

City of Barre, VT  
Regular Meeting of the  
**Barre City Planning Commission – Regular Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 13, 2025 AT 5:30 PM**

**Participation: Hybrid (in-person and remote)**  
**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83132944524?pwd=OY7bpA4Xp6W6PoMaXOCjgyinPLafJx.1>

**Meeting ID: 831 3294 4524**

**Passcode: 381609**

**AGENDA**

<b>Agenda Item #</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Call to Order
2	Adjustments to the Agenda
3	Public comment (for something not on the agenda)
4	Approval of Minutes for the January 23, 2025 meeting
5	<b>Warned Public Hearing</b>  <b>Proposed Changed to the Unified Development Regulations:</b> changes include those revisions made under an Interim Zoning approval by the City Council on August 27, 2024, as well as changes to allowed uses for downtown housing in the UC-1 Zoning District to allow for ground floor housing
5	<b>Old Business</b>  <b>Commission Charges:</b> information regarding Commission roles and work <b>Municipal Plan</b> – review Economic Development Section
6	<b>New Business</b>
7	Confirmation of next meeting date of April 10, 2025
8	Staff updates – as needed
9	Roundtable
10	Adjourn

# Barre City Planning Commission

## January 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes

---

Present: David Sichel (Chair), Joe Reil (Secretary), Rosemary Averill, Caitlin Corkins, Wendy Ducey, Raylene Meunier\*

\*Joined meeting during discussion of Item 6A.

Absent: Becky Wigg (Vice Chair)

Staff: Janet Shatney (Director of Planning, Permitting & Assessing)

Visitors: Ed Stanak and Jeremy Spiro-Winn, Barre City Residents

### 1. Call to Order.

5:30pm.

### 2. Adjustments to the Agenda.

None.

### 3. Public comment (for something not on the agenda).

None.

### 4. Approval of Minutes.

#### a. December 12, 2024.

Reil suggested an edit to fix an incorrect section notation.

**Averill moved to approve with edit, Corkins seconded, unanimous in favor.**

### 5. Old Business.

#### a. Encore Renewable Energy Battery Storage Discussion and possible Letter of Recommendation

Shatney drafted a letter and presented it for review with some proposed edits already in place. There was a suggestion that we take into account that the site neighbors were notified and had no concerns and consensus was to include this in the letter.

**Reil moved to submit to City Council with proposed edits, Ducey seconded, unanimous in favor.**

- b. Unified Development Ordinance Revisions: Downtown Housing on ground floor

A proposal to consider adjusting ordinance for ground floor housing in the UC-1 district was discussed. Some specific examples were considered, as well as concerns about ensuring this is Main Street frontage only. Consensus was generally supportive with going ahead with this requiring a Conditional Use permit.

**Corkins moved to have Shatney draft the discussed changes and to hold a public hearing during the February meeting, Ducey seconded, unanimous in favor.**

## 6. New Business.

- a. Chapter 23 Vacant Building Ordinance Discussion

Discussion was prompted by the recent Council decision regarding the building at 134 North Main Street. Existing ordinance was reviewed and discussed, noting that this may not be completely within the Planning Commission's purview. State law needs to be considered as well as inviting input and participation from other stakeholders, including the Fire Department, City Council, and the City's Lawyers.

Ed Stanak spoke to say that he feels the existing ordinance is already well structured but needs to be beefed up to be more enforceable and more gradually enforced and suggested comparing with what other Cities/States are doing, also wants to encourage discussion on the State regulations by the Legislature and would like to take part in future discussions.

Jeremy Spiro-Winn spoke in support of revising the ordinance and had some suggested changes, Sichel suggested Spiro-Winn submit his proposed changes in writing.

Shatney will review the statute with the City Manager and provide a suggestion for how to proceed in a future meeting.

## 7. Confirm Date of Next Meeting.

- a. February 27, 2025.

## 8. Staff Updates.

Assessors are out reviewing properties with an aim to be completed in time for the April tax deadline.

Flood-related buyouts and Elevation money discussions are in progress.

9. Round Table.

Sichel had a question about whether any additional grants were being pursued and Shatney indicated that was not happening at this time.

Ducey had a question about whether the restrictions on food service drive-through in the Unified Development Ordinance and whether an exception means this needs to be revised. Shatney indicated that the regulations apply to a new building or construction and existing exceptions are known as non-conforming.

10. Adjourn.

6:52 pm, **Ducey moved to adjourn, Reil seconded, unanimous in favor.**

## 210 BASE ZONING DISTRICTS

### 2101 Urban Center 1 (UC-1)

2101.A **Intent.** The Urban Center 1 district provides concentrated downtown retail, service, office, upper floor housing and other compatible mixed uses in Barre City's central business district. Urban design standards are required in order to maintain neighborhood commercial scale, pedestrian activity, architectural character and the traditional built pattern. The purpose of this district is to:

- (1) Promote the long-term economic and social vitality of Barre City's central business district;
- (2) Provide for the daily needs and services of the community;
- (3) Provide economic development opportunities through clean industry, office and commercial uses;
- (4) Provide housing opportunities within walking distance of employment, service and retail opportunities;
- (5) Encourage investment that increases the value of downtown buildings and property;
- (6) Ensure that new buildings are compatible with the historic architectural framework of Barre City's downtown and preserve a human scale;
- (7) Promote a quality, urban streetscape and pedestrian-friendly environment; and
- (8) Accommodate a broad range of high-density housing options.

2101.B **Allowed Uses.** [Section 2115](#) establishes the uses allowed in this district. In addition:

- (1) Residential uses are prohibited on any portion of the ground floor ~~within 100 feet from the front property line~~ along the street frontage. Ground floor residential uses ~~more than 100 feet from the front property line~~ not along the street frontage may be allowed as a conditional permissible use upon the applicant demonstrating that the dwelling unit(s) will not adversely impact the use of the remaining ground floor space for non-residential purposes and that the provisions of Subsections 3201 and 3201-G will be met.
- (2) Food service drive-throughs are prohibited. All other drive-through service may only be located at the rear of the building and will require conditional use approval.
- (3) Wholesale trade and information service uses are not permitted to occupy the ground floor, street frontage portion of a building.

2101.C **Dimensional Standards.** [Section 2116](#) establishes the dimensional standards for this district. In addition:

Formatted: Default Paragraph Font

**BARRE CITY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE**  
ADOPTED August 27, 2024 / EFFECTIVE November 4, 2024

**2. Zoning Districts**  
210. Base Zoning Districts

- (1) New principal buildings must be a minimum of 2 stories (this will be interpreted to require at least one functional upper floor).

**2102 Urban Center 2 (UC-2)**

2102.A **Intent.** The Urban Center 2 district provides compact retail, service, office, housing and other compatible mixed uses in Barre City's downtown and neighborhood centers. Urban design standards are required in order to maintain neighborhood commercial scale, pedestrian activity, architectural character and the traditional built pattern. The purpose of this district is to:

- (1) Provide for the daily needs and services of the community;
- (2) Provide housing opportunities within walking distance of employment, service and retail opportunities;
- (3) Encourage investment that increases the value of buildings and property in Barre City's downtown and neighborhood centers;
- (4) Ensure that new buildings are compatible with the historic architectural framework of Barre City's downtown and neighborhood centers and preserve a human scale;
- (5) Promote a quality, urban streetscape and pedestrian-friendly environment;
- (6) Accommodate a broad range of high-density housing options.

2102.B **Allowed Uses.** [Section 2115](#) establishes the uses allowed in this district. In addition:

- (1) Food service drive-throughs are prohibited. All other drive-through service may only be located at the rear of the building and will require conditional use approval.
- (2) Wholesale trade and information service uses are not permitted to occupy the ground floor, street frontage portion of a building.

2102.C **Dimensional Standards.** [Section 2116](#) establishes the dimensional standards for this district. In addition:

- (1) New principal buildings must be a minimum of 2 stories (this will be interpreted to require at least one functional upper floor).

**2103 Urban Center 3 (UC-3)**

2103.A **Intent.** The Urban Center 3 district provides compact retail, service, office, upper floor housing and other compatible mixed uses in Barre City's downtown and along major thoroughfares. Urban design standards are required in order to maintain and enhance neighborhood commercial scale, pedestrian activity, architectural character and the traditional built pattern. The purpose of this district is to:

- (1) Provide economic development opportunities through clean industry, office and commercial uses;

**BARRE CITY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE**  
ADOPTED August 27, 2024 / EFFECTIVE November 4, 2024

**2. Zoning Districts**  
210. Base Zoning Districts

**2115 Use Table**

USE & DEFINITION	UC-1	UC-2	UC-3	MU-1	MU-2	MU-3	R-16	R-12	R-8	R-4	GB	IN	CIV	CON
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>														
<b>Single-family dwelling</b> Use of a structure for habitation by one household that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.	X	X	P <sup>1</sup>	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Two-family dwelling</b> Use of a structure for habitation by two households each in a unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, and with each unit having a separate entrance from the outside or through a common vestibule.	X <sup>1</sup>	P <sup>1</sup> X	P <sup>1</sup>	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Three- or four-family dwelling</b> Use of a structure for habitation by 3 or 4 households each in a unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, and with each unit having a separate entrance from the outside or through a common vestibule.	P <sup>1</sup> X	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Multi-family dwelling (5+ units)</b> Use of a structure or part of a structure for habitation by five or more households each in a unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, or any dwelling unit in a mixed-use building. See <a href="#">Section 3201</a> .	P	P	P	P	C	X	P	C	C	C	C	X	X	X
<b>Accessory dwelling</b> Accessory use of single-family residential property for a second dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation. See <a href="#">Section 3202</a> .	X	X	P <sup>1</sup>	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Home occupation</b> Accessory use of single-family residential property for a small business that does not alter the residential character of the property. See <a href="#">Section 3203</a> .	X	X	P <sup>1</sup>	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Home business</b> Accessory use of single-family residential property for a small business that may alter the residential character of the property. See <a href="#">Section 3204</a> .	X	P	P	P	P	P	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X
<b>Family childcare home</b> Accessory use of single-family residential property for a small daycare business that operates under state license or registration. See <a href="#">Section 3205</a> .	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Senior housing</b> Use of one or more structures to primarily house people age 55 or older that: (a) Contains multiple dwelling units each intended for habitation by one household and providing complete independent living facilities including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation; and (b) May offer minimum convenience services to residents as an accessory use.	P	P	C	P	X	C	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Assisted living</b> Use of one or more structures to provide housing, board and care to residents who need assistance with daily activities such as dressing, grooming, bathing, etc. and that operates under state license. Includes residential care homes.	C	C	C	P	X	C	P	C	C	C	C	X	X	X
<b>Skilled nursing service</b> Use of one or more structures to provide housing and 24-hour skilled nursing care to residents and that operates under state license. This includes nursing or convalescent homes, and hospice or respite care facilities.	X	C	C	P	X	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X
<b>Group home</b> Use of single-family residential property to provide housing to people with a handicap or disability that operates under state license or registration. See <a href="#">Section 1105</a> and <a href="#">Section 3206</a> .	X	X	P <sup>1</sup>	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X
<b>Single-room occupancy</b> Use of a structure or part of a structure to provide housing to single individuals each in a single-room dwelling unit that is not required to include food preparation or sanitary facilities. See <a href="#">Section 3207</a> .	C	C	C	C	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Emergency housing</b> Use of structure or part of a structure to provide food, shelter, and other support services on a temporary basis to people who are homeless or to victims of disaster.	C	C	C	C	X	X	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

P = Permitted Use | C = Conditional Use | X = Prohibited Use | All uses other than single- and two-family dwellings, and accessory uses to single- and two-family dwellings, require site plan review in accordance with [Section 4305](#). | <sup>1</sup> Additional use standards apply (see zoning district section)

Formatted Table  
Formatted: Superscript

# Municipal Boards, Commissions, and Committees

## Planning Commissions

### Membership

A municipality may establish a planning commission by resolution of its legislative body. The commission must have between three and nine members, a majority of whom must be residents of the municipality. Typically, the legislative body (selectboard, city council, aldermen, or trustees) appoints the members. Alternatively, the voters in a municipality may elect planning commission members. If the commissioners are elected, the legislative body may still fill a vacancy until the next municipal election, or a special election may be held. The legislative body may remove appointed commissioners at any time, by unanimous vote, but it may not remove elected planning commission members.

Planning commission members should represent all geographic areas of the municipality. They should express a variety of interests and bring a range of skills to the commission. The interests of any single group should not be favored.

### Role of the Planning Commission

As leaders of the community on planning matters, the members of the planning commission have many important roles. One significant role is to represent all members and interests of the community. In this capacity, the commission should seek maximum participation in the planning process by other public officials, interest groups, civic groups, and citizens to discuss joint and competing interests. The commission must be willing to listen to ideas and to solicit comments. The commission must be cautious in weighing the comments of those who are active in the planning process with the interests of those who do not participate. Above all, members must put the general welfare of the community above any personal interests.

The planning commission is responsible for looking out for the general welfare of the community and for bringing a long-term perspective to short-term strategies and day-to-day decision making.

The planning commission must be careful not to devote all of its time to regulatory review when long-range planning and broader community interests also require its attention. To ensure that the planning commission has adequate time for these bigger picture issues, many communities have created a development review board. The development review board typically assumes responsibility for reviewing site plans and approving conditional use, variance and subdivision applications, which allows the planning commission to focus on developing, maintaining, and implementing the municipal plan and regulations.

One of the responsibilities of the planning commission is to educate the public about the purposes of planning and to publicize and seek comment on specific recommendations to address local planning issues. This educational process occurs through public hearings and informational meetings, through coordination with other local officials, through written materials and newspaper articles, and through day-to-day contact with the public. To be effective, commissioners must be well informed about the community, the content of planning documents, and the rationale for plans, implementation strategies, and regulatory decisions.

The commission should propose courses of action for the municipality, including the comprehensive plan. It also reviews and recommends actions on specific proposals put forth by public interest groups and the private sector. To carry out this role effectively, commission members need to inform themselves about the planning process, organize themselves, take advantage of training programs offered to them, and seek technical advice to further their understanding.



## Powers and Duties of the Planning Commission

The powers and duties of the planning commission are set forth in [24 V.S.A. section 4325](#). These powers include major responsibilities such as preparing and implementing the municipal plan, as well as the authority necessary to carry out activities related to these responsibilities, including undertaking studies, entering upon land, and hiring technical assistance. The planning commission is specifically authorized, by [24 V.S.A. section 4325](#), to do the following:

- Prepare a municipal plan for review by the municipality's legislative body, and maintain and prepare amendments to the plan as needed;
- Prepare bylaws for review by the municipality's legislative body, and maintain and prepare amendments to the bylaws as needed;
- Administer any subdivision regulations and any bylaws adopted by the municipality, unless a development review board has that function;
- Undertake development review under the zoning regulations, including site plan review, planned unit and planned residential development plans, design review, and approval of rights-of way for parcels not having frontage on public roads, unless a Development Review Board has been created by the municipality to carry out this function;
- Participate in the review of Act 250 permit applications, including testifying on projects under review and appealing unfavorable decisions;
- Participate in the review of Section 248 certificate of public good proceedings before the Public Service Board;
- Prepare and update a five-year capital budget and program for consideration by the municipality's legislative body;
- Review adjacent municipal plans, the regional plan, and state agency plans for compatibility with their own municipal plan;
- Conduct studies and make recommendations on land development, urban renewal, transportation, community development, beautification, design, historic and scenic preservation, conservation of energy, development of renewable energy resources and wetland protection;
- Participate in regional planning programs; and
- Recommend codes and standards, including building, plumbing, fire, electrical and housing codes, and specifications for streets and related public improvements.

## Organization and Procedures of the Planning Commission

### Officers

The planning commission is required to elect a chairperson and a clerk ([24 V.S.A. section 4323\(b\)](#)). The chairperson is responsible for the overall organization and conduct of the commission. The clerk is typically responsible for minutes of meetings, filing of public notices, notification of applicants, and distribution of proposed documents in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 117.

### Rules

The planning commission is required to adopt rules for the performance of its function ([24 V.S.A. section 4323\(b\)](#)). These rules should be adopted at the commission's organizational meeting by a majority vote of the members present. If a commission does not have a set of rules, it should adopt them as soon as possible. They are necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the commission.

Planning commission rules should cover the following:

- Powers and duties of the planning commission;
- Responsibilities of the officers;
- Procedures for scheduling and conducting regular commission meetings;
- Procedures for scheduling and conducting public hearings;
- Public notice for commission meetings and public hearings;
- Preparation of findings of fact for permit applications;
- Notification of applicants;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Minutes of meetings;
- Record-keeping;
- Handling of expenses;
- Annual reports; and
- Voting procedures.

Model rules are available on the [Vermont League of Cities and Towns](#) website: Except for the vote required for adopting rules, planning commissions must follow [1 V.S.A. section 172](#), which states that a majority of all of the commissioners must approve any action – not just a majority of those present.

### **Meetings**

Planning commissions are subject to Vermont's Open Meeting Law ([1 V.S.A. section 310-314](#)). Every planning commission should be familiar with these provisions. All meetings of the planning commission are open to the public. The commission must inform the public when and where the meetings will occur. A schedule of regular planning commission meetings must be posted in a public place. Any changes to this schedule, or notice of special meetings, must be posted in the municipal clerk's office and at least two other designated places in the municipality at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Public Hearings have different notice requirements and can be found in [24 V.S.A. section 4444](#). Notice of the date, place, and purpose of the public hearing must be published in the newspaper at least 15 days before the hearing, and posted in three or more locations in the municipality as well.

Planning commission meetings, like all public meetings, must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Vermont's Public Accommodations Law found in [9 V.S.A. Chapter 139](#). Meetings, as well as written materials, must be accessible to all persons with disabilities. This means that a handicapped person must be able to enter the building and the meeting room, and have the use of a rest room. On request, people with hearing, speech, and visual impairments, as well as mobility difficulties, must not be denied participation in a planning commission meeting or hearing.

### **Records**

The planning commission must keep a record of its business, including minutes that reflect all meetings, resolutions, transactions, and decisions. The records must be on file and available to the public within five days after each meeting. Most municipalities retain these records in the clerk's office or in the office of the planning department. If the municipality has a website, the minutes must be posted there as well ([1 V.S.A. section 312\(b\)](#); [24 V.S.A. section 4323](#) and [section 4326](#)).

In most municipalities, the development review board functions as the quasi-judicial body that approves and disapproves development applications. Some municipalities still have a zoning board of adjustment, which reviews variances, conditional uses, and appeals of the zoning administrator. In municipalities with zoning boards, the planning commission serves as a quasi-judicial body that reviews subdivisions and site plans. Planning commissions that serve a development review function must keep accurate records of evidence presented at hearings, resolutions of the commission, and findings of fact on which the decisions are based. The record must also include any conditions that are required in a decision.

### **Annual Report**

Every planning commission must make an annual report to the municipality as noted in [24 V.S.A. section 4326](#). This report should summarize the commission's activities for the year, including current issues, trends, and needs for future action. These reports are often circulated to the residents through the town, village, or city annual report. The commission should produce a complete and informative statement.

### **Technical Assistance**

Because a municipal planning commission usually is composed of volunteers, preparation of plans and bylaws often requires the assistance of others such as professional staff, regional planning commission staff, or private consultants who work under the commission's direction. Assistance may also be obtained from federal, state, county, and regional organizations and from educational institutions. [A list of helpful resources can be found on DCHD's website.](#)

### **Expenses**

A planning commission may incur costs for the "necessary and reasonable" expenses of its members, for professional assistance, and for meeting notices and mailings. To cover these costs, the municipality is authorized to appropriate funds for the planning commission.

Many municipalities use permit application fees to cover costs for processing applications. The legislative body can set the fees, which must reasonably relate to the cost of administration ([24 V.S.A. sections 4440\(b\)](#)). The planning commission also may accept funds from federal or state governments and from private sources ([24 V.S.A. section 4322](#) and [section 4326](#)).

## **Development Review Boards**

A development review board can be created to perform all the regulatory review functions for the town as set forth in [24 V.S.A. section 4460](#). It replaces the zoning board of adjustment and takes over the subdivision and site plan review role of the planning commission. This permits the planning commission to focus on the municipal plan.

## **Zoning Board of Adjustment**

While most towns no longer have zoning boards of adjustment, some still do. The zoning board of adjustment reviews applications for conditional use approval, appeals from actions or decisions of the zoning administrator, and associated variance requests ([24 V.S.A. section 4461](#)).

# 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%

## Staff Updates – Week ending March 7, 2025

- January and February 2025 DRB hearings were canceled as there were no applicants – there was a hearing on March 6 from the owners of 75 N Main Street for a façade improvement. This building is known as the Old Town Hall building, and for some, perhaps you remember it where Needleman’s Bridal was for many years. It has stood empty now for a couple years. The façade improvement includes changing it to be the flat front style before the two bay/bow windows were added. The application was approved pending the owners provide a stamped architectural plan of the revisions to the façade.
- Speaking of the DRB, there has been a vacant position for several months now in one of the at-large positions, and in late January, 2 more members resigned. There are now THREE open positions on the DRB, 1 for Ward 1, and 2 for at-large positions. With the DRB down to 6 members, they require a quorum (of the body, not of the meeting) of 5 to open, and 5 affirmative votes to pass any requests. Should you be aware of anyone interested in sitting on the DRB, please spread the word. There was an ad in the Times Argus 2 weeks ago, and have generated some interest, with one person stating their intention to apply with the City Manager’s office.
- The City Council removed the waiving of fees for flood damage permitting now, and anyone applying to fix damage to their structures from the July 2024 flood have to pay all fees.
- My office continues to work toward cleaning up the collections for the Rental Registry for past due payments, as this coming May, we will be sending out the annual invoicing for the ensuing year.
- I continue to work with VT Emergency Management on the City’s buyouts. We have now 27 applications to remove flood damaged structures through the buyout; 21 have been approved by FEMA, 7 are still in process at the VEM/FEMA level. VEM hired an appraisal firm out of Hardwick, VT, to complete the residential appraisals for 23 of our buyouts, and 4 of our commercial sites contracted to a firm out of Boston. Many of the appraisals have been completed, and are waiting for more information from the property owners.
- Elevation funds: More to come as the Council debates and asks for more information.
- The draft Short Term Rental Ordinance was shared with the Fire Marshal, as the Code Enforcement office would be the primary staff, and the Fire Marshal needs to review and work with the City Manager on it, and get back in front of City Council.
- The Assessors have been out communicating with and inspecting properties for the preparation of our 2025 Grand List. Their inspections are largely comprised of review of past permits issued out of my office, and this permit list spans 4-6 years of permits to review and see what was done. Their intention is to complete a list for changes of appraisal notices to be sent by May 27<sup>th</sup>. This is to get back on schedule for grievances

getting done and a tax rate set by the Council in July so that tax bills can be mailed in August like they used to be.

- The Appraisers continue working through areas of the City doing residential review. Currently, they are working in the northeast area of Ward 2, and the northern area of Ward 1 on the north side of N. Main Street. They will start commercial property reviews starting mid-summer.
- The Friends of the Winooski River is applying for a grant to remove 3 dams in Barre City and Barre Town, of which the City is serving as the pass-through for the work. The Friends are working on the dam that is located in Barre Town, behind the old Jockey Hollow Restaurant, as well as a small dam located in the river behind Trow and Holden on S. Main Street. The 3<sup>rd</sup> dam is located behind the Quality Inn.
- The I Love Cows Solar Field is projected to move forward this summer, along with the Battery Storage Facility. I am currently working on assisting the owners with easements for power poles.
- If you recall, the DRB denied the application by Capital Candy, to demolish the round barn historic building (former granite shed) in the middle of their parcels, for parking. The denial has been appealed to the Environmental Court, and the City Attorney is moving through the process of meeting with the judge, etc. No word yet when I will need to appear at court, should it move to that stage. More to come eventually.
- Positions on the Planning Commission will need to decide if you are going to continue for the ensuing 3-year term or not. Those seats expiring at the end of this fiscal year (June 30) are David and Becky's seats. The Manager will need the volunteer application completed and you will need to go before the City Council for re-appointment should you choose to do so. If you are aware that you are not going to seek re-appointment, please let me know so that I can work with the Manager on a hiring notification (similar to what we've done with the DRB open seats).
- The Planning Commission is required to complete the State's Ethics Training. Starting January 1, 2025, certain municipal officers and similarly certain boards and Commissions must successfully complete an Ethics Training Course and have that on record with the City. Here is the link to the Ethics Commission's Training Page, with the link to complete the actual training. It's an approx. 45-minute course with several questions at the end. Once you've completed your training, please forward to me your approval/certificate once completed. This should be completed no later than May 30<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, let me know. [Training | Ethics Commission](#) please choose Municipal Code of Ethics, not State.