continue efforts to remediate and redevelop brownfield sites.
- D. Continue to assist building and businesses owners with navigating the city’s permit process.
- E. Retain and build on Barre City’s heritage as a “blue collar” community that is affordable for working class families and offers a great quality of life.
 - E-1. Implement the goals and strategies set forth in other chapters of this plan intended to promote livable neighborhoods, affordable housing, and community services and amenities to attract and retain a skilled workforce in the city.

E-2. Foster a greater sense of civic pride among Barre City residents.

E-3. Continue to improve Barre City's reputation and image (i.e. Barre Rock Solid).

E-4. Continue to promote more events and gain better participation in from those by the Barre Partnership, such as the Heritage Festival, Granite City 5K, a soap-box derby, the farmer's market, events at the Old Labor Hall and the Auditorium, etc.

F. Find new uses and opportunities for, and promote investment in the city's vacant, obsolete or under-utilized buildings.

F-1. Encourage building owners to renovate and develop buildings with a flexible design that can be easily converted to new uses and to adapt to new economic conditions.

F-2. Increase awareness and use of the city's tax stabilization programs to facilitate investment in real property.

F-3. increase the programming at the City's BOR Facility and Civic Center, and Alumni Hall.

2. For Barre City to remain a regional employment center that provides livable wage jobs for a large percentage of the city's workforce and workers from surrounding communities.

A. Continue efforts to revitalize Barre City's downtown business district.

B. Link economic development goals and strategies to building a sustainable community so that today's decisions and actions will not diminish the opportunities for future generations to live healthy and successful lives in the city.

C. Market the city as a place where people can live in close proximity to their place of work, and the economic, environmental and social benefits that a short commute has for individuals, families and the community.

D. Identify and attract companies from outside the city that will complement our existing businesses, and that will provide jobs that match the skills and training of the city's workforce, and/or that will revitalize and redevelop the city's industrial sites, commercial areas and downtown business district.

E. Assist in the expansion of existing businesses within the City as a means to improve and attract workforce development.

3. For Barre City and its economic development partners to support entrepreneurship as a primary mission.

A. Recognize the critical role that small, local businesses play in creating new jobs in the city and in recirculating dollars in the local economy.

B. Assist local entrepreneurs to open, successfully operate and growth their businesses.

- C. Use available revolving loan funds primarily to support local business start-ups and expansions.
 - D. Continue to partner with and support the efforts of local economic development organizations.
- 4. For Barre City's workforce to have the skills and training opportunities needed to remain competitive in a global marketplace, allowing residents to respond to changes in the local economy by transitioning between jobs and to remain employed throughout their working lives.**
- A. Attract, retain and educate a skilled workforce that can successfully adapt to ongoing change in the local economy.
 - B. Provide services and opportunities for unskilled or under-skilled residents.

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. Implement the state-approved Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District for the downtown business district.

Status: The TIF plan and application was prepared and received state approval in 2012.

Timing: First debt incurred January 2014. Life of the TIF District is 20 years.

Partners: City Clerk/Treasurer, City Planner, Regional Planning Commission, City Manager, City Council, City Assessor.

Notes: The TIF District provides a financing tool for significant infrastructure projects to stimulate the development and redevelopment of several properties in the Designated Downtown. These private projects require city investment into parking, transportation, and streetscape in order for them to be built to full capacity. Barre City's Tax Increment Finance District plan was approved in 2012, allowing a total of \$6.6M in infrastructure improvements in support of private development in the designated TIF district, located in the heart of the downtown. To date the City has completed \$2.2M in parking improvements including the Enterprise Aly, Campbell and Keith Avenue parking lots, and the Pearl Street pedestrian way. Other potential parking-related projects include redesign along Merchants Row and additional improvements in the Keith Avenue parking lot. All projects require voter approval.

2. Open a grocery store in Barre City.

Status: There is a recognized need for a large-scale grocery store, but to date no private operators have been interested in locating in Barre City and existing neighborhood stores have not been interested in expanding. This community sentiment bubbled to the surface in a 2004 market study, commissioned by the downtown Barre merchant's association (The Barre Partnership).

Results of a community survey pointed to the desire for a downtown store. The report highlighted this sentiment and confirmed that grocery stores located in the downtown do indeed contribute to a vibrant community center.

Timing: 2023

Partners: Granite City Grocery, other grocery retailers, Barre Area Development Corp., The Barre Partnership, Capstone Community Action Council, City Council

Notes: According to their 2020 annual report, various sites have been proposed since 2012, reviewed and even vetted by their Board and their professionals, but their market study has not supported the sites proposed, and the financial model will not work without support from a market study. Volunteers are going to be reaching out to the community to ensure that the mission and vision are still relevant to the community.

3. Complete planning for and implement the Merchant Row project.

Status: A plan for Merchants Row was completed in 2011.

Timing: When the City is ready to present the project to the voters for approval.

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Manager, City Council, CVRPC

Notes: The Merchants Row plan resolves a number of circulation issues associated with the Merchants Row area of Barre and would transform this bleak area of undifferentiated asphalt to a re-configured urban landscape that includes sidewalks, ADA accessible entrances to Merchants Row shops, public plazas at the Barre Opera House and historic train depot, an alignment for a long planned bike path, designated loading areas and landscaping. Enterprise Aly was completed in 2015, and the updated design of the Merchants Row area would expand upon the work already done.

4. Update planning for and implement the North Main to Summer Street project.

Status: A plan for North Main to Summer Street was completed in 2012.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Manager, City Council, Barre Partnership

Notes: The plan's overall strategy is to focus development and activity along Main and Summer Streets, and provide parking within the center of the blocks in a series of connected 'parking courts' that are configured to be user-friendly and convenient, but tied to an urban pattern that places parking behind the buildings and preserves streetscapes for walking and human activity. An update to the plan is needed.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

1. Per capita income in Barre City. Per capita income (total income ÷ total number of residents) measures our city's economic health and it is an important indicator of our community's standard of living. For individual residents, income is one of the strongest predictors of health and well-being. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey*

In 2010: \$20,700
2018 Update: \$22,030
Target for 2026: \$24,000

2. Unemployment rate for Barre City residents. The unemployment rate is another direct measure of city's economic health. A high unemployment rate as compared to state and regional averages suggests that there are problems specific to the community that are affecting the local economy. Employment is the primary source of income for most Barre City residents and for individuals and families' unemployment can lead to increased rates of physical and mental illness. *Source: Vermont Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics*

In 2010: 11.1%
2018 Update: 3.4%
Washington Co. for 2018: 2.6%
Target for 2026: 2.6%

3. Total number of jobs in Barre City. Whether the number of jobs in a city is growing, stable or declining, particularly as compared to regional employment trends, is also an indicator of economic health and vibrancy. Barre City was historically dependent upon a single industry, which resulted in a long period of economic decline and stagnation as jobs in granite manufacturing disappeared. An increase in jobs in a diversity of sectors will be evidence that we are building a healthier and more resilient local economy. *Source: Vermont Department of Labor, Labor Market Information*

In 2010: 4,400
2018 Update: 5,700
Target for 2026: 6,500

4. Vacancy rate for first floor commercial space in the downtown business district. Vacant downtown buildings are highly visible evidence of the poor health of a local economy. Barre City's downtown has endured a long period of neglect and dis-investment that appears to be reversing. Declining vacancy rates is a direct measure of the success of our revitalization efforts, and the health and well-being of our community. *Source: Planning Director*

In 2010: 15%
2019 Update: 12%
Target for 2023: 8%

planning for housing

Barre City recognizes that safe, attractive and affordable homes and neighborhoods are a necessary foundation for the health and well-being of residents and neighborhoods. To achieve our vision for a healthy future, Barre City needs to attract and retain residents, particularly households with moderate to higher incomes. The quality, cost and characteristics of homes and neighborhoods are the major factors people consider when choosing where to live. The City has quality housing stock, as evidenced by the beautiful homes throughout the city, and is an asset to our community.

Where we live is at the very core of our daily lives. Shelter is a basic human need without which no one can be healthy, safe or productive. The physical conditions within homes, conditions in the neighborhoods surrounding homes, the affordability of homes are all closely interrelated with the health and well-being of residents and our community as a whole.

The health of our local economy is linked to the availability and affordability of housing in the city. To attract jobs, we need to have places for new workers to live. To revitalize our downtown, we need to attract new residents and expand the base of consumers that will support local businesses. The residential sector also drives demand for city infrastructure and services; the location and design of homes and neighborhoods influence the cost of providing infrastructure and services in the city.

The type of residential development that occurs in a community reflects both local and regional market forces, as well as the influence of government policies and regulations. The city can take an active role in promoting housing that will contribute to making Barre City a healthier place to live. Policies that encourage higher-density housing within urban centers increase residents' ability to walk or bike to work, school, stores and services. Enforcing building codes and inspecting rental housing reduces the number of residents living in unhealthy and unsafe conditions. The City will need to consider increasing the number of enforcement staff with the added responsibilities of ordinances and their requirements.

key points

1. **Changing Demographics.** Demographic trends suggest that there will be increasing numbers of single-person households and households without children in future decades. Many of these households will want a home: in a more urban setting with greater access to employment, services, shopping and social activities; that is smaller, less expensive, easier to maintain and more energy-efficient; and with convenient access to transit. In future years, we will need more housing in Barre City that can meet those housing needs. Many people who grew up in Barre City or lived in the city as young adults moved out to nearby rural communities to raise their families. Now 'empty-nesters', these residents could be attracted back to the city with the right mix of housing in a revitalized downtown setting.
2. **Existing Housing.** Existing housing in the city ranges from single family homes to large apartment buildings, and homes with accessory dwelling units (ADU's). ADU's are often referred to as the "mother-in-law" apartment. ADU's have been allowed for many decades in the City, and

provide an affordable living unit for a renter or family member, and the owner to gain some income. A growing trend is that more “empty-nesters” are choosing to age in place and find that the once-bustling home is quiet and a lot to manage. ADU’s are allowed in the City, and must be located within or associated with an owner-occupied single family dwelling, and be up to 900 square feet in size, or not to exceed 30% of the habitable floor area of the primary dwelling. ADU’s provide a great means of affordable housing as well.

3. **Downtown Housing.** Downtown and near-downtown has a limited amount of housing aside from a few senior and affordable housing facilities. To revitalize our downtown, we need to bring people back to shop, dine, work and live downtown. Adding more housing would increase the income generated by downtown buildings, property values and the city’s tax base. Residents would be ‘anchor consumers’ for downtown businesses and would keep downtown alive after business hours. The Vermont Downtown Program reports that the average downtown resident spends more than twice as much money at downtown businesses than the average person who works, but does not live, downtown. With limited opportunities for new single-family development and infill in established neighborhoods in Barre City, our downtown offers an excellent opportunity for substantial increases in the city’s housing stock.
4. **Affordable and Special Needs Housing.** Barre City’s housing stock includes a large number of modest, single-family homes that continue to offer some of the region’s most affordable opportunities for homeownership. As more affluent residents left for outlying rural communities, our stock of higher-end and larger homes was largely converted to multi-family rentals. The availability of centrally located land with access to public services led to several large subsidized housing developments being built in Barre City during the 1970’s and ‘80’s. As a result of all these factors, we presently provide more than our share of the region’s affordable and special needs housing. Thirty-nine percent of all the subsidized apartments in Washington County are located in Barre City (approximately 514 units) and the subsidized units account for 12% of all housing in the city (the 5th highest percentage of all Vermont municipalities).
5. **Moderate- and Upper-Income Housing.** Barre City has seen the supply of moderate- and upper-income housing decline in recent decades. This widening gap in our housing stock has weakened the city’s property tax base and resulted in a loss to the local economy. The result is reduced resources for city services and infrastructure, including the investments that are needed to make Barre City a desirable place to live. We want our city to remain an affordable and attractive community for those working in the region - a city that is home to a diverse population. In order to achieve this, we need to balance our housing stock by adding middle- and higher-end units and ensuring that the quality of existing homes is maintained or improved.
6. **Housing Quality and Neighborhood Stability.** More than half of Barre City’s homes were built before 1940 and are located in traditional, pre-war neighborhoods. These older homes and neighborhoods need ongoing improvement and maintenance if they are to remain healthy and desirable places to live. The national upheaval in the housing market after 2008 has led to higher rates of foreclosure and distressed residential properties being purchased by investors (often from other parts of the country). While there are many stable neighborhoods in Barre City, there is evidence that some of our neighborhoods are in transition away from homeownership towards rentals, and some are showing signs of decline as a result of that transition. Poor property management leads to the loss of neighborhood stability, which is more likely to occur if landlords with no connection to our community acquire a higher percentage of rental properties. Investment in the city’s homes and neighborhoods will have significant direct and indirect benefits to individual residents and families, and the community as a whole.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following housing challenges and issues that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Neighborhood Destabilization.** There is anecdotal evidence that some of Barre City's neighborhoods are experiencing destabilization. Our city's distressed neighborhoods have higher percentage of rental properties owned by absentee landlords, a higher percentage of properties that are neglected or not properly maintained, and a higher rate of tenant turnover. These factors can become self-reinforcing within a neighborhood and can lead to a downward spiral in property values and quality of life. More than half of the homes in the city are rented rather than owned and rental housing is not evenly distributed. There are blocks that are predominately owner-occupied and those that are mostly renter-occupied. The low rate of homeownership and the increasing rate of resident turnover in some neighborhoods is fraying our city's social fabric.
2. **Housing Quality.** The perception that some of Barre City's neighborhoods are in decline is largely driven by the condition and maintenance of homes. The most affordable housing tends to be in the neighborhoods closest to downtown, which are among the oldest in the city. These homes are most likely to need upgrades to make them more energy efficient or to remove hazards like lead-based paint. While buyers may be able to purchase a house in Barre City, they may not have the additional resources necessary to repair or maintain their home, particularly if it is an older structure with a backlog of deferred maintenance. Rents in Barre City are largely driven by the HUD Fair Market rates and many landlords believe that at those rental rates there would not be an adequate return on their investment if they made significant improvements. Additionally, landlords who receive fixed rents through state or federal programs have little incentive to make improvements beyond what is needed to meet minimum standards. Buildings that are allowed to deteriorate decline in value, depress the value of surrounding properties, and generally make a neighborhood less desirable. More than half of the homes in Barre City were built before 1940 and most of the city's housing is located in established neighborhoods that formed 50 or more years ago. Our older housing stock needs regular repair and upgrades to provide residents with a safe and healthy place to live and contribute to neighborhood quality of life.
3. **Demand for City Services.** The amount of rental housing, and housing for very low-income households or populations with special needs in Barre City has increased demand for city services, particularly police and emergency response. The cost of providing these city services is borne primarily by property taxpayers, many of whom perceive that those who pay higher city taxes tend to use less services, while those who pay lower city taxes use more services. A balanced housing stock and a broader distribution of wealth is essential to ensure our tax base is adequate to support the provision of city services necessary to maintain a healthy community with a good quality of life.

strengths & opportunities

Barre City and its partners have already acted to address housing issues, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Support and Programs.** The city and several partner organizations are available to assist current or potential residents with a variety of housing issues in Barre City. Downstreet Housing and Community Development (Downstreet) operates a NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center in Barre City and administers a variety of programs for homebuyers from education to grants for income-eligible households. Downstreet also offers assistance with home improvements to income-eligible households. Barre Housing Authority, Washington County Mental Health, Capstone Community Action Council (Capstone), the Good Samaritan Haven, and others also provide housing-related support and programs in the city. (A more complete list of programs and services is included on page 3-8 of this plan.)
2. **Affordable Housing.** Barre City is an affordable community to purchase or rent a home. Much of the city's historic housing stock is composed of modest, single-family homes on small lots – what would now be described as workforce housing – and these homes provide some of the best opportunities for first-time homebuyers and affordable homeownership in the region. The median sale price of a primary home in Barre City has been at least \$40,000 lower than the county average and \$70,000 lower than the state average throughout the past decade. Rents are also affordable at a median average of \$715/month and there is an ample supply of rental housing. Our city is a very affordable place for younger people to get started in and older people to downsize and retire to. This is something that should be marketed to a broader audience.
3. **Rental Registration Inspection Programs.** Barre City has an ordinance that requires annual registration of all rental units and establishes minimum standards for rental housing. Barre City has operated a rental housing inspection program since 2004 to maintain a minimum housing quality level. In 2012, the Barre City Fire Department's Code Enforcement Office took over responsibility for the inspection program from the Building Department in order to increase staff capacity for this program. Rental units are inspected every 4 years presently, and each rental unit has been inspected at least twice now. There are typical issues with landowners making appointments for inspection or for follow-up, but overall the City feels this program is running smoothly.
4. **Taxes.** Barre City has local tax stabilization programs for residential properties being substantially improved by locking-in their lower pre-renovation assessments for up to 10 years. Barre City is the only community in the state with a local tax stabilization program that applies to both the municipal property tax and the education property tax. Additionally, within the state-recognized designated downtown, property owners may be eligible for state income tax credits for building improvements.
5. **Public Infrastructure and Services.** Barre City has public water and sewer infrastructure, and both systems have capacity available. Cell phone service and broadband internet service are both available throughout the city. The city's parking permit system allows for overnight parking for downtown residents in city-owned lots, although the number of spaces designated for overnight or long-term parking may need to be increased as the amount of downtown housing increases. The lack of dedicated parking for some downtown buildings may be a disincentive for increasing the number of upper floor apartments.
6. **Regulations and Permitting.** It is possible to build housing in Barre City at much higher densities than in most Vermont communities and there remains land suitable for new construction and infill development. The city has a zoning administrator available to assist applicants with navigating the regulatory and permitting system. Barre City has increased what

development activities can be reviewed administratively by staff and be approved without requiring a DRB hearing.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following housing goals and strategies in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

- 1. For Barre City to encourage new residential development as part of an effort to reverse recent declines in the city's population and further the state's planning goal of maintaining the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.**
 - A. Plan to accommodate much of the city's new housing downtown.
 - A-1. Promote new mixed-use development and rehabilitation of existing buildings that includes residences on the upper floors.
 - B. Allow for mixed-use redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial buildings, particularly projects that preserve historic downtown buildings and granite sheds.
 - C. Continue allowing the creation of accessory dwellings within existing homes or outbuildings as required by state law.
 - D. Continue support of Downstreet Housing's endeavors in the city.
- 2. For Barre City to promote investment in new residential construction, and in the maintenance and rehabilitation of the city's existing housing stock.**
 - A. Provide a user-friendly environment that encourages residential developers to invest and construct within the city.
 - A-1. Work in partnership with landowners and developers to overcome hurdles, such as the ownership of 'paper streets' or the need for infrastructure upgrades, that are preventing infill development on vacant lots in the city.
 - B. Encourage the maintenance of the city's existing housing stock and the rehabilitation of deteriorating or substandard housing.
 - B-1. Continue efforts to improve the quality of rental housing in the city and to ensure that residents do not live in substandard, unsafe or unhealthy conditions by maintaining our rental registration and inspection programs, and strengthening our rental housing codes and ordinances.
 - B-2. Continue to offer municipal tax stabilization for major improvements to residential property and increase public awareness of this program.

- B-3. Support efforts and programs to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Barre City, particularly those focused on upgrades to rental and affordable housing.
 - C. Recognize that the city has a finite amount of open land suitable for residential development and encourage well-planned development that makes efficient use of this limited resource.
- 3. For Barre City to stabilize, protect and enhance the character of residential neighborhoods and the quality of life they provide for residents.**
- A. Ensure that infill development within existing neighborhoods will be harmonious with the scale, density and character of nearby homes.
 - B. Manage the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family or non-residential uses in order to minimize impacts on neighborhood character and quality of life.
 - C. Provide opportunities for small-scale, neighborhood-oriented shops and services within walking distance of most of the city's residential areas.
 - D. Maintain and improve playgrounds, greenspace and parks in the smaller neighborhoods.
 - E. Spur private investment in the preservation, renewal and renovation of homes and neighborhoods to avoid potential decline.
 - D-1. Monitor vacancies, rental inspection results and property maintenance/building code enforcement actions to direct revitalization efforts towards struggling neighborhoods.
- 4. For Barre City to have a more balanced and diverse housing stock, while remaining a community where working people can afford to buy or rent a home.**
- A. Maintain Barre City's role as community where residents working in the city and region can afford to buy or rent a home.
 - A-1. Encourage preservation of the city's existing supply of 'starter homes' and new home construction to serve the first-time homebuyer market.
 - A-2. Promote programs and strategies that provide assistance with housing costs for low- and moderate-income households.
 - A-3. Promote programs and strategies that help control rising housing costs.
 - B. Maintain a rate of homeownership in Barre City that results in at least 50% of properties in each neighborhood being owner-occupied.
 - B-1. Promote programs and strategies that provide assistance to current renters who are capable of and interested in buying a home.
 - B-2. Promote programs and strategies to encourage owner-occupied rental properties.
 - C. Promote residential development that responds to the needs of people across all the city's economic and social groups.

- C-1. Expand the housing choices available to buyers in Barre City to include options other than single-family detached homes (townhouses, row houses, condominium units in mixed-use buildings, etc.).
 - C-2. Allow for and encourage development of alternatives to fee-simple home ownership and for-profit rentals such as community land trusts, limited-equity condominiums and cooperatives.
 - C-3. Include housing units at a variety of price points within new residential developments and downtown mixed-use buildings.
 - C-4. Facilitate the integration of households with various incomes into all neighborhoods and the dispersal of affordable housing throughout the city.
- D. Maintain an adequate supply of housing that can provide those with limited means, disabilities or other special needs a safe, stable and healthy place to live.
- D-1. Offer residents an opportunity to live in economically and socially diverse neighborhoods.
 - D-2. Distribute housing targeted to a particular population group (elderly housing, subsidized housing, group homes, etc.) among the city's neighborhoods and avoid clustering such housing within any single neighborhood.
 - D-3. Encourage a more balanced distribution of affordable and special needs housing among Central Vermont municipalities.
 - D-4. Balance any loss of affordable housing due to downtown redevelopment and revitalization projects with creation of equivalent affordable units within new buildings and/or distributed around the city.
-

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

- 1. Undertake a study to document the occupancy of downtown buildings and recommend strategies to encourage use of upper floors for housing.**

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2022

Partners: Barre Partnership, City Assessment Department, City Planner, Planning Commission, Downstreet Housing

Notes: This study should include an inventory and assessment of the condition, use and occupancy of the upper floors of buildings in the downtown business district. Based on the

findings, recommendations should be developed to increase the utilization of upper floor space for housing.

2. Implement a pilot program that would assist with the purchase and management of owner-occupied rental properties in the city.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2023

Partners: Downstreet Housing; Capstone Community Action Council

Notes: Downstreet has indicated an interest in partnering with the city on a program that would help buyers purchase and manage owner-occupied rental properties. A new source of funding would need to be found to support the program as it would not be eligible under Downstreet's current funding streams.

3. Amend the city's Minimum Housing Code to incorporate stronger and more effective standards.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2023

Partners: City Planner, City Fire Department, Vermont Department of Health, Downstreet Housing, City Attorney, City Council

Notes: Barre City has a Minimum Housing Ordinance that could be further amended to strengthen the city's minimum housing standards. The current code is based on the HUD minimum standards. Consideration should be given to incorporating additional standards related to energy-efficiency and healthy living conditions. The Vermont Healthy Homes Program has produced a rating tool and reference manual that could be consulted, and Burlington's housing code could be used as a model.

4. Encourage home-sharing as a means of keeping larger single-family homes intact.

Status: No action to date.

Timing: 2021

Partners: City Planner, Downstreet Housing and Community Development; HomeShare Now

Notes: Encouraging home-sharing is one way to avoid conversion of larger homes to rental or multi-family units and would provide additional benefit of helping residents afford and invest in the older housing stock that was at one time prime single-family housing. Rental units within the neighborhoods have begun to depreciate neighboring homes and neighborhoods making them less desirable.

5. Consider implementing a Housing Preservation Loan Program to help with the repairs needed to homes in the City.

Status: No action to date.

Timing: 2020-2021

Partners: City Council, City Clerk/Treasurer, City Finance Director, City Planner

Notes: Montpelier’s Housing Preservation Loan Program could serve as a model guide to implementing something similar for Barre City.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

1. Percentage of Barre City households spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

Households that spend too much of their income on housing often find themselves unable to afford other necessities such as food, health care, transportation, child care, and clothing. The generally accepted rule of thumb is that housing expenses (including utilities and taxes) should constitute no more than 30% of household income. *Source: Vermont Housing Finance Agency’s Housing Data*

In 2010: 44%
In 2017: 48%
Target for 2025: 35%

2. Home ownership rate in Barre City. Home ownership provides many benefits including tax benefits, collateral for financial emergencies, and opportunities for wealth creation. Home ownership is associated with increased residential stability and creates incentives for personal investment in home maintenance, neighborhood improvement, and community involvement. *Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census*

In 2010: 43%
In 2017: 48%
Target for 2024: 50%

3. Percentage of rental housing in Barre City that is owner-occupied. Owner-occupied rental properties are less likely to have tenants that are disruptive to the neighborhood (noisy, disorderly conduct, criminal activity, trash accumulation) because the landlord lives nearby and will likely not want to live next to a bad neighbor. Owner-occupied rental properties can make home ownership more affordable both through the direct rental income and through various tax benefits. *Source: Barre City Grand List*

In 2010: 20%
In 2019: 23%
Target for 2025: 25%

- 4. Percentage of rental units in Barre City inspected and brought up to code each year.** Homes that are poorly designed, constructed or maintained can make residents sick. Homes with inadequate heating or ventilation can lead to the growth of mold and dust mites, resulting in asthma and respiratory allergies. Older homes may have lead-based paint that can cause lead poisoning, particularly in young children. The likelihood of physical hazards in a home is related to housing affordability. *Source: Barre City Fire Department*

In 2010: unknown

In 2018: 46%

Target for 2024: 75%

TRANSPORTATION

planning for the transportation system

Barre City recognizes that the city's transportation system contributes significantly to economic vitality and community well-being. To achieve our vision for a healthy future, Barre City needs a transportation system that enables all residents to conveniently and safely travel around the community, accessing homes, jobs, schools, parks, shopping and services.

The transportation system directly affects health through traffic accidents, air pollution, and reduced physical activity. It also has indirect impacts on health as a result of economic factors such as access to employment opportunities, transportation costs, and the vitality of the local economy. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity by providing access to land.

Barre City's transportation system is more than just roads. It includes:

- Sidewalks and paths traveled by pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Public transit;
- The rail line; and
- The connections between these modes of transport within the city and to transportation systems in the larger region.

Barre City has more potential for - and need for - effective and efficient transportation alternatives than most Vermont communities due to our relatively high density, compact development pattern and large percentage of residents who do not drive or own a vehicle.

key points

1. **Downtown Traffic.** Almost 17,000 vehicles per day travel on North Main Street, a large percentage of which is through traffic. Traffic creates both a significant challenge and potential opportunity for downtown revitalization efforts. The North Main Street Reconstruction Project from 2011 has improved both traffic flow and the appearance of the downtown streetscape. The project has mitigated some of the negative impacts of heavy traffic and created a more pedestrian-friendly downtown. This effort needs to be continued with the planned Merchants Row and the North Main to Summer Street projects.
2. **Downtown Parking.** The city is the principal provider of downtown parking with more than 500 parking spaces in several municipal lots in addition to on-street parking. Generally, Barre City has an ample supply of public parking, but improvements are needed to provide safe pedestrian access within parking lots, to maximize use of and direct drivers to available parking, and to make parking areas a more attractive part of our downtown. A more pedestrian-friendly downtown and near-downtown will also encourage people to park and walk from place-to-place, rather than driving to and parking at each destination.

3. **Pedestrians and Bicyclists.** There is demand for an improved sidewalk/path network in Barre City for pedestrians and bicyclists. Sidewalks and paths provide opportunities for exercise and a healthy, low-cost transportation alternative for those who cannot or choose not to drive. There are numerous challenges to overcome to construct sidewalks and paths including obtaining rights-of-way and securing funding. The city struggles to pay for the maintenance of existing sidewalks and paths, raising concerns about whether we should build more sidewalks and paths. The City has completed portions of the City Bike Path, and needs to finish those segments that will interconnect the completed ones.
4. **Public Transit.** Barre City has a large transit-dependent population – people who do not/cannot drive or do not own a vehicle – and many households that are burdened by increasing transportation costs. There are private taxi companies that operate within the City, as well as Uber and Lyft. While GMTA (Green Mountain Transit Authority) does provide public transit service in the city, a more robust public transit system is needed to fully meet the transportation needs of our residents. Improvements to the current public transit system could encourage more people to choose transit over driving to destinations within the city and region, thus reducing traffic and parking congestion. Expanding the number of people living or working downtown will expand the base of potential public transit riders, which should help support improved service in Barre City.
5. **Road Maintenance Costs.** Road maintenance costs consume a significant portion of the city’s budget. Road maintenance costs continue to rise with energy costs due to dependence on petroleum products (asphalt, vehicle fuel, etc.) making the challenge of keeping up with road maintenance needs more difficult for the city over time.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following transportation challenges and issues that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Facilities for Pedestrians and Bicyclists.** Barre City residents regularly identify improved walking and biking routes within the city and to neighboring communities as an important goal. However, given the city’s limited resources and other priorities, it continues to be a challenge to focus on this issue. The Semprebou bequest renewed efforts to complete the multi-use path between Barre City and Barre Town, and only certain segments have been constructed to date. If that project is successfully completed, it may spur further efforts to make the city a more walkable and bikeable place.
2. **Public Transit.** There is a recognized need to expand public transit service within the city, but additional city funding would likely be needed to improve public transit service. City residents and workers are currently limited in their transportation choices by public transit service location and frequency, and commuting destinations and distances. Through changes in land use, urban design, street design, and public transit services, our city can improve the viability of public transit service while also becoming more walkable and bikeable. Improving our public transit service by studying the impacts of rail service between Barre City and Montpelier would particularly benefit lower-income residents who are more heavily burdened by transportation costs and could expand their access to employment opportunities.

3. **Aging Infrastructure.** The City of Barre, like municipalities around the state and country, faces the challenge of aging infrastructure. With declining federal and state dollars available, the city will have to finance a larger share of the upgrade, replacement and repair costs. The cost-per-mile of repaving, other road repairs and regular road maintenance are significantly affected by rising energy costs. Unlike many communities, Barre City has recognized the need to address the issue of aging infrastructure. For more than two decades, the city has been engaged in an on-going street reconstruction program. The challenge in future years will be finding the funding needed to keep that program going at the level needed to keep the city's transportation infrastructure in adequate condition.
-

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already acted to address transportation issues, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Proximity and Quality of Interstate Access.** Route 62, a five-mile long, four-lane, limited-access state highway, provides a direct link between downtown Barre City and Interstate 89 at Exit 7. Route 63 is 3 ½ mile long three-lane, limited access state highway that also provides a direct link to Barre City from Exit 6.
2. **Highways.** Routes 14 and 302 bring many travelers into Barre City and bring many potential customers into our downtown. Traveling between downtown Barre City and Montpelier via Route 302 is a 20-minute trip, which made by more than 12,000 vehicles per day.
3. **Traffic.** While there is considerable traffic on North Main Street, downtown Barre City is less congested than most urban areas in Vermont. Vehicles flow with limited delay into and out of the city. Transportation studies have determined that none of our intersections will fail to meet level of service standards, even after City Place was constructed and approximately two hundred more people are working downtown. Except for the intersection in front of the library (Route 302, Route 14 and Elm Street), all other intersections in the city have a level of service of C or better, which is outstanding for an urban area.
4. **Public Parking.** There are more than 500 public parking spaces available downtown. The availability of public parking has allowed the city to eliminate on-site parking requirements for downtown businesses.
5. **Rail.** With rising fuel costs, the ability to ship and receive freight via rail is again becoming a competitive advantage and a factor that businesses will consider when selecting where to locate. Many of Barre City's industrial areas have direct rail access. In 2019, a grant was awarded to the City of Montpelier to study the use of the rail service between them and Barre City. This may conflict with the "granite train" that runs in Barre City delivering grout.
6. **Airport.** Downtown Barre City is four miles from a regional airport, the Edward F. Knapp State Airport just across the city line in Berlin.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following transportation goals and strategies in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

- 1. For Barre City to optimize and maintain its transportation infrastructure as needed to support economic vitality and quality of life in the city.**
 - A. Invest in improvements to transportation infrastructure needed to attract and retain businesses in the city.
 - B. Improve the appearance and function of existing arterial roads in the city.
- 2. For Barre City to accommodate future transportation needs primarily by improving the quality and use of existing infrastructure rather than by building additional infrastructure.**
 - A. Optimize existing traffic configurations and traffic lighting to provide for the efficient movement of existing and future vehicular traffic.
 - B. Promote and improve safe vehicular access with new development and redevelopment.
 - C. Incorporate Complete Street elements such as sidewalks, crosswalks and curb ramps into street reconstruction and repair projects.
- 3. For Barre City residents and workers to have viable alternatives to driving a personal vehicle to destinations within the city and region.**
 - A. Maintain current public transit service, and expand that service as warranted by demand and as can be sustained financially.
 - B. Maintain and improve the city's sidewalk network so more city residents can safely walk from their homes to jobs, schools, parks, shopping and services.
 - C. Complete construction of the planned bike path through the city.
- 4. For Barre City to provide a pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly environment.**
 - A. Maintain and construct new sidewalks that serve areas of existing or anticipated high volumes of pedestrian use.
 - B. Maintain neighborhood sidewalks within the financial constraints approved by the city voters.
 - C. Make improvements when streets are being repainted, repaired or reconstructed to better accommodate safe walking and biking throughout the city (ex. narrowing travel lanes/widening shoulders, bike lanes, sharrows (road marking in the bike lane), sidewalks, cross-walks, curb ramps, traffic calming, signage, etc.).

- D. Improve the connectivity of existing walking and biking routes.

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. Develop and adopt a Complete Streets policy.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2024

Partners: City Planner, City Engineer, Planning Commission, City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Council, Paths, Routes & Trails Committee

Notes: The website of the National Complete Streets Coalition provides information about developing a local Complete Streets policy and links to policies adopted by municipalities around the country. In Vermont, Montpelier, the City of Rutland and the City of Burlington have developed Complete Streets policies.

2. Investigate demand for and establish additional scheduled stops as needed along the City Route, City Commuter and Hospital Hill bus routes.

Status: Action has begun in 2018.

Timing: discussions and changes by GMTA have had them reviewing polices on off-route pick-ups, larger busses and added stops with additional shelters.

Partners: CVRPC, City Planner, Planning Commission, City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Council, GMTA

Notes: Opportunities to provide bus service to the high school should be explored, which could reduce downtown traffic generated by students driving or being driven to/from school. Attention should be given to the changes that GMTA is making, and the City should participate in their work.

3. Encourage and support Barre City Elementary and Middle School's (BCEMS) involvement in the Safe Routes to School program.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2022.

Partners: BCEMS, City Planning Commission, City Planner, City Engineer, City Council

Notes: This state/federal program helps to generate enthusiasm around biking/walking to school and can provide financial resources to improve city infrastructure. More information is available online at <http://saferoutes.vermont.gov>.

4. Identify and take appropriate action with regard to paper streets, particularly those that are limiting the use and development of otherwise suitable lots.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Planner, City Engineer, City Attorney, City Council, Paths, Routes & Trails Committee

Notes: Paper streets are strips of land that were designated for use as a street when a subdivision was initially laid out, but the street was never constructed as planned. The ownership of some of these strips has become uncertain over time. This limits the ability of adjoining land to be developed because the city cannot grant the right to install a street or infrastructure on the strip of land (as originally intended) without the approval of the owner. The city would need to identify the owners of paper streets or institute a legal process to municipal ownership of these strips if no owner can be determined to facilitate development of the adjoining land.

5. Develop and adopt road standards.

Status: The city has a set of road standards, but have not been formally adopted and are very old.

Timing: 2024

Partners: City Engineer, City Planner, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Council

Notes: Having an adopted set of road standards would enable the city to qualify for transportation grants. The existing set of road standards should be reviewed to assure that new roads will be accessible to emergency vehicles and that they will incorporate appropriate stormwater infrastructure before being formally adopted. All street segments in Barre City should be classified as arterial, connector or neighborhood streets, and adopted standards for each classification should reflect the appropriate planned usage as described in Section 3. This will also entail revisiting the Streets and Sidewalks Ordinance. This project should take into consideration National Association of City Transportation Officials design guides.

6. Complete a citywide Pedestrian Environment Quality Index (PEQI) and Complete Streets assessment.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2021

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, Paths, Routes & Trails Committee, City Council

Notes: More information about conducting a PEQI assessment is available from the UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at www.peqiwalkability.appspot.com . There are a number of Complete Streets assessment tools available and examples of assessments completed in communities around the country. Trained volunteers can conduct these assessments, which examine both the physical infrastructure available to pedestrians and whether the overall environment is safe and pedestrian-friendly.

7. Review access management¹ provisions in the city’s land use regulations and update as needed.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Council

Notes: Vermont Agency of Transportation has published an Access Management Guidebook and Best Practices document that include recommended access management provisions. This could be incorporated into the revision of the city’s commercial and industrial zoning districts recommended in the land use chapter.

8. Develop a citywide long-range bicycle and pedestrian plan.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2024

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, Paths, Routes & Trails Committee, City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Council

Notes: This could build upon the bike path planning work already completed, as well as the PEQI and Complete Streets assessments recommended above. The plan would be tool to help the city prioritize bike and pedestrian improvements, and to coordinate small sidewalk or path projects into an interconnected system that would be completed over time.

9. Complete construction of the bike path through the city.

Status: Final engineering for the path is on-going.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Engineer, City Planner, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Council

Notes: Supported by the Semprebon funding, the city should come up with a schedule to complete the Depot-to-Museum segment and the Depot-to-Barre Town segment by 2022.

¹ Access Management is utilizing tools and techniques to manage vehicular access to businesses, homes and other land uses without sacrificing safety and efficiency.

10. Re-engineer the railroad trestle on Vanetti Place to mitigate flood hazards.

Status: No action has been taken to date.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Planner, VTrans, City Council

Notes: This project falls to the responsibility of VTrans. The railroad is using this bridge for the use by the granite train, and city departments have made arrangements to regularly inspect the trestle for debris buildup.

11. Construct Barre's first traffic circle.

Status: No action has been taken to date

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Engineer, Transportation Advisory Committee, City Planner, VTrans

Notes: This project will be considered a text for replacing further uncontrolled or signaled intersections with traffic circles. Candidate locations include Washington and Hill Streets, or North Main and Berlin Streets. Traffic circles should always be considered as a lower maintenance alternative to a signaled intersection.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

1. **Miles of sidewalk in Barre City.** Walking contributes to minimum requirements for physical activity, does not contribute to noise or air pollution emissions, and reduces transportation energy consumption and costs. A vibrant pedestrian environment contributes to economic vitality and social interaction within the community. *Source: Barre City GIS Mapping*

In 2010: 22

Target for 2024: 25

2. **Miles of multi-use paths in Barre City.** A multi-use path network can help encourage people to increase their daily activity by providing a convenient and appealing place to walk or bike that is separated from vehicles and that can provide a safer, quieter and more relaxing environment. *Source: Barre City GIS Mapping*

In 2010: <1

In 2019: 0.3 miles

Target for 2023: 4

- 3. Percentage of Barre City residents who walk, bike or take transit to work.** Environments that support walking, biking and transit trips as an alternative to driving have multiple potential positive health impacts. Studies have shown that around 30% of people using transit to get to work meet their daily requirements for physical activity from walking between destinations and transit stops. *Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey*

In 2010: 5%
In 2017: 13%
Target for 2023: 20%

PUBLIC UTILITIES

planning for public utilities

Public utilities greatly affect the city's economic vitality, our residents' health and quality of life. To achieve our vision of a healthy future, Barre City needs a system of public utilities that is reliable and well maintained, that has affordable rates, and that is capable of supporting growth.

The pipes and wires that run beneath city streets, inside building walls and overhead provide the basic necessities of modern life – clean drinking water, sanitation, electric power and communications. The city is directly responsible for providing some public utilities, while utility and private companies or regional entities provide other services. While the city no longer directly provides solid waste facilities, it is still involved in planning how that essential service is provided in the region and where any future solid waste facilities may be located.

A large part of the city's role as a utility provider relates to managing water. An adequate supply of potable water is one of our most basic needs with every person requiring two liters of clean drinking water each day. Sanitary sewers that properly collect and treat wastewater are essential for protecting the health of all city residents and the natural environment to which our wastewater is returned. Stormwater also needs to be effectively managed to prevent flooding hazards and pollution. Collecting, processing and pumping water are energy intensive activities, which result in both financial and environmental costs.

key points

1. **Aging Infrastructure.** Barre City has a well-developed system of public utilities with public water, public sewer, electric and broadband telecommunications services available throughout the city. Some components of these systems, however, are aging and need to be replaced and/or upgraded to modern standards. With little state or federal financial assistance for infrastructure projects, the city and utility providers look primarily to rate payers to fund needed improvements, requiring a careful balance between the goals of maintaining quality service and affordable rates for customers.
2. **Capacity to Support Growth.** Barre City's water and wastewater systems have capacity available to support growth and development. The water filtration plant is operating at less than one-third of its capacity and the wastewater treatment facility is operating at less than three-quarters of its capacity. This infrastructure capacity provides the city with an advantage over other communities in the area that do not have further capacity to support growth.
3. **Stormwater.** Barre City's storm drainage infrastructure is less developed than municipal water and wastewater systems and will likely need to be expanded over time. To continue efforts to minimize flooding damage and improve water quality, the city will likely need to construct additional infrastructure to collect, treat and manage the discharge of stormwater. The completed North Main Street Reconstruction project addressed a number of stormwater problems in downtown Barre City. The city's hazard mitigation plan identifies a number of

additional infrastructure improvement projects that would improve stormwater management and reduce flood hazards.

4. **Telecommunications.** Access to state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure is critical to the city's future economic success. Just as Barre City needed a connection to the railroad to spur industrial development in the late 1800's, today the city needs to be connected to the digital information networks that are the catalysts for economic development in the 21st century. Barre City has complete broadband service, but given the rapid pace of change in the telecommunications sector, the city will need to remain vigilant to ensure infrastructure is upgraded as technology evolves and to improve the ability of all city residents to use and have affordable access to these technologies. CV Fiber is a non-profit organization made up of 16 Central Vermont towns, including Barre City whose goal is to get fast, dependable and affordable internet to every single person in our community. They are in the planning stages for initial deployment that will include a targeted deployment location.
5. **Solid Waste.** On average every Vermont resident currently generates one ton of waste per year, two-thirds of which is landfilled either in state or out of state. Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) has adopted a goal of working to achieve "zero waste" in our district. The "zero waste" goal should help create new businesses and jobs through waste-based economic development, strengthen existing businesses, and protect public health and the environment. By the end of the next decade, we anticipate that a much larger percentage of our waste will be reused, recycled, composted or otherwise diverted from the waste stream.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following challenges and issues related to our public utilities that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Water and Wastewater Infrastructure.** Barre City's drinking water and wastewater treatment plants are modern, but our distribution system still has some pipes that more than 90 years old. The city is actively working to upgrade the distribution system, but it will take time and sustained funding to modernize underground pipes throughout the city. The city has identified approximately \$2.5 million worth of improvements needed to the water transmission and distribution system, and \$8 million in improvements to the wastewater collection system. Most of these projects have been planned for at least a decade.
2. **Safe Drinking Water.** Barre City's water supply is an open reservoir in the Town of Orange, which is susceptible to contamination whether accidental or intentional. While there have never been any contamination problems, there have been incidents that could have caused contamination such as a plane that landed on the reservoir and a car that crashed into it.
3. **Stormwater Infrastructure.** Similar to the water and wastewater distribution system, much of the city's stormwater infrastructure was built prior to modern engineering standards. The pipes and culverts designed to transport stormwater out of the city are undersized in many places. Much of the flooding damage that has occurred in recent years is related to the inability of the stormwater system to handle the amount of run-off being generated. There are nearly \$1 million in stormwater-related projects included on the city's list of planned infrastructure improvements.

4. **Stormwater Management.** During the 2000's, federal and state stormwater regulations became more stringent and were applied to smaller development projects. More communities around the country are establishing stormwater management utilities, whereby property owners pay a fee to the municipality based on the amount of additional runoff from their site in return for the municipality taking responsibility for maintaining and/or providing a stormwater management system. The city may need to consider establishing a stormwater management utility fee if the costs for complying with stormwater regulations exceed the ability to fund required improvements through regular property taxes, or if meeting state and federal regulations becomes too burdensome for individual property owners and coordinated action is required. Alternatively, the city can use various regulatory techniques to help reduce stormwater run-off such as requiring development to limit new or reduce existing impervious surfaces.
5. **Landfill Siting.** The possibility of the need to site a new landfill in the region is always a matter of concern, although the only landfill in Vermont was granted an expansion in 2019. The city was satisfied with CVSWMD's 2005 landfill siting criteria and it is the city's policy that the criteria requirements should not be made any less stringent in the future. Further, it is the city's position that when reviewing a proposed landfill site, the impact of additional vehicles hauling regional waste on Barre City's arterial roads should be closely evaluated. Route 302, which serves as a major arterial through Barre City runs through the downtown business district. Downtown already suffers from the problems associated with truck traffic and additional truck traffic resulting from a regional landfill should not travel through downtown on a regular basis. In addition, Route 14 runs mostly through high-density residential areas and is also not suitable for the amount of additional truck traffic that could be generated by a regional landfill.
6. **Yard Waste.** Barre City residents have the ability to utilize the special yard waste days set aside for disposal of yard waste (grass clippings, branches, leaves, etc.) in Barre Town, and the City trucks will pick up the remaining piles left at the ends of driveways after the last day of the planned events. Some residents continue to dispose of their yard waste by dumping it over a river bank or on nearby undeveloped land. The resulting debris left in drainage ways has and will continue to become a hazard during storms as it can create blockages that lead to flooding of nearby property when water cannot flow through a channel. Yard waste can become a potential resource if properly collected, and then composted or chipped.
7. **Property Maintenance.** Barre City has increased its enforcement of property maintenance ordinances in recent years. The result has been a noticeable decrease in the number of properties where trash, junk vehicles and vehicle parts, appliances, furniture and similar household items have accumulated, creating unsightly, unsanitary and unsafe conditions for residents and neighbors. Continued enforcement of property maintenance ordinances and providing convenient, affordable options for proper disposal of large household items will be needed to keep this problem in check.

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already acted to improve our public utilities, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Capacity to Support Growth.** Barre City’s water and wastewater systems have excess capacity available to support growth and development. The city is currently using less than one-third of the capacity of the water filtration plant and the wastewater treatment facility is operating at less than three-quarters of its capacity. There is also three-phase power throughout downtown and in many other parts of the city. This infrastructure capacity provides the city with an advantage over other communities in the area in attracting new businesses. The economic development implications of extending infrastructure further outside the city or selling additional capacity to outlying towns should be carefully considered.
2. **Upgraded Infrastructure.** Unlike many communities, Barre City has recognized the need to address the issue of aging infrastructure. The city has spent the past decade upgrading our water and sewer distribution system. This effort has been coordinated with the street reconstruction program so that old pipes are upgraded at the same time as the street – an efficient and cost-effective approach that avoids digging up a new street in order to repair an old pipe. The challenge in future years will be finding the funding to keep this program going at the level needed to keep our infrastructure in adequate condition. In recent years, the city has invested more than \$7 million in our water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer systems.
3. **Phosphorus Removal.** The city’s treated wastewater effluent is released into the Steven’s Branch, which is part of the Lake Champlain watershed. There is a cap on how much phosphorus the wastewater treatment plants within the watershed are allowed to send into the lake. The Barre City wastewater treatment plant has been upgraded to improve its ability to remove phosphorus from the effluent and is currently discharging less than 25% of its limit, providing ample capacity to accommodate growth.
4. **Well-Mapped and Inventoried Utilities.** Barre City has also mapped and inventoried underground infrastructure more accurately and completely than most communities. This information allows for more efficient repairs when a line breaks or other problem occurs, and it improves our ability to effectively plan for improvements to the distribution systems.
5. **Source Water Protection Plan.** Barre City has a Source Water Protection Plan and inventories the properties adjoining the reservoir that provides the city’s drinking water every three years to prevent potential contamination.
6. **Waste-Based Economic Development.** ReSOURCE completed a project to restore the historic granite shed at 30 Granite Street, and is an example of waste-based economic development and adaptive reuse of the city’s industrial buildings. The project’s retail component, the ReSTORE which opened in December 2008, is a reuse operation offering household goods, appliances, building materials, and art supplies. The former granite shed serves as a learning site for at-risk youth and unemployed workers called youthBuild, provides creative materials for artists and educators, and give families in crisis access to basic household goods and services.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following goals and strategies for public utilities in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **For Barre City’s Public Works Department to provide business and residential customers with reliable and affordable utilities services as needed to support economic vitality and quality of life in the city.**
 - A. Maintain public water and sewage systems that meet state and federal standards, and that support the city’s goals for economic and residential growth.
 - A-1. Continue upgrading aging water and sewer pipes in coordination with the city’s street reconstruction program.
 - B. Continue to actively pursue a new Public Works Facility.
 - C. Continue efforts to improve stormwater drainage infrastructure within the city.
 - C-1. Adopt a policy to guide the sizing of culverts to ensure that new or replacement infrastructure will be better able to carry stormwater out of the city during heavy storms.
 - C-2. Implement the stormwater improvements identified in the city’s hazard mitigation plan.
 - D. Continue to actively participate in the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District and advocate for regional solid waste management practices, policies and facilities that will benefit Barre City residents and business.
 - D-1. Support CVSWMD’s “zero waste” goal and assist in its implementation.
 - D-2. Oppose solid waste projects that would re-direct more of the region’s waste hauling truck traffic through the city’s downtown business district or residential neighborhoods.
 - D-3. Review the regional Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) each time it is revised and re-adopted.
-

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Prepare and adopt a Capital Improvement Program, which would incorporate the capital improvements needed by city-owned utilities into a municipal capital planning and budgeting process that would include all city departments/services.**

Status: A Plan for city vehicles is currently managed through the City.

Timing: 2021

Partners: City Finance Director, City Manager, City Planner, Planning Commission, Department Heads, Council

Notes: The city could apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to prepare a capital plan & budget.

2. Install guard rails around the city’s reservoir.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2025

Partners: City Engineer, City Manager, City Council

Notes: This project is listed in the city’s 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan as a low priority action. It may be eligible for partial funding from the EPA.

3. Pursue further waste-based economic development, expanding and building upon the success of ReSOURCE’s project at 30 Granite Street.

Status: The solid waste district’s “zero waste” policy and Act 148, which established universal recycling and composting statewide, create an opportunity for economic growth in this sector.

Timing: Work currently underway and continuing in subsequent years.

Partners: City Manager, City Planner, Barre Area Economic Development

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

- 1. Annual number of water quality violations.** The quality of drinking-water is a critical determinant of health. Clean drinking water is a foundation for the prevention and control of waterborne diseases. *Source: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division*

In 2010: 1
Target for 2025: 0

- 2. Annual number of sewer overflows.** Untreated sewage carries pathogens that can be spread to surface waters, drinking water supplies and swimming areas. It can also kill aquatic life and create algal blooms. *Source: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Wastewater Section*

In 2010: 1
In 2011: 1
In 2015: 1
In 2016: 2
Target for 2021 and beyond: 0

energy planning

Barre City recognizes that energy is a critical building block for the health and well-being of our community and residents. To achieve our vision of a healthy future, Barre City needs access to reliable, affordable and clean sources of energy.

While energy is an issue with a global scope, many of our choices and decisions at the individual and community level affect how energy is consumed and generated. Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions usually have other benefits. For example, strategies to reduce the number of vehicle miles driven will likely result in increased physical activity, better air quality, and fewer vehicle collisions as people drive less and increasingly walk, bike or take public transit for transportation.

As the cost of energy continues to rise and the effects of climate change are being felt, the need for effective planning and policies becomes more evident. Energy costs are consuming an ever-expanding portion of household, business and government budgets. Rising energy costs are especially problematic for low-income and fixed-income households.

The largest percentage of the energy used by households is for transportation, and there is a lot we can do at the local level to reduce that demand. Another significant percentage of energy use goes to heat and cool buildings, and again this is an area where city actions and policies can make a difference. Electricity is the third principal component of household energy use and our individual choices can greatly affect energy consumption in this sector.

key points

1. **Municipal Energy Use.** Barre City could realize multiple benefits through greater energy efficiency and conservation in municipal operations. Energy costs, which are anticipated to continue increasing, are a significant component of the city budget and reducing those costs would be a direct savings to taxpayers.
2. **Home Energy Use.** The energy used to heat, cool and power our homes accounts for about one-third of the energy consumed in Vermont. About 45% of that energy is provided by electricity, 45% comes from fossil fuels, and 10% is from renewable sources. Home energy can also account for a substantial portion of a household's budget, especially for low- and moderate-income households. Most homes in Barre City are not that energy-efficient and need weatherization and other efficiency improvements to make them healthier, more comfortable and more affordable places to live. Of particular concern are the many rental properties in the city where the tenant might pay separately for heat. Landlords have very little financial incentive to invest in efficiency upgrades for these buildings.
3. **Transportation Energy Use.** The transportation sector consumes another third of the energy used in Vermont and is also a major component of most household budgets. Virtually all the energy used in this sector is from fossil fuels, the price of which continues to fluctuate. Unlike

most places in Vermont, it is possible to live in Barre City without a car because our homes, shops, services, schools and employment are in close proximity and there is public transit service. Improving transit service, making the city a better place to walk and bike, and increasing the number of people living and working downtown, will further reduce the amount of energy used for and dollars spent on transportation by city residents.

4. **Commercial and Industrial Energy Use.** The final third of energy used in Vermont powers commercial and industrial activities. Around 65% of energy businesses use is from electricity, 35% is from fossil fuels and 5% is from renewable sources.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following energy challenges and issues that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **City Codes and Regulations.** For many years, energy efficiency has been seen as a desirable goal and a laudable personal choice, but not something that should be mandated by government. As a result, the city has done little to require property owners or developers to increase the energy efficiency of the city's building stock.
2. **Age and Condition of Homes.** More than half of the homes in Barre City were built before 1940 and many need improvements to make them more energy efficient. A household that can afford to purchase a home in Barre City may not be able to afford further investment in substantial improvements to make the building energy efficient even though doing so would save them money over the long-term. The PACE district, if implemented, could provide a more affordable option for homeowners who want to make efficiency upgrades. There are also a number of programs available to assist income-eligible homeowners with weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades.
3. **Efficiency of Rental Housing.** If tenants pay for their own heat, there is little incentive for landlords to invest in energy efficiency improvements. This is particularly a concern when units are rented to low-income households who cannot afford to adequately heat their home. If households living in inefficient units qualify for home heating assistance, scarce public resources are being spent inefficiently. Given that the demand for home heating assistance is significantly greater than the availability of funding, improving the energy efficiency of these residences is a high priority.
4. **Efficiency of Municipal Facilities.** Energy audits have been completed at most municipal facilities and many improvements are needed to increase their efficiency, this includes City Hall, the BOR Facility and Auditorium, public works facilities, Barre Area Senior Center building, and others. Reducing the cost of operating these facilities could increase funding available for direct services, programs, projects and other improvements recommended throughout this plan. Over the long-term, it will also save taxpayers from ever-increasing energy bills.

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already taken action on energy issues, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Tax Stabilization.** Barre City offers tax stabilization to both residential and non-residential property owners who make significant investments in their buildings, including energy efficiency improvements.
2. **PACE District.** Barre City voters approved a PACE District in 2012, but the city has not fully implemented the program. The PACE program is intended to help homeowners make energy improvements by providing loans that will be paid off by the participating property owner through a special assessment tax over a period of up to 20 years. Non-participating property owners will have no obligation to pay for any of the costs of the PACE district.
3. **Density.** People living and working in Barre City can be less dependent on personal vehicles and can choose more energy-efficient means of transportation (public transit, walking, biking) because of the city's higher density and the proximity of homes to employment and services as compared to surrounding rural towns.
4. **Availability of Services and Resources.** Barre City hosts a number of organizations and businesses that provide energy efficiency services and resources to the community. The Barre City Energy Committee has been working diligently on energy savings awareness, from workshops throughout the fall and winter, and participating in Efficiency Vermont's Button-Up series for the public. And, Efficiency Vermont has assigned a region coordinator to the City for various forms of assistance.
5. **Municipal Energy Savings.** Barre City has completed energy audits for a number of municipal facilities and plans to schedule the recommended improvements. The city has not completed installation of new boilers at Alumni Hall based on results from a blower test; and new high efficiency boilers have been replaced at City Hall. And, all streetlights were inventoried and LED lighting is installed in them.
6. **Vermont Energy Codes.** The Vermont Public Service Department created the Residential Building Energy Code, and the Commercial Building Energy Code in March of 2015, that requires new construction, as well as modifications to buildings, to meet certain codes, and file a certificate with the municipality stating codes were met.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following energy goals and strategies in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **For Barre City government, businesses and residents to have a reduced dependence on nonrenewable and imported energy sources, while continuing to have access to reliable and affordable energy sources.**

- A. Practice and incorporate energy conservation and use of renewable energy within city operations.
 - A-1. Continue to implement the recommendations of the energy audits of city-owned buildings.
 - A-2. Explore opportunities to generate renewable power at city-owned facilities and sites.
 - A-3. Consider the lifecycle cost (purchase + operation) of city vehicles when making purchasing and replacement decisions.
 - A-4. Consider alternative fuel vehicles when making purchase and replacement decisions for city vehicles.
 - A-5. Make energy efficiency one of the decision-making criteria within a comprehensive capital improvement program.
 - A-6. Reduce the amount of energy consumed and tax dollars spent on street lighting, while continuing to maintain the light levels needed for public and traffic safety.
 - B. Promote increased use of alternative fuel vehicles, public transit use, ride sharing, bicycling and walking to reduce energy consumed for transportation.
 - B-1. Continue incorporating electric vehicle charging stations into planned improvements to city-owned parking lots and facilities.
 - B-2. Develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan as recommended in the Transportation chapter of this plan.
 - B-3. Increase the number of public transit stops and routes in Barre City as recommended in the Transportation chapter of this plan.
 - B-4. Consider establishing an incentive program for city employees who regularly carpool, take public transit, walk or bike to work.
 - C. Promote the transportation energy savings associated with locating homes and businesses in Barre City – a compact, high-density, walkable urban center with public transit service – as compared to outlying rural towns.
 - C-1. Increase awareness and requirements of the state Residential and Commercial energy codes when zoning and building permits are applied for.
 - D. Support mixed-use development, which reduces energy consumed for transportation, by providing housing in close proximity to services and employment.
- 2. For new buildings in Barre City to be highly energy efficient and for improvements to be made to increase the energy efficiency, and lower the operating costs, of our existing building stock.**

- A. Increase awareness and use of the city’s tax stabilization programs as a means to encourage both commercial/industrial and residential building owners to make energy efficiency improvements.
 - C. Implement the voter-approved Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program in Barre City.
 - D. Explore the feasibility of providing district heating in downtown Barre City.
-

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. Continue the support of the Barre City Energy Committee (BCEC) to coordinate the city’s energy planning, efficiency, conservation and generation efforts.

Status: Ongoing.

Timing: Ongoing.

Partners: BCEC, City Manager, City Council

Notes: One of the main tasks of the city’s energy committee is and has been to increase residents’ awareness of the technical assistance and funding already available through Efficiency Vermont and other programs to audit, weatherize and otherwise improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings in the city.

2. Schedule and continue to complete energy efficiency upgrades to city-owned buildings.

Status: Energy audits have been completed at most city-owned buildings. The recommended energy efficiency upgrades need to be prioritized and scheduled.

Timing: Schedule completed in 2013 with projects underway in subsequent years.

Partners: City Manager, City Council

Notes: Energy efficiency upgrades to city facilities should be incorporated into the comprehensive Capital Improvement Program recommended in the Utilities chapter of this plan.

3. Consider implementing the voter-approved Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program.

Status: City voters approved creation of a PACE District in 2012.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Manager, City Council, BCEC

Notes: Following 2011 legislative changes, the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation issued updated guidelines for PACE Districts in April 2012 that address many of the uncertainties associated with and questions raised by the Federal Housing Finance Agency about this program. Efficiency Vermont is now able to administer a PACE program on behalf of a municipality with the associated fee borne by program participants.

4. Adopt energy-efficiency standards for rental units, particularly those that do not include heat as part of the rent.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2023

Partners: BCEC, Fire Department, City Planner, City Manager, City Council, Capstone Community Action Council

Notes: City of Burlington’s Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Ordinance is an example of such an ordinance. This task could be incorporated into the broader revisions to the minimum housing code recommended in the Housing chapter.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

1. **Per capita electricity consumption in Barre City.** Energy conservation reduces air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the pollution associated with production and transport of energy sources like oil and coal. *Source: Vermont Energy Action Network Dashboard*

In 2010: Approximately 3,400 kWh
In 2019: approximately 4,230 kWh
Target for 2022: 3,200 kWh

2. **City government annual energy consumption.** Many municipal operations are energy-intensive and municipal facilities are inefficient. Energy costs are rising and are expected to continue to increase for the foreseeable future. The city could realize significant long-term savings by acting now to reduce energy consumption. *Source: Vermont Energy Action Network Dashboard*

In 2010: Unknown
In 2018: 2,215,778 kWh
Target for 2025: 20% reduction from 2018

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND AMENITIES

planning for community services & amenities

Barre City understands that community services and amenities are necessary to maintain the health and well-being of our neighborhoods and residents. Demand for community services and amenities and the level of civic engagement is greatly affected by our city's demographics such as the age, income, health and education of city residents. To achieve our vision for a healthy future, Barre City needs to provide the community services and amenities that foster an attractive quality of life without placing an excessive burden on taxpayers.

Protecting public health, safety and welfare is a basic role of government. The City of Barre fulfills that role through the provision of public services like police, fire, EMS, road maintenance, code enforcement and emergency/disaster response. Residents also look to city government to directly provide or contribute funding for services that enrich our daily lives such as parks and recreation programs, schools and educational opportunities, library, arts, cultural and historical amenities, and social and human services. City government also has a responsibility to keep residents well informed about community issues, invite all residents to participate and express their views, and make decisions that affect all of our lives in an open and transparent way.

key points

1. **Cost of City Government.** The cost of running city government has been increasing above the rate of inflation. Such growth in our municipal budget cannot be sustained without corresponding growth in the city's tax base. Yet, we are unlikely to be successful in our economic development and revitalization efforts, which are necessary to expand the tax base, if we cannot provide the municipal services needed to support growth. Keeping the cost of city government at a reasonable level while taking the steps needed to improve municipal facilities and services is a critical challenge for Barre City.
2. **Demographics.** Barre City has a disproportionately high number of residents who rely on various community services as compared to surrounding towns. This includes seniors, people with disabilities, people without permanent housing, released offenders, refugees/immigrants and others. The resulting higher demand is a particular concern for those services that are primarily funded by local taxpayers - police, EMS and schools. Barre City also has a more transient population than most Vermont communities with people moving in and out of the city, and moving from place-to-place within the city, which creates further challenges to providing community services, communicating with city residents and fostering civic engagement.
3. **Public Safety.** Despite perceptions to the contrary, Barre City is generally a safe community. The city's crime rate is similar to other urban communities in Vermont like Brattleboro, Montpelier, Newport and St. Johnsbury, and is lower than the crime rate in Burlington, Rutland and Winooski. According to the 2010 Vermont Crime Report, 80% of reported crimes were against property, primarily theft and vandalism.

4. **Police Department.** Barre City has a municipal police department that included 18 full-time and 12 part-time officers and seven dispatchers in 2018. The police are managed by a Police Chief. The department's operating budget in FY2018 was almost \$2.3 million, which included \$1.6 million in salaries and \$365,000 in overtime pay. The Barre City Police Department responded to about 10,471 calls in FY2018.
5. **Fire and EMS.** Barre City has a municipal fire and emergency medical service (EMS) department consisting of 18 full-time responders and approximately 20 part-time personnel. The department's operating budget in FY 2018 was \$1.8 million, which included \$1.16 million in salaries and \$271,000 in overtime. The department responded to 528 fire calls and 1,990 EMS calls in FY2018.
6. **Recreation.** Barre City has a municipal Recreation Department, which is responsible for the operation of the city's parks and recreation facilities, and for offering a variety of year-round recreation programs for residents of all ages. The department's operating budget in FY 2018 was \$90,000 with an additional \$208,000 spent operating the BOR Facility. The city's Facilities Department and the Cemeteries and Parks Department maintain the recreation areas and parks. As a result of contributions from the Semprebon Fund, a number of playgrounds throughout the city have been upgraded with new equipment and other improvements in recent years.
7. **Library.** The Aldrich Public Library sits in a prominent downtown location across from City Hall Park. While an independent nonprofit organization, Aldrich Library relies upon the city and town for a significant portion of its annual operating budget. The city appropriated \$207,000 for the library in FY2018. Between the City and the Town members, 88,659 books and materials were checked out, 441 programs were offered, and computer usage total was 48,217 times.
8. **History and Culture.** Barre City has a wealth of historic and cultural assets that express our community's unique heritage. There are two National Register Historic Districts in the city, as well as a number of individually listed sites and buildings. Our downtown is home to a number of culture and arts institutions including the Barre City Opera House, Studio Place Arts and the Vermont History Center. Throughout our community are reminders of our granite heritage including the impressive granite monuments in parks and cemeteries, the Old Socialist Labor Party Hall and the Vermont Granite Museum.
9. **Schools.** Barre City has an elementary and middle school, which serves students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Enrollment in 2018 averaged 880 students. City students in grades 9 through 12 attend Spaulding High School along with students from Barre Town. Total high school enrollment in 2018 averaged 740 students. The Barre Technical Center, co-located with Spaulding High School, offers hands-on career training programs for high school students and adults from throughout Washington County.
10. **Childcare.** There were six (6) licensed daycare centers/programs and sixteen (16) registered home daycare providers located in Barre City in June of 2019; The licensed daycare providers were reporting fewer than 10 vacancies out of a total capacity for 207 children; while the home daycare providers could have accommodated less than 20 additional children, out of 152 in total. Parents in Barre City seeking a childcare provider or related assistance can contact Child Care Support Services at the Family Center, go to <http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us/>.

11. **Seniors.** Barre City has a large population of seniors and is a regional provider of senior housing with approximately 200 units. About 16% of Washington County residents age 74 or older live in Barre City and those residents account for 11% of the city's total population. There are a number of organizations based in the city and neighboring communities that provide services to seniors. There is a Senior Center based in the E.F. Wall Complex on S. Main Street.
12. **Healthcare.** Barre City residents can access a range of healthcare services within the city and neighboring communities including Central Vermont Medical Center (CVMC), the People's Health and Wellness Clinic and Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice, as well as a number of private healthcare practitioners.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following challenges and issues that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Cost of City Government.** In FY 2018, Barre City's general fund budget was \$11.5 million, nearly \$8.7 million of which was raised through taxes. Barre City has not significantly expanded city services and has had to cut some programs completely in an effort to curb increases. Providing the same level of city services and facilities is simply becoming more expensive each year, and as described elsewhere in this plan there are needs and demands for improved community services, facilities and amenities in Barre City that will be difficult to fund with the current tax base and economic climate.
2. **Schools.** Barre City's school system faces a number of challenges related to the community's demographics including high poverty rates, a more transient population with students moving in and out of the district, and high rates of special needs students. Like others around Vermont, our school system struggles to contain the cost of education while providing necessary services.
3. **Emergency Planning and Hazard Mitigation.** The floods that struck the city and state in 2015 and 2017 provided ample evidence of the critical need for city government, businesses and residents to be prepared for natural disasters. The city became more disaster resistant by implementing and completing the hazard mitigation work around the Harrington Avenue area, and continues to be cognizant of the risk and consequences of potential disasters, and mitigate potential hazards in order to protect life and property.
4. **Recreation Programs and Facilities.** The Recreation Department devotes a substantial percentage of its staff time to administrative activities that include all aspects of scheduling, contracting and invoicing for use of the Alumni Hall and the BOR Facility. Without additional staffing for the department, there is limited ability to expand recreation programming. The department sees a need for better communication with city residents to increase awareness of recreation facilities and programs, and for more residents to help with improving neighborhood parks and running recreation programs. The department also believes that there are a significant number of children that would like to participate in the summer youth program based at Rotary Park and the use of the City pool, but who do not have a way to get there. Transportation to the park would enable more of the children who could benefit the most from the structured activities, educational opportunities and meal program to participate.

5. **Childcare.** Barre City residents and workers face the same childcare issues faced by families across the state – finding convenient, affordable, quality childcare. It is an ongoing challenge to attract and retain qualified personnel and programs in the childcare industry while keeping the cost of care affordable for working parents. The vacancy rates among childcare providers in the city is consistently low. The Family Center’s Child Care Support Services works to overcome this challenge by offering assistance to both parents and providers.
6. **Senior Transportation.** Older residents compose a large segment of Barre City residents who do not drive. GMTA helps to meet the transit needs of these residents by providing bus service from the senior housing complexes in Barre City to shopping and healthcare destinations on a daily basis. Other social service agencies and organizations provide transportation services to seniors as well. However, there remains a need for improved transportation options for older city residents who do not or would prefer not to drive. A local “Senior Bus” could meet some of those needs and transport seniors to social events and activities in the city and around the region. Currently, the Barre Area Senior Center contracts with a tour bus company when it organizes trips. With access to a local bus, the center would be able to schedule more activities for its members.
7. **Special Needs Population.** Barre City provides housing for a significant population of people under the supervision of the state Department of Corrections (parolees and furlougees) and under the care of Washington County Mental Health. The region’s primary homeless shelter is located in Barre City, as well as a large percentage of the region’s most affordable housing. Having a disproportionately large special needs population living in the city is placing a strain on public services - the police, EMS, school system, etc. - and increasing costs for all city taxpayers. The city is strongly advocating for regional and state actions that would more equitably share the cost and responsibility of housing and caring for residents with special needs, rather than placing most of the burden on just a few municipalities around the state.
8. **Information Technology and Telecommunications.** Barre City government could benefit from improved information technology and telecommunications. This would require both upgrades to physical infrastructure and equipment, as well as training and time for city staff - all of which are currently lacking.

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already acted to improve the city’s community services and amenities, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Neighborhood Parks.** There are city parks and playgrounds located in all parts of the city, and nearly all residents live within walking distance of a city park or playground. The city has many residents, including seniors and families with children, who are of limited means or have limited transportation access, and neighborhood parks provide them with recreation opportunities that they would otherwise not be able to afford or to reach. For all residents, Barre City’s neighborhood parks are an important contributor to quality of life, and serve as community focal points and gathering places.

2. **Playground Improvements.** The Mathewson Playground upgraded its equipment and surface in 2018. Continuous upgrades and maintenance to our parks and playgrounds will be even greater assets for the neighborhoods and the city as a whole. Wobby Memorial Park, next to the Public Safety Building, is a model for what could be done at other parks around the city. The park is intended to provide north end residents with similar experience to what south end residents have at Rotary Park.
3. **Summer Bike Patrol.** The “Bumblebees” bike patrol is a successful example of an alternative approach to providing community services. The bike patrol is staffed by young adults, typically college students, and operates during the summer months to supplement police patrols. Although the “Bees” were cut from the budget in FY2018, the Police Chief is ever hopeful to be able to bring them back.
4. **Community Facilities.** The Civic Center (Auditorium and Alumni Hall) and the BOR Facility serve a critical role as community gathering places. The Civic Center has been equipped with a back-up generator and it is used as a Red Cross Certified Shelter during storms and disasters. The floods of 2011 and 2015 highlighted the value of these structures to the city when hundreds of residents needed emergency shelter. These facilities provide a venue for large community events.
5. **Inspection Program.** The city has expanded and improved the building inspection program in order to more effectively identify and address deficiencies in rental housing. Improving the housing stock will help reverse negative perceptions about the city, increase property values and rental income, and attract a more socioeconomically balanced population to live in the city.
6. **Emergency Preparedness.** The city has improved its preparedness for emergencies and disasters. Our shelters are now certified by the Red Cross and Public Safety Department personnel continue regular emergency response training.
7. **Nonprofit Partners.** There are numerous nonprofit organizations based or working in Barre City that can help the city carry out the actions identified in this plan, including but not limited to: Downstreet Housing, Capstone Community Action, ReSOURCE, and Washington County Mental Health.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following goals and strategies for community services and amenities in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **For Barre City’s government and partner organizations to provide community services and amenities, which are affordable to taxpayers, use tax dollars as efficiently as possible, enrich quality of life in the city and region, help attract new residents to the city, and support economic revitalization and growth.**
 - A. Provide police, fire and emergency medical services in a cost-effective manner.
 - A-1. Continue to replace police, fire and EMS vehicles on a planned schedule to avoid the need to purchase multiple vehicles in any given year and the associated budget increases.

- B. Take action to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to life and property from, and be prepared to respond to, emergencies and disasters.
 - B-1. Continue to improve, and regularly maintain, the city's stormwater infrastructure.
 - B-2. Increase public awareness of potential hazards in Barre City, and educate residents about how to better prepare for emergencies and adequately insure their property.
 - B-3. Improve communication before, during and after emergencies or disasters among various response personnel, between response agencies and city government, and between city government and residents.
 - B-4. Test, and improve as needed, the ability of emergency response services and critical community facilities to function during emergencies or disasters.
 - B-5. Comply with National Flood Insurance Program requirements and provide ongoing training NFIP training to city officials and staff.
 - B-6. Work with Barre Town and the state to keep the East Barre Dam in good condition and the spillway clear of debris.
- C. Provide recreational opportunities within the financial constraints of the city and participating organizations.
 - C-1. Continue to improve Rotary Park and make it a destination for city residents as well as residents of surrounding communities.
 - C-2. Maintain existing and plan for additional neighborhood parks as needed so that all city residents will live within walking distance of a city park or playground.
 - C-3. Encourage the development of private and non-profit recreation opportunities to supplement existing public recreation opportunities.
 - C-4. Encourage the surrounding communities to participate in cooperative efforts for joint recreation activities and facility usage.
 - C-5. Monitor neighborhood demographics and park usage on an on-going basis to ensure that neighborhood parks and playgrounds are meeting the needs of nearby residents.
 - C-6. Strive to provide parks and playgrounds that meet the needs of neighborhood residents, and modify park design or amenities as neighborhood demographics and recreational needs change.

2. For Barre City's unique heritage, historic resources and cultural assets to be preserved, celebrated, and contribute to our community's physical, economic and social revitalization.

- A. Enhance Barre City’s appeal to residents and visitors by rehabilitating and showcasing our historic buildings and landmarks, and promoting our unique granite industry heritage and role in labor history.
 - A-1. Create a strong identity around granite-related history and attractions by increasing the visibility of these resources, improving the coordination between destinations, and integrating them more effectively into the existing regional tourism promotion system.
- B. Expand and promote Barre City’s arts, cultural and entertainment offerings to make our community a more vibrant and attractive destination for residents and visitors.
 - B-1. Expand downtown festivals, events, and coordinated cultural and historic programs to bring residents and visitors downtown throughout the year.
 - B-2. Increase and improve promotion of cultural and historic events and resources at the Aldrich Library, Vermont History Center, Barre City Opera House, Old Socialist Labor Party Hall, Studio Place Arts, and the Vermont Granite Museum.
- C. Increase awareness of our heritage, historic resources and cultural assets.
 - C-1. Develop a coordinated system of directional and informational signs and a more coordinated on-line presence so residents and visitors can easily find and learn more about significant historic sites and buildings in the city.
 - C-2. Install more public art and historic exhibits around the city.
 - C-3. Improve promotion and distribution of the downtown and cemetery walking tours.

3. For Barre City residents to be well-informed, active citizens.

- A. Disseminate information about city government in a timely and convenient manner.
 - A-1. Maintain the user-friendly city website that is kept up-to-date with information about all aspects of city government and civic affairs.
 - A-2. Require that all city boards, committees and departments post meeting schedules, meeting minutes, policies, regulations, plans, studies and other public information on the city website in a timely manner.
 - A-3. Ensure social media connected with city accounts is kept up to date with information pertinent to its design.

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

- 1. Prepare and adopt a Capital Improvement Program, which would incorporate the capital improvements needed to city buildings and facilities into a municipal capital planning and budgeting process that would include all city departments/services.**

Status: A capital equipment plan was developed in 2013.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Finance Director, City Manager, City Planner, Planning Commission, Public Works Director, City Department Heads, City Council

Notes: The city could apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to prepare a Capital Improvement Program.

- 2. Enroll in the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System.**

Status: Not started yet.

Timing: 2021

Partners: City Manager, City Planner, Fire Department, City Council

Notes: The National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum federal requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk.

- 3. Develop and adopt a citywide Parks and Recreation Plan.**

Status: No action to date

Timing: 2022

Partners: Recreation Director, City Planner, Planning Commission, City Council

Notes: This action could be coordinated with development of the Open Space Plan and/or Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

- 1. Percentage of dwellings located within 1/4 mile of a city park.** Parks provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction.

In 2010: 70%

In 2018: 70%
Target for 2025: 72%

2. **Number of violent crimes in Barre City.** Experiencing and fearing crime is associated with negative health effects, a decreased sense of well-being, and a lower quality of life. *Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer.*

In 2010: 71
In 2018: 70
Target for 2023: 65

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

planning for the natural environment

Barre City recognizes that a healthy natural environment is necessary to sustain the well-being of our community and residents. To achieve our vision for a healthy future, air must be safe to breathe, water must be safe to drink, land must be safe to use, and residents need access to green spaces, parks and undeveloped areas where we can recreate and enjoy nature.

Barre City's natural environment consists of air, water, earth and all the organisms that live here. How well these components interact determines the health of the local environment and impacts the city's economy, quality of life, and the health and well-being of residents.

key points

1. **Rivers.** Barre City is located along the banks of Stevens and Jail branches of the Winooski River because their waters were harnessed to power and provide transport for the industry and commerce that built the city. While no longer an economic engine, these urbanized river corridors continue to influence, and be influenced by, the development along their banks. The river corridors are the city's primary ecological resource and are important components of the city's open space network. They create both potential assets and hazards to the community.
2. **Undeveloped Land.** While largely developed, Barre City is not "built out" and has approximately 480 acres of privately owned, undeveloped land remaining in large tracts. These remaining large tracts of undeveloped land include physically constrained lands (i.e. steep slopes), and environmentally sensitive areas that pose substantial constraints to development. They also are an important component of the city's open space network. There is the presence of important mapped forest integrity blocks (areas of forest not currently developed for non-forest use) within the City, and these lands help minimize forest fragmentation and help promote ecological function to the area.
3. **Open Space.** Maintaining and enhancing the city's open space network – both passive green space and developed recreation facilities – is a critical element of residents' quality of life. As density increases, the importance of community open space increases as fewer residents have spacious private yards. Open spaces provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, which positively affects public health and strengthens social ties. Along with forest blocks, there are important habitat connectors throughout the city that are road segments bordered by vegetation with little development that is buffered to connect to forest blocks.
4. **Brownfields.** Barre City developed as an industrial center and continues to have a sizable industrial sector. It is only in recent decades that there has been much consideration of the impacts of industrial activity and other types of development on the natural environment, and associated regulations to protect environmental quality. As a result, the city now faces the challenge of cleaning up polluted and blighted sites. These brownfields, once remediated however, provide opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization in the heart of the city.

5. **Green Infrastructure.** The city's natural environment is a dynamic system that is intrinsically linked with the city's built environment. While often overlooked in an urban setting, the environmental services that these natural systems provide are essential to maintaining public health, community character and quality of life in the city.
-

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following challenges and issues related to our natural environment that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Brownfield Remediation.** To grow Barre City's economy, our vacant or under-utilized industrial sites need to be revitalized. Securing funding for remediation will be an ongoing challenge. While some of the cost of that remediation will need to be borne by the city in the short-term, once redeveloped brownfield sites will generate a long-term return on our investment through job creation and increased tax revenues.
 2. **Flooding and Stormwater.** Barre City will always face the challenge of flooding. It is not a hazard that can be prevented, but actions can be taken to minimize the threat to life and property. Mitigating flood hazards within flood-prone areas of the city and managing stormwater throughout the city will need to be an essential component of our planning and development efforts.
 3. **River Corridors.** Our rivers and streams create natural corridors through the city. Their banks remain largely vegetated, providing habitat and travel routes for wildlife. These riparian buffers are lacking or insufficient in some areas, and the city's revised Unified Development Ordinance requires that existing vegetation be maintained or new vegetation established along rivers and streams.
-

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already acted to improve the city's natural environment, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **Public Open Space.** Barre City owns a significant amount of land, including several large parcels of undeveloped open land and more than 20 individual parks and recreation areas. The benefits to having forest blocks in the city is that these areas provide habitat for a variety of species, and provide necessary forest cover to allow wildlife to travel in search of food, mates and wintering grounds.
2. **Private Open Space.** There remains more than 480 acres of privately-owned undeveloped land in the city. Some of this land is suitable for development, while some will likely remain undeveloped. The benefits to having forest blocks on private property is that the landowner can control and aid in forest and wildlife management.
3. **Greenway Network.** There is a significant amount of open space – both public and private – in Barre City, and the city maintains more than 20 individual parks and recreation areas. Two river

corridors travel through the city. The city needs to improve the connections between these resources. An interconnected network of open space, or a greenway, throughout the city would expand the recreational and ecological benefits of the individual resources. Construction of the long-planned regional bike path would connect Barre City residents to recreational resources and natural areas outside the city, and bring more people from outlying areas into the city. Parks, recreation and open space projects may be viewed as a low priority given the city's critical need to revitalize downtown and promote economic development, but they are essential to enhancing the city's quality of life and making Barre City a place where people want to live and businesses want to locate.

4. **Green Infrastructure.** There is a network of open and green space throughout the city. The rivers and tributaries within the city are also a component of this network. Together, they form the green infrastructure needed to support life within the city. Maintaining and enhancing the components of this system, and their interconnections, is just as important to the city's future as repairing and upgrading the streets, sidewalks, pipes and utility lines that form the city's gray infrastructure.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following natural environment goals and strategies in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **For Barre City to protect and enhance water quality in the Stevens and Jail Branches of the Winooski River and their tributaries, and improve riverbank stability, shoreline habitat, aesthetic quality of the river corridors and public access to the rivers.**
 - A. Implement the remaining recommendations of the 2009 Stevens Branch River Corridor Management Plan to maintain or restore the natural condition and function of the river corridors including:
 - A-1. Encouraging landowners to plant or allow re-growth of appropriate vegetation along eroding river or stream banks and banks with no buffer.
 - A-2. Mitigating impacts of stormwater entering streams and rivers.
 - A-3. Replacing problematic culverts and bridges.
 - B. Take a more proactive approach to improving the river corridors by:
 - B-1. Initiating discussions with affected landowners about a riverfront walkway in order to gain their input and support.
 - B-2. Seeking external funding to help cover the costs for design and implementation of improvements within the river corridors.
2. **For Barre City to continue efforts to remediate polluted sites and encourage brownfield redevelopment, while maintaining high standards for protection of environmental quality, human health and community character for current and future land uses.**

- A. Continue investigating partnerships with state, federal, or private entities to complete remediation of brownfield sites.
- 3. For Barre City to balance the desire for compact urban development with the need to preserve open space resources, and ensure that areas designated for new development, infill development or increased density also provide for the open space needs of current and future city residents.**
- A. Encourage conservation development techniques, such as cluster residential developments, on the remaining large tracts of undeveloped land within the city, which would allow the landowners to develop their properties while preserving open space and its associated benefits.
 - B. Explore funding options to support the purchase of land or conservation easements in order to preserve large open space areas within city.
 - C. Conservation efforts should continue in areas where there are priority interior forest blocks as well as those areas such as the Cow Pasture are prioritized.
- 4. For Barre City to become more resilient to the effects of flooding.**
- A. Maintain eligibility for flood insurance, hazard mitigation, and disaster assistance by continuing to meet federal requirements for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.
 - B. Consider participation in the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System, which would help guide the municipality in reducing damage from flooding events.
 - C. Implement the recommendations of our 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan.
 - D. Implement the remaining recommendations of the 2009 Stevens Branch River Corridor Management Plan to maintain or restore the natural condition and function of the river corridors.
-

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. Enroll in the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Manager, City Planner, Fire Department, City Council

Notes: The National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum federal requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk.

2. Develop and adopt a river management plan.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2023

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, Friends of the Winooski River, CVRPC

Notes: This plan would build upon the Phase I and Phase II geomorphic assessments and Stevens Branch Corridor Management Plan and more specifically address the specific, local challenges and opportunities presented by the river as it flows through our city.

3. Develop and adopt a citywide Open Space Plan.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2022

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Council

Notes: This action could be coordinated with development of the Parks and Recreation Plan.

4. Study the feasibility of and options for establishing a greenway with a multi-use path along the Stevens Branch.

Status: Underway for Summer and Fall 2020.

Timing: 2023

Partners: Consultants; Public Works Director; Recreation Committee; Paths, Routes and Trails Committee

Notes: The Metro Way Multi-Use Path has been designed and construction will occur during the 2020 construction season. This path will be a continuation of the multi-use path off the Enterprise Alley parking lot and will start at the intersection of Metro Way and Williams Lane, and will end at Prospect Street.

5. Complete the projects listed in the 2018 Central Vermont Tri-Town Stormwater Master Plan.

Status: No action taken to date.

Timing: 2023

Partners: CVRPC, City Planner, City Engineer, City Council

Notes: There are 72 stormwater best management practices sites that range from small changes to large construction type installments. Working on a few each year would go a long way to meeting those challenges that were identified in the Plan.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

1. **Average E. coli levels in the Stevens and Jail Branches of the Winooski River in Barre City.**

Land use and land cover largely determine the type and amount of contaminants entering our rivers and streams, and consequently, the health of all the downstream life – plants, animals, people – that rely on this water. Elevated E. coli levels are a direct indicator that water may not be safe for human consumption or contact. *Source: Friends of the Winooski Annual Water Quality Monitoring Reports*

In 2010: 283 mpn/100 ml

In 2017: 256 mpn/100 ml

Target for 2022: 77 mpn/100 ml (This is the Vermont water quality standard that indicates water is safe for swimming.)

2. **Percentage of Repetitive Loss Structures flood-proofed or removed.**

Flooding poses a variety of health risks. There is the immediate danger to life posed by high and/or fast-moving water. Water can also carry pollutants onto flooded property and into flooded buildings such as untreated sewage, petroleum products or industrial chemicals. Mold, an indoor air pollutant that poses serious health risks, will grow in flooded buildings if immediate and appropriate actions are not taken. With the increase in flooding events, the number of listed structures has increased. *Source: Ned Swanberg, Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation Floodplain Manager*

In 2010: 8 listed structures

In 2018: 26 listed structures

Target for 2024: 100%

planning for land use

Land use planning is at the core of our efforts to improve the health and well-being of Barre City. Land use policies shape the physical environment of a community, which in turn has direct and indirect effects on the health and well-being of our residents, economy and environment. The authority to plan and regulate land use and the built environment is one of the principal tools that a municipality can use to influence its future. To achieve our vision for a healthy future, Barre City needs to restore and reinforce the city's traditional land use pattern and set the stage for revitalization and growth.

The building blocks of Barre City's traditional land use pattern include the downtown business district, a series of industrial sites along the river and rail line, and walkable neighborhoods that extend outward from these activity centers. Barre City's traditional land use pattern is characterized by:

- A mix of uses in close proximity to each other bringing people together for a variety of activities –including work, living, recreation, business, shopping, entertainment, and civic engagement.
- A physical layout that has high-density core areas and decreasing densities as distance from the core areas increases.
- Natural and built features that define the community and establish an identity or sense of place.
- A strong public presence, such as greens or parks, civic buildings, and other public spaces.
- Multi-story buildings that maximize the use of vertical space while maintaining a human scale at street level and that are located close to the street.
- Buildings whose main entrance is oriented to the street, and principal buildings closer to the street than associated accessory buildings (such as garages).
- Limited amounts of land devoted to parking, especially as visible from the street, and on-street parking.
- A walkable environment in which a mix of uses are within a 5- or 10-minute walk of each other.
- Narrow, interconnected, side streets, and short blocks.
- Diversity in the size of buildings and lots.

Many of the recommended goals, strategies and action identified in this plan relate to reinforcing the city's traditional land use pattern through downtown revitalization, re-use of under-utilized industrial buildings, rehabilitation of homes, infill development, and new compatible development. This approach is consistent with the state's overall goal land use planning goal "to plan development

so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.”

key points

1. **Traditional Development Pattern.** With the arrival of the railroad in 1875, the granite industry boomed and in only a few decades a small settlement in the river valley had grown into the city that exists today. The network of streets, downtown business blocks, and residential neighborhoods were built so that people could live within walking distance of where they worked, went to school, shopped and socialized. Most of this traditional development pattern remains intact in Barre City, largely because the city saw little growth and development during the second half of the 20th century. Some of the historic downtown block buildings have been lost and replaced by single-story buildings or more automobile-oriented shops and plazas. There has been some residential growth, particularly on the western side of the city, which has a more suburban character than the older residential neighborhoods closer to downtown. But overall, much of the city would be recognizable to someone who lived here a century ago. Today there is recognition of the many benefits that the traditional development pattern provides and an interest in restoring and enhancing it as the city seeks to revitalize and grow in future decades.
2. **City as a Regional Center.** Barre City functions as a regional center in Central Vermont. Historically, it was a center of industry and commerce with substantially higher numbers of residents, businesses and jobs than the surrounding rural communities. Following construction of the interstate through the region in the 1960’s, the outlying communities entered a period of growth while older urban centers, like Barre City, were largely stagnant. The city’s role as a regional center changed with retail and other businesses locating on the easy-to-develop land near the interstate. The pendulum, however, is swinging back towards more compact, walkable urban centers, and as a result the city’s role as a residential, economic and social center for the region is returning.
3. **Downtown Revitalization.** Barre City has been engaged in downtown revitalization since the 1980’s, and those efforts are still gaining the momentum needed to be successful and sustainable over the long term. The downtown business district and adjoining blocks are the core of our community, and a primary focus of this plan. There is now a widespread recognition that without a healthy downtown, the city will not be successful in attracting and retaining residents and businesses. Barre City has made considerable investments in downtown revitalization efforts in recent years, with plans for more improvements in the near future. The goal is for downtown to be fully occupied with successful businesses and more residents living in well-maintained, mixed-use, multi-story, higher-density buildings.
4. **Industrial Sites.** Barre City developed as the “Granite Center of the World” with the stone that was quarried in the surrounding hills being brought down into the city to be cut, shaped, sculpted, polished and shipped in a series of granite plants located along the river and railroad. Most of these sites are still used for industrial and commercial purposes, but the uses have diversified beyond granite and many of the sites and buildings are not being fully utilized. Some of these sites should be considered for mixed-use redevelopment, while others may be best suited to remain primarily devoted to heavier commercial and industrial uses.

5. **Residential Neighborhoods.** Residential neighborhoods extend up the hillsides from downtown and the main corridors through the city. Many of the older neighborhoods are composed largely of modest, single-family homes, which provide some of the most affordable opportunities for homeownership in the region. Close to downtown, some of the neighborhoods have largely converted to rental housing and some are showing signs of distress or decline, as discussed in the housing chapter of this plan. More recent housing development further out from downtown is not well-integrated into the urban fabric and has a more suburban character. There is a recognized need to rebalance the city's housing stock and bring some higher-end housing back into the city. Given this diversity of residential issues, the city needs land use regulations that are more specifically tailored to each neighborhood.
6. **Open Space and Undeveloped Land.** Barre City owns a significant amount of open space, including more than 20 individual parks and recreation areas. In addition, there are more than 480 acres of privately-owned undeveloped land in the city. Some of this land is suitable for development, while some will likely remain undeveloped due to constraints like steep slopes.
7. **Stream and River Corridors.** Barre City grew up along the banks of the Stevens and Jail branches of the Winooski River. The valley floor provided relatively level land to build on and access to the water power needed to fuel industry and commerce. As a result, our city will always face the challenge of flooding and our land use plans will need to address mitigation of flood hazards and effective stormwater management.

issues & challenges

Barre City has identified the following challenges and issues related to how we plan and regulate land use that need to be addressed to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **New Uses for Old Buildings and Properties.** Barre City has a substantial amount of historic industrial space - primarily former granite sheds - that is obsolete, vacant, under-utilized, and/or poorly maintained. These buildings can be modernized, renovated and re-fitted to be suitable for new uses and occupants. The city's land use regulations will help to facilitate mixed-use redevelopment of these buildings and sites. Some of the city's industrial sites are brownfields that need to be cleaned-up before they can be redeveloped for new uses.
2. **Residential Neighborhoods.** Some of Barre City's residential neighborhoods are showing signs of distress and destabilization including increased rates of resident turnover, vacancy, foreclosure, property maintenance complaints and police calls.
3. **Complete Streets.** Barre City residents regularly identify improved walking and biking routes within the city and to neighboring communities as an important goal. Improving the walkability throughout the city is a central component of building a healthier future for Barre City. Despite the widespread recognition of and support for making the city more pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly, it continues to be a challenge to focus on the needed improvements when there are a number of other issues that appear to be more urgent for the city to address.

strengths & opportunities

Barre City has already acted to improve how we plan and regulate land use, and there remain many strengths and opportunities we can build upon to continue those efforts as we strive to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **North Main Street Reconstruction.** The reconstruction of North Main Street from Route 62 to the City Hall Park, completed in 2012, replaced all utilities, street lighting, sidewalks, completely reconstructed the road surface, revitalized the streetscape to improve the appearance of downtown and optimized the timing of the lights to facilitate traffic flow. The North Main Street Reconstruction Project replaced downtown sidewalks and redesigned crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety. The revitalized streetscape has greatly improved the appearance of our downtown.
2. **City Place.** Barre City used \$700,000 from a Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grant in 2009 to acquire and redevelop 219 North Main Street. The city also purchased the adjoining property at 9 Merchant Street. In 2011, the city razed the dilapidated structure located on the property and readied the site for redevelopment. A conceptual redevelopment plan was completed in 2012 and a developer was selected to construct, own and operate the building. Construction a 4-story, 84,000 square foot mixed-use office building was completed in early 2014. This building now houses VTrans with a 15-year lease agreement, along with a health-based business in the back.
3. **Merchants Row.** A master plan was prepared for Merchants Row in 2010 in anticipation of major improvements being made once the North Main Street Reconstruction project was completed. Efforts to implement that plan continue. One of the key elements of that plan is the creation of a continuous sidewalk along the rear entrance of the North Main Street buildings. The plan also includes a recreational path paralleling the railroad tracks, which would be one of the segments of the much-desired Central Vermont Bike Path connecting Barre City and Montpelier.
4. **North Main to Summer Street.** A master plan was prepared for the blocks between North Main Street and Summer Street. That plan calls for primarily new residential development on Summer, Merchant and Elm Streets that replicates historic patterns and infill development along street frontages with connected 'parking courts' in the center of the blocks.
5. **TIF District.** Barre City sought and received state approval for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in 2012. The downtown TIF district has allowed the city to capture the increased property tax revenues generated through revitalization in our downtown and use those dollars to fund the improvements need to support redevelopment. TIF funds were used to develop the Campbell Place parking lot, the Enterprise Aly redevelopment, the Keith Avenue Parking lot (in lieu of a parking structure) and the Pearl Street Pedestrian Way.
6. **Downtown Designation.** Barre City has a state Designated Downtown, which provides benefits to businesses and property owners within the district such as state income tax credits for building improvements. With the adoption of the new Unified Development Ordinance (zoning and subdivision), the Planning Commission expanded the designated Downtown, and the City will pursue the necessary revision.

7. **Rental Registration and Inspection Program.** Barre City has adopted an ordinance that requires annual registration of all rental units and establishes minimum health and safety standards for rental housing. Recent changes to the program with the Fire Department taking over responsibility for conducting inspections from the Building Department has increased staff capacity for the program and should bolster city efforts to improve the quality of our housing stock.

goals & strategies

Barre City has established the following land use goals and strategies in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. **For Barre City to grow and flourish as a compact, walkable, mixed-use urban center that can attract and retain residents and businesses.**
 - A. Implement the city's land use strategies as set forth in this plan.
 - A-1. Implement this plan's land use policies that call for development of dense, attractive, mixed-use downtown surrounded by walkable neighborhoods.
 - A-2. Adopt the ordinances needed to address issues with the appearance and maintenance of buildings and property in the city, particularly within the downtown business district.
 - A-3. Continue to plan for and construct the improvements needed to make the city more walkable and pedestrian-friendly, particularly within the downtown business district.
 - A-4. Encourage construction of new housing downtown, primarily on the upper floors of new and existing mixed-use buildings.
 - A-5. Ensure that infill development will be harmonious with the scale, density and character of the surrounding neighborhood.
 - A-6. Update the energy efficiency and conservation standards in the city's land use regulations, and related codes and ordinances, to incorporate the 'energy smart' provisions recommended in the VECAN (Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network) Energy Planning and Implementation Guidebook for Vermont Municipalities.
 - B. Continue to assist building and business owners with navigating the city's permit process, and continue efforts to streamline city regulations and development review procedures.
 - C. Promote investment in the city's vacant, obsolete or under-utilized buildings and properties.
 - C-1. Encourage the maintenance of the city's existing housing stock and the rehabilitation of deteriorating or substandard housing.
 - C-2. Continue efforts to remediate polluted sites and encourage brownfield redevelopment through partnerships with state, federal and private entities.

D. Adopt a ‘Complete Streets’ policy and undertake projects to make Barre City a more pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly community.

D-1. Complete construction of the planned bike path through the city.

D-2. Adopt road standards that would require new public or private streets to be ‘complete’ and incorporate ‘complete streets’ elements into street reconstruction and repair projects to the greatest extent feasible.

next steps

Barre City should pursue the following actions in order to achieve our vision for a healthy future:

1. Complete planning for and implement the Merchants Row project.

Status: Planning for, including some of the environmental studies have been completed.

Timing: 2021.

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Manager, City Council, Public Works Director

Notes: Potential grant funding should be pursued, and the design phase of the project could be underway in 2021.

2. Update and implement the North Main to Summer Street Plan.

Status: plans have been completed for this project, and the plan was endorsed in March of 2012.

Timing: 2021.

Partners: City Planner, Planning Commission, City Manager, City Council

Notes: Downstreet Housing has built their office/apartment building in the area this plan talks about, as well as the City having constructed the Pearl Street Pedestrian Way. With these changes, the plan should be revisited and revised as necessary to update the goals and desires this plan sets forth.

2. Complete review for implementation of a Design Review Committee.

Status: No action to date.

Timing: 2021

Partners: Planning Director, Permit Administrator, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, Barre Historical Society

Notes: Look into creating a design review committee as laid out in the Unified Development Ordinance. Their work would assist the Planning Department and the Development Review Board with issues related to the designated downtown historic district and other related items.

benchmarks

Barre City should measure progress towards achieving our vision for a healthy future against the following benchmarks:

1. Vacancy rate for commercial space in the downtown business district. Vacant downtown buildings are highly visible evidence of the poor health of a local economy. Extremely low vacancy rates suggest high demand, which will likely result in rising rents and sales prices as well as an increase in new construction. Conversely, high vacancy rates result in declining revenues from downtown buildings and discourage investment and new construction. Barre City's downtown has endured a long period of neglect and dis-investment that appears to be reversing. Declining vacancy rates is a direct measure of the success of our revitalization efforts, and the health and well-being of our community. *Source: Planning Director*

In 2010: 15%
In 2019: 12%
Target for 2025: 5%