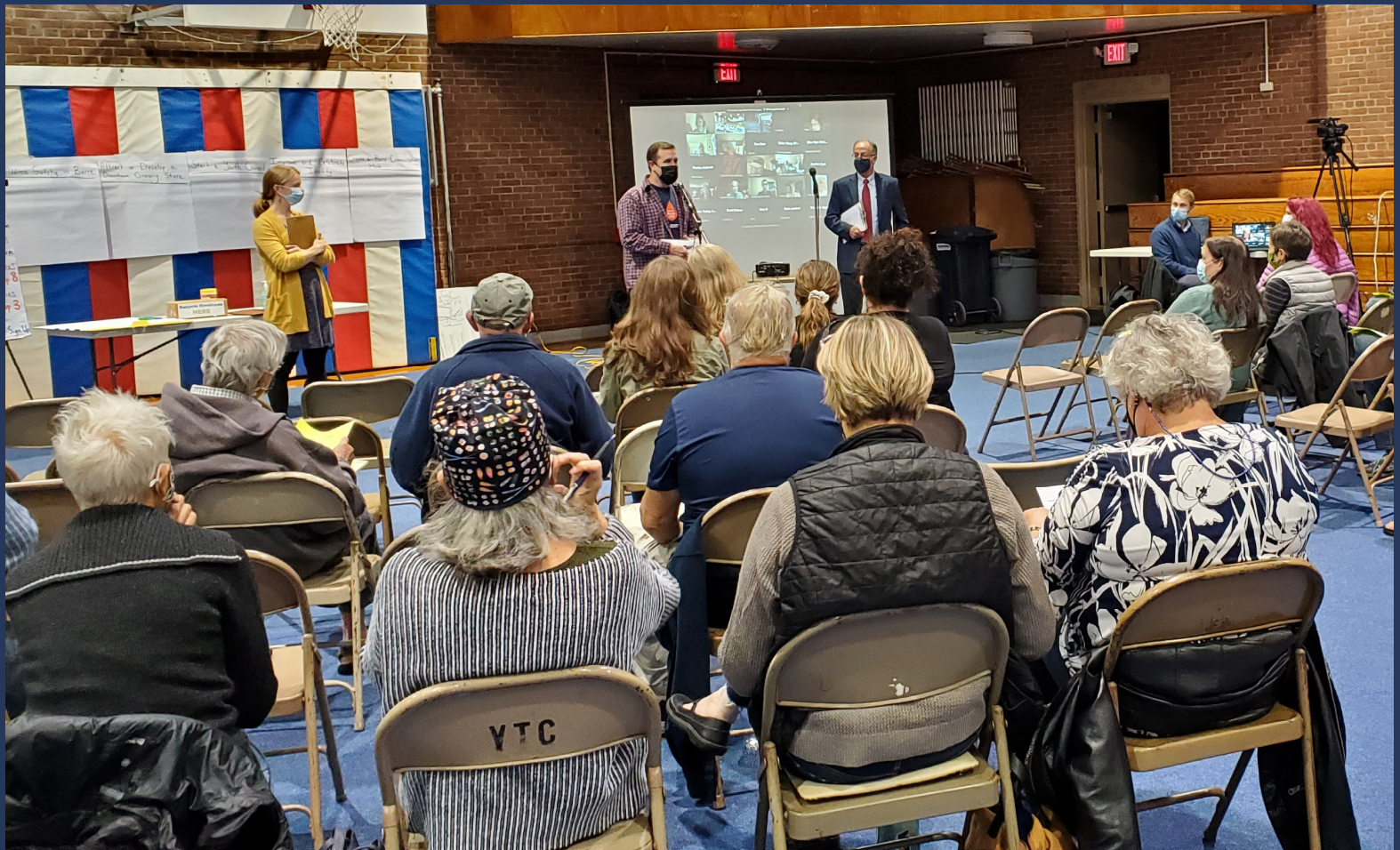


# All In For Barre

## Community Visit Report and Action Plan December 2021



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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# I. Introduction

A city built on the tradition and prosperity of the Granite Industry, Barre is more than just the “Granite Center of the World.” In recent years, City Leadership, the Barre Partnership, and other community partners have worked to create a vibrant downtown center with shopping, restaurants, and creative art installations. According to many community members, the Aldrich Library, Millstone Trails and other recreation opportunities, and community events are important assets that provide ways for the community to come together and enjoy the place they call home – especially during the pandemic. Throughout the All in for Barre process it was clear that Barre also continues to face some challenges. Rather than shy away from addressing those, All in For Barre participants decided to face them head on. The Steering Committee invited and welcomed conversation on equity and inclusion, addressing community divisions and safety, as well as discussion on housing and other key challenges for the future. All in For Barre was a process aimed at ensuring that these issues could be grappled with together – from City Leadership, to business owners, to students at Spaulding, to residents experiencing homelessness – all were welcome to weigh in on what is most important for a successful future.

If we didn’t know before, we know for sure now that Barre is a city that perseveres. VCRD and the Barre Visiting Resource Team got to see this first hand throughout the All in For Barre process. In March 2020, a Steering Committee of local community members gathered to frame the All in For Barre Process – setting a slate of topics for discussion and embarking on a plan to reach out to bring the full community together in April. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic quickly brought the process to a halt in 2020, the City remained committed to the process and adapted on the fly to ensure safe and welcoming opportunities to participate. Barre residents weighed in through many different channels – in-person forums, zoom forums, printed and online surveys. Thanks to CVTV’s technical expertise and support, the second step in the process was VCRD’s first ever fully hybrid community-scale meeting and was a big success. This is a city that is driven to move forward despite challenges thrown its way, and it was a pleasure to work with the such dedicated community leaders through these planning twists and turns.

The All in For Bare process engaged both long-established leaders who have been working for decades for the good of their community, and also some newer faces—folks eager to step-up and put themselves on the line to help make the Barre community succeed. The priorities reflect this diversity of experience and backgrounds. A couple of the final priorities selected in the process have been percolating for years and could benefit, we heard, from new energy and resources to help advance them. The other priority was a newer idea to bring exciting vitality through an underappreciated resource. It is not easy to choose priorities, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the ‘opportunities’ section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces, but in the end, Barre selected three priorities for action that will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community and economy for all including:

- **Improve River Access**
- **Start a Barre Housing Task Force**
- **Develop a Barre Community Center**

These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals. There is a lot of work to do, but task force chairs have already come together to frame a cohesive structure and a path forward. With nearly 200 people from all parts of the community participating in the process, it is clear that, even in this difficult time, there is energy in Barre for forward momentum and progress.

The Task Forces advancing these issues are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report). VCRD is prepared to support the work ahead and we look forward to providing follow up help to the All In For Barre Task Forces as needed.

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There are many people to thank for making this Community Visit effort possible.

We would like to thank Mayor Herring and the Barre City Council who initially invited this process. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including: Luke Aither, Joe Aldsworth, Claire Duke, Jacob Hemmerick, Lucas Herring, Michelle Kersey, Karen Lane, Tracie Lewis, Phayvanh Luekhamhan, Steve Mackenzie, Jeanie Macleod, Renita Marshall, Patty Meriam, Cody Morrison, Bob Nelson, Loren Polk, Ed Rousse, Janet Shatney, Kristine Smith, Tess Taylor, Eli Toohey, and Elaine Wang. Thank you also to all of the community leaders, groups, and organizations who worked to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate! Thanks especially to Casey Engels at Capstone Community Action for her work on outreach and helping to arrange for transportation needs.

Thanks also to the Northern Borders Regional Commission, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the members and donors of the Vermont Council on Rural Development who all contributed funding to make this process possible.

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with—and especially the All In For Barre Visiting and Resource Teams (listed in the back of this report)—they are the best of Vermont’s public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Barre should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: David Sichel: Housing Task Force; Danielle Owczarski: River Access; and Becca Lo Presti: Community Center.

VCRD especially wants to thank Renita Marshall who stepped forward as a key community touchstone for us in this process as the Community Visit Chair. In Barre, it was important to us to find someone who could be a champion for this process and help to connect and invite across the full community. As we asked around about people who fit that description, Renita Marshall’s name kept coming up. People described her as someone with a love for the City of Barre and as passionate about the future of the City. She was also described as someone who stands up for the “people” of the City and connects with many different parts of the community. We invited her to Chair the process and have certainly seen this passion for and dedication to Barre. We have appreciated her leadership and know she will be a strong leader and bridge to move this work forward.

At VCRD, we are so proud to work in places where community is real and strong, where local residents work together to get things done. It was a great pleasure to work with the residents of Barre, who stand up for the city and who are lined up for the common good and best future for this community. We are eager to follow your progress and support your success!

## II. Vision for Barre's Future

*These points of vision were compiled from vision statements that were shared during Community Visit Meetings and supported by the majority of participants at the Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent broad hopes that the majority of responding residents have for the long term good of the greater Barre community.*

### **Barre residents look to a future Barre:**

- ❖ that is a vibrant place to live.
- ❖ with abundant, accessible, and affordable housing.
- ❖ with afterschool programs and activities for youth.
- ❖ with a thriving community and downtown.
- ❖ where community members take care of one another.
- ❖ that prioritizes youth and kids' access to activities and services.
- ❖ with a sense of common identity and pride.
- ❖ that continues to build on the history and tradition of the granite industry.
- ❖ as a place that attracts visitors.
- ❖ with a common vision for how to meet its residents' needs.
- ❖ where Barre Town and Barre City work together for the benefit of the people and community.
- ❖ that is a center for arts, festivals, live music, and recreation.
- ❖ where the community is healthy, connected, and accessible to all.
- ❖ where people want to move to raise their children.

### III. The “All In For Barre” Community Visit Process

VCRD’s Community Visit program is a way for towns to engage and bring together their residents, set common goals and directions in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals. **Here is a snapshot of the 5-month process in Barre:**



#### Planning Committee Meeting: July 20, 2021

On February 20, 2020 and again on July 20, 2021, a total of 24 local residents met to plan for the launch of the Barre Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – All In For Barre – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, and flyers, this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Planning Committee included: Luke Aither, Joe Aldsworth, Claire Duke, Jacob Hemmerick, Lucas Herring, Michelle Kersey, Karen Lane, Tracie Lewis, Phayvanh Luekhamhan, Steve Mackenzie, Jeanie Macleod, Renita Marshall, Patty Meriam, Cody Morrison, Bob Nelson, Loren Polk, Ed Rouse, Janet Shatney, Kristine Smith, Tess Taylor, Elaine (Eli) Toohey, and Elaine Wang.

#### Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: August 25, 2021

All In For Barre kicked off with 10 brainstorming forums – 9 in person held in locations around the city and 1 on Zoom – and a community dinner at the Elks Lodge. Over 125 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in the following forum topics chosen by the planning team: Substance Use Disorder; Aging in Barre; Transportation; Housing & Homelessness; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion; Opportunities in the Face of Climate Change; Supporting Barre Students & Families; Recreation, Arts & Culture; and Addressing Empty Buildings & Downtown Vitality. 27 visiting team members participated, learning more about Barre and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Beth Awhaitey, *Outreach Specialist*, Office of Senator Sanders; Michele Bailey, *Senior Program Manager and ADA Coordinator*, VT Arts Council; Leslie Black-Plumeau, *Community Relations & Research Manager*, VT Housing Finance Agency; Ted Brady, *Executive Director*, VT League of Cities & Towns; Jason Broughton, *State Librarian & Commissioner of Libraries*, Vermont Department of Libraries; Xusana Davis, *Executive Director of Racial Equity*, State of Vermont; Ben Doyle, *Executive Director*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Will Eberle, *Field Services Director*, Agency of Human Services; Rebecca Ellis, *State Director*, Office of Congressman Peter Welch; Laurie Fielder, *VGreen Program Director*, VSECU; Scott Finn, *President & CEO*, VPR (Vermont Public Radio) and VT PBS; Josh Hanford, *Commissioner*, VT Dept of Housing and Community Development; Gary Holloway, *Downtown Program Coordinator*, Dept of Housing and Community Devel; Michelle Kersey, *Donor Relations Manager*, Downstreet Housing & Community Development; Kevin Lambert, *Public Affairs Specialist*, USDA Rural Development; Sarah Launderville, *Executive Director*, VT Center for Independent Living; Kate McCarthy, *Program Officer*, Vermont Community Foundation; Conor O’Dea, *State Unit on Aging Director*, Department of Aging and Independent Living; Robert Purvis, *Executive Director*, Turning

Point Center of Vermont; Aly Richards, *CEO*, Let's Grow Kids; Gus Seelig, *Executive Director*, VT Housing & Conservation Board; Bonnie Waninger, *Executive Director*, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Paul Costello, *Executive Director*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Associate*; Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*; and Nick Kramer, *Community and Policy Associate*.

## Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: September 29, 2021

After the kick-off, all of the brainstormed ideas were distilled into 23 key areas of action. Over 100 community members joined either in person at the Barre Auditorium or on Zoom on September 29<sup>th</sup> to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 3 action ideas emerged as key priorities: **Improve River Access**, **Develop a Barre Community Center**, and **Start a Barre Housing Task Force**. Participants then signed up for task forces that will convene to move these priorities forward.

## Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: October 20, 2021

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, community members, facilitators, and resource team members came together in person and virtually to develop action plans, identify resources, and form task force groups that will work in the months ahead to implement the priorities. From here forward, all action of "All In For Barre" is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team Members included: Leslie Black Plumeau, Vermont Housing Finance Agency; Nate Cleveland, VT Department of Housing and Community Development; Margaret Donovan, Manchester Riverwalk; Richarda Ericson, Vermont River Conservancy; Shaun Gilpin, VT Department of Housing and Community Development; Jenny Hyslop, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board; Emily Pelow Corbet, Vermont Community Foundation; Misty Sinsigalli, USDA Rural Development; Bonnie Waninger, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Paul Costello, *Executive Director (last meeting in role as VCRD ED)*; Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Operations and Communications*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Associate*; Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement and Policy Director*; Nick Kramer, *Community and Policy Associate*; and Brian Lowe, *Executive Director (incoming)*.



*On Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, participants joined in person and online to narrow the list of priorities for community action.*



## IV. All In For Barre Priorities

Determined by Barre residents at the All In For Barre Community Meeting  
September 29, 2021

*Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, more than 100 Barre community members whittled down a list of 23 action ideas to 3 priorities that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.*

### Barre residents selected three priorities for future action:

#### ► Improve River Access

Celebrate the natural asset of the river and improve points of access for canoeing, kayaking, and swimming. This group could also work to expand educational opportunities around the river, both for school-age children and adults.

#### ► Develop a Barre Community Center

Develop a community center in Barre to serve as a gathering and events space, afterschool hub, a community kitchen, youth center, potential childcare site, and more. The space could help to connect across generations, provide a safe space to go after school, and offer activities for people of all ages.

#### ► Start a Barre Housing Task Force

Many residents see a crucial need for more affordable, safe, and quality housing for people of all ages and income levels. A housing task force could expand housing options, encourage and support home repair, and improve tenant and landlord relationships. The group could identify ways to support and answer the needs of tenants, while also helping to connect landlords to resources and financing. Additionally, the group could explore and develop innovative housing models and solutions such as co-housing or the development of a housing fund that could support home ownership and repairs.

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### Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

*Along with the three chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared on Community Visit Day. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.*

#### Improve Public Transportation

Identify and promote ways to increase public transportation options, such as partnering with GMT to expand routes and frequency or to develop a "Barre Circulator" route modeled after the Montpelier Circulator. Explore and develop creative alternatives such as a local ride sharing model. A task force could focus on transportation for the Barre workforce, but also transportation to recreation and youth activities. A bus pass for students could help to improve usage among youth.

### **Improve and Expand Pedestrian and Bike Infrastructure**

Improve walk and bike infrastructure to make downtown Barre safe, accessible, and enjoyable for pedestrians and bikers with bike lanes and paths, bike parking, and sidewalk improvements. Work could focus on safe walk and bike routes to school for Spaulding students as well as others visiting, working, and recreating on Barre roadways. The group could explore traffic calming and slowing solutions that could improve safety and reduce traffic noise. Residents are interested in bike paths that could connect to Montpelier, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, the Cross Vermont Trail, and to the schools and recreation opportunities.

### **Improve Downtown Aesthetics and Vibrancy**

Identify ways to showcase Barre's downtown through public art, pocket parks, beautification, tree planting, signage, and more. The group could identify ways to integrate public art, beautification, and gathering places across the city – especially in historically underserved neighborhoods. The use of art, color, and gathering spaces could help to showcase the City's beauty, build unity and pride across the community, and attract locals and visitors to downtown shops and restaurants to support local business. Several residents pointed to a new Barre Welcome Sign as another strategy to attract and welcome visitors to the City.

### **Expand Community Events**

Promote current event offerings in a central communications hub and plan an annual series of local events that could help to unify and connect the community. Events could include an expanded and reinvigorated Barre Heritage Festival, indoor and outdoor concerts, and community or neighborhood block parties and dinners. Events could help to bring vibrancy, energize and engage youth, and celebrate Barre's rich history and culture.

### **Attract and Welcome New Community Members**

A task force could form that would focus on building a more welcoming community for newcomers to the City. The group could create a "welcome wagon" to share informational materials that orient new folks to the town and build a list of locals who are willing to match with new residents and be a liaison as they settle in the community. A task force could concentrate on strategies internally to build a more safe and welcoming community such as creating and sharing equity and inclusion trainings and sharing a more positive and caring reputation for the area.

### **Advance Career Training and Workforce Development**

Identify opportunities for career advancement and ongoing education for youth and adults. This could include developing training opportunities in partnership with area businesses and manufacturers, free community workshops, and creative work-based learning opportunities. A task force could focus on celebrating the trades and sharing opportunities in the trades – especially with youth. A "Barre Academy" program could be developed that offers a series of community-based education over the course of the year, free for people of all ages to participate.

### **Expand Access to Childcare and Afterschool Programming**

Access to affordable childcare and afterschool care and activities is a challenge for many in the Barre community. A Task Force could form to focus on this challenge, identify gaps, and find ways to meet needs and reduce barriers. The group could explore options to expand current offerings, develop new childcare and afterschool options, and find ways to help address staffing challenges.

### **Start a Senior Advisory Council**

A Senior Advisory Council could form to share information on activities and services for seniors, advise City Council on senior matters, and help to build events, connection and communication for seniors. The council could utilize and partner with the senior center and find other creative ways to connect seniors to each other and to others in the community and make sure seniors have what they need to thrive in the community. Additionally, the council could work to build a “yellow page” resource for seniors that provides printed information on businesses, resources, and activities rather than all online.

### **Expand Wrap-Around Support for Community Members in Crisis**

Build a cross-sector and inclusive group of community members, emergency services, and service providers to improve integrated and collaborative support for people experiencing mental health or substance use crises. The group could work to identify ways to better connect and offer care in an integrated and wrap-around way that supports those in crisis and their families. This could include an expansion of circles of support, regular sharing across service providers on challenging cases, better connections between emergency services and mental health support, or other ways to ensure that people have what they need to get through challenging times and recover in a supported and safe way.

### **Expand Alternative Energy and Efficiency**

Identify ways to improve weatherization and efficiency in Barre and help expand alternative energy in the City. This could include helping residents understand and access existing resources or find creative models to bring alternative energy such as community solar. A task force could also look at Barre’s existing infrastructure with an eye towards resilience, and explore public access to heating / cooling stations, water features, and green space.

### **Advance Shared Equity and Inclusion Goals and Action**

Community members could come together with representatives of key City organizations and leadership to develop shared language, goals, and action for a safer and more inclusive Barre. The group could work to integrate and expand existing efforts and could implement strategies such as bringing equity evaluation to all City and community institutions, bringing “reading against racism” to the schools, consulting with ADA and accessibility experts to improve access to public process, or holding city-wide discussion groups or shared learning opportunities. A “citizens leadership academy” program could invite cohorts of residents to better understand and engage in equity and inclusion work locally.

### **Expand Emergency Housing Options**

Work with area experts, providers, and stakeholders to develop safe and accessible housing models for those experiencing crisis such as a warming shelter, safe house, or other emergency housing for those whose needs aren’t currently being met. Additionally, the group could develop longer term housing for community members in recovery.

### **Support and Connect Young Families**

Build a program that reaches out to and connects Barre residents with young children. The program could build social connections as well as help connect new parents to the support they need to be successful including early education and care, resource and assistance, and education.

### **Boost Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Many residents identified strategies to boost creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship as a key strategy to fill downtown vacancies and improve the economy and vibrancy of the City. A task force

could implement a set of strategies to attract and support creative entrepreneurs and startups such as; developing a co-working or makers space, offering pop-up shops and work spaces in vacant downtown buildings; and sharing and celebrating new businesses and creative ideas. The group could consider an “Innovation Fund” that would draw on philanthropic dollars to support creative start-ups, artists, and events.

### **Expand Substance Use Education**

Work with existing providers to expand education on substance use disorder both with youth and with the broader community. Some opportunities could focus on prevention while others would help to build a shared understanding in the community around the challenge of substance use and how to best support those in crisis or where to turn for help.

### **Address Safety in Barre**

Many residents expressed concern about their safety in Barre, especially after dark. This was shared by folks of all ages and background – but especially by youth and people of color. A task force could form to explore strategies that would help to improve the safety of Barre community members and businesses. This may mean addressing loitering and criminal activity, but also could focus on traffic safety and walkability – especially with so many students walking to school. The group could work with key community leaders and partners to work together towards a safer and more welcoming downtown.

### **Attract or Develop a Downtown Grocery Store**

Revisit and build on past efforts to bring a small, convenient, and affordable grocery store to Barre. Residents share a need for a place to buy basic grocery needs that is walkable and affordable. A group could either work to attract a business to the community or look into creative business models such as a cooperative or community owned business to make this long-time goal a reality.

### **Start a Youth Council**

A youth-led council, with other community representation, could form to boost youth engagement and leadership in the community. The group could help to better integrate youth voice by playing an advisory role and weighing in on city decision-making.

### **Improve and Celebrate Barre’s Identity**

Many residents shared a concern regarding how Barre is perceived to outsiders and how that impacts community pride and ownership. A task force could form to work with the full community to renew, revive, and strengthen a Barre identity that is inclusive, vibrant, and positive. The group could bring voices together from across the City to celebrate Barre’s culture and heritage and work together towards a clear identity and vision for the future. The group could then work to share Barre’s story and improve reputation among visitors and work to rebuild and renew and shared pride in the City and opportunity into the future.

### **Create a Barre Communications Hub**

Build a central online hub where information and events are shared with the community. A central location and calendar could help to reach more community members in City events and news and deepen participation and engagement. In the long term, the group could explore options to staff communications efforts.

# V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, October 20 2021

*Barre Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and a visiting resource team to develop step-by-step action plans and a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.*

## ► Improve River Access

Celebrate the natural asset of the river and improve points of access for canoeing, kayaking, and swimming. This group could also work to expand educational opportunities around the river, both for school-age children and adults.

Community Chair: **Danielle Owczarski**

Facilitator: **Nick Kramer**, *Community and Policy Associate*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Margaret Donovan**, *Manchester River Walk*

**Richarda Ericson**, *Vermont River Conservancy*

Community participants: Peter Anthony, Christian Betheuil, Gio Camozzi, Brian R Carrier, Jim Deshler,  
and task force sign-ups: Jenn Grablutz, Ellen Kaye, Nick/Nicolas Landry, Carol MacDougall, Scott McLaughlin,  
Patty Meriam, Danielle Owczarski, Brendan Pierson, Deb Sachs, Tess Taylor,  
Hannah Towne

### What is the current status?

- Most riverfront property is privately owned, with some non-profit ownership, like the Granite Museum. There are lots of houses that run along the river, many of which are rentals.
- There are ongoing challenges around trash disposal in the river.
- Much of the river has been channelized through the city, which makes access difficult.
- There are a number of bridges and crossing points along the length of the river. There are also a number of informal access points that are passed down among Barre locals. Some of these could be improved for safer access.
- The river has a long history of human use, much of which is not well chronicled but could be celebrated.
- There are a number of individuals experiencing homelessness who access the river.
- Ellen S. Sivret submitted a proposal to the City Council in 2011 with suggested action steps towards river improvement.
- There is a city council member with a drone that could be used to help take aerial photos.
- The railway runs parallel to the course of the river for much of its length through Barre.
- There have been some efforts to support the natural ecosystem along the river banks, but they are few and far between.

### Action Steps

Gathering Information:

1. Conduct a comprehensive historic and ecological river assessment and map crossing points, existing access points, and property ownership along the length of the river in the city. Develop an online report of the assessment information for future outreach.

2. Based on the above, and on local knowledge build an initial list of stakeholders with a vested interest in this project. This could include landowners, businesses, teens, individuals experiencing homelessness, and other groups in the city with potential interest in river use.
3. Host a series of public events—river exploration walks, clean-up days to help grow the list of partners and stakeholders and raise awareness about the river.
4. Engage the broader community to build a vision for potential future uses. What do Barre residents want to see happen? This could include a public survey, forums, an ideas board, or be a component woven into the events described above. Build a vision statement for the future of the river, based on the input gathered from the community.
5. Connect with City leadership and with other committees in town whose work may bear on future projects. This group partner with the Transportation Committee, an Accessibility Committee, environmental groups etc. to leverage funding and increase person-power.

Long-term projects this group could undertake include:

1. Connect with other neighboring towns to explore the possibility of completing a walking and biking path along the river.
2. Create and implement better signage at access points that highlight natural or historical features.
3. Host ongoing river-centered events to draw folks to the river. These could include clean-up work days, fish surveying events, educational workshops.
4. Explore partnerships with local schools and youth groups to develop curricula based around the river history & ecology.
5. Build a historical narrative around the river's history, and create online story-maps highlighting points of interest, access points.

## Resources

- **Richard Ericson**, *Vermont River Conservancy*. [richarda@vermontriverconservancy.org](mailto:richarda@vermontriverconservancy.org). Great overall resource, as they've overseen similar projects in other areas.
- **Michele Braun**, *Friends of the Winooski*. Local non-profit based in Barre focused on Environmental issues. 802-279-3771.
- **Jennifer Waite**, *US National Park Service*. Jennifer oversees the Trails & Conservation Assistance Program.
- **Kelly Stoddard-Poor**, *AARP Vermont*. [kstoddardpoor@aarp.org](mailto:kstoddardpoor@aarp.org). AARP has a number of placemaking grants available for cities looking to boost the use of outdoor space.
- **Local Employers** like *Green Mountain Coffee Roasters*, *National Life*, all have programs that pay employees to work on volunteer projects, and could help with river clean-up initiatives.
- **North Branch Nature Center**, located in Montpelier, could be a good consultant for outdoor environmental programming.
- **The Trust for Public Land – Vermont** works to preserve land for public use and facilitate access: [vermont@tpl.org](mailto:vermont@tpl.org).
- **Spaulding High School** could be a partner in helping build curriculum around the river and draw students. Contact Luke Aither, Assistant Principal at [laithshs@buusd.org](mailto:laithshs@buusd.org).
- **Vermont Landowner Liability Law** gives extended coverage to landowners in the event of an incident on their property. <https://uvlt.org/docs/landconservation/VTLiability.pdf>.
- **Deb Sachs**, *NetZero Vermont*, [deb@netzerovt.org](mailto:deb@netzerovt.org), can help provide examples of successful online story maps, connect to resources around bikeability / walkability projects along the river.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

### Action Step Recommendations

Consult the town plan to see what goals and action steps may have been identified for this need.

Talk with the town planning office (perhaps the floodplain manager?) about riverfront access and possible opportunities.

Look into whether there are other projects underway near the riverfront – bike paths, flood mitigation projects, road and bridge reconstructions, building redevelopment and brownfields remediation, streambank stabilization, etc. – to see whether there are opportunities to work riverfront access into the timelines, engineering, and design of these projects. The Public Works Department or Planning Office could be resources.

Consider what river access improvements the community wants to targeted to enhance: angling/paddling opportunities? Tourism/home sales?

Check out how to make this access accessible to people with disabilities. Making sure the trails and equipment available work for people with disabilities.

Connect with organizations that create and improve river access in Central Vermont; see next section for suggestions.

### Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

In 2014, Vergennes made river access a high priority. Check out the Vergennes report: <https://www.vtrural.org/programs/community-visits/reports/vergennes>.

Talk to representatives of communities that have successfully spotlighted their river access in recent years, including Springfield, Winooski, Montpelier, Waitsfield, Bennington etc.

Meet with the Lake Champlain Basin Program to discuss resources for work in the watershed.

Contact the Vermont River Conservancy about your goals and interests – they will likely be able to provide guidance.

Friends of the Winooski is a great resource, <https://winooskiriver.org/>. The Stevens Branch that runs through Barre is in the Winooski River watershed.

**Indigenous Acknowledgement and Partnership:** As much as possible, include members of the Indigenous community in your planning. Remember, Vermont is unceded Indigenous territory. By partnering with the Indigenous community, you can ensure more process equity and ecological protection. This might include special access rights, more educational programming that centers the Indigenous stewards of the land, discounts on equipment rentals or fees for Indigenous visitors, renaming using Indigenous names, etc.

**Environmental Justice:** Incorporate principles of environmental justice in your planning by educating yourselves on the various ways in which historically marginalized communities are often shut out, drowned out, or overburdened by eco-related initiatives.

Connect with Northfield’s “Ridge and River Route” group. Lydia Petty is a great point of contact for that – [lydbright@gmail.com](mailto:lydbright@gmail.com).

VT Adaptive Ski and Sports has an adaptive kayaking program: <https://www.vermontadaptive.org/summer-sports/>.

The VT Commission on Native American Affairs (VCNAA) could be a partner and resource. <https://vcnaa.vermont.gov/>

See the work of the state Climate Justice Council for more ideas on how to be inclusive and adhere to principles of environmental justice. Council’s meetings and materials are open to the public.

### **Potential Funding Sources**

Lake Champlain Basin Program, Jim Brangan, [jbrangan@lcbp.org](mailto:jbrangan@lcbp.org).

National Parks Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>.

Vermont ANR River Management Program, <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/rivers/river-management>.

Vermont River Conservancy – this is their bread and butter! They have recently worked in Montpelier to improve river access, which may be useful since in terms of development pattern, Montpelier and Barre share some commonalities. <https://vermontriverconservancy.org/>.

VNRC Small Grants for Smart Growth, [www.VNRC.org](http://www.VNRC.org). VNRC funded a community engagement process to gather feedback on the design for a riverfront park. <https://vnrc.org/vermont-river-conservancy-vrc-receives-1500-small-grant-for-smart-growth-to-fund-expanded-scope-for-feasibility-study-conceptual-design-of-a-confluence-river-park/>.

National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>. Vermont contact is Jennifer Waite at Marsh Billings National Historic Site, [jennifer\\_waite@nps.gov](mailto:jennifer_waite@nps.gov).

Federal recovery funding might be good to use here, particularly the ARPA funding.





## ► Develop a Barre Community Center

Develop a community center in Barre to serve as a gathering and events space, afterschool hub, a community kitchen, youth center, potential childcare site, and more. The space could help to connect across generations, provide a safe space to go after school, and offer activities for people of all ages.

Community Chair: **Becca Lo Presti**

Facilitator: **Brian Lowe**, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Nate Cleveland**, VT Dept. of Housing and Community Development  
**Emilye Pelow-Corbett**, Vermont Community Foundation  
**Misty Sinsigalli**, USDA Rural Development  
**Alyssa Johnson**, VCRD

Community participants and task force sign-ups: Holly Anderson, Melissa Battah, Christian Betheuil, Margo Bluhm, Gio Camozzi, Brian R Carrier, Amy Galford, Ann Gilbert, Karen Hatcher, Lucas Herring, Sandra Jenkins, Olivia Leclerc, Lisa Liotta, Rebecca Lo Presti, Steve Mackenzie, Renita Marshall, Katherine O'Day, Shannon Planck, Loren Polk, Stephanie Quaranta, Bern Rose, Sonya Spaulding, Elaine (Eli) Toohey, Suzanne Trahey, Eva Zaret

### Background and current efforts:

- Full time staff are too expensive, but volunteer led efforts have not been viable.
- Some community locations exist, but are not geographically accessible.
- Wheelock building may be available?
- There is a desire for multiple ages to mix, but also potential challenges from mixing multiple different populations.
- The library has a dedicated teen room and teen librarian, and is excited about the potential for future spaces – they do not see this effort as competitive.
- Silos of resources
- Social isolation and mental health are challenges
- Large amount of female head of households in poverty (Working Communities Challenge)

### Priority Action Steps

1. Work with stakeholders and partners to develop a shared vision/purpose statement to build momentum and shared understanding about the Community Center.
2. Conduct an assessment of existing services in the community and potential partners. Consider ways in which a community center could have fill gaps in services, as well as ways in which a community center could expand and augment existing services.
3. Identify a lead agency or non-profit as a fiscal agent to apply for funding .
4. Work to identify potential sites. Consider a space needs assessment, capital needs assessment, and scattered sites vs. a single site.
5. Work to identify anchor tenants.

### Resources

- The Old School Community Center in Wilmington is an example of a successful project that could be a model. Visit <https://www.osccvt.com/> to learn more.
- VCRD can provide technical assistance in navigating grant applications for feasibility studies and future USDA Community Facilities applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org).

- Downtown and/or city owned properties can have advantages for funding applications.
- Anchor tenants who can provide recurring revenue have been important in many successful community centers. In some cases childcare centers have been able to fill this role.
- The Vermont Community Development Program has funding for feasibility studies. Visit <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>
- The Vermont Community Foundation may be able to provide support. Contact Emilye Pelow-Corbett, [epelowcorbett@vermontcf.org](mailto:epelowcorbett@vermontcf.org)
- Private philanthropic support has been an important component in many successful projects.
- Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services has a Building Communities grant program that can fund shovel-ready community facilities projects. Visit <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

### Action Step Recommendations

Determine your top goals for the Community Center. Brainstorm a list of what the space could offer, and determine 3 to 5 must-haves.

There are two parts to a community center – the facility and the programming. Focusing on facility can help bring people together around a tangible result, but it can also suck up energy when it may be easier to use existing facilities and focus on the programming instead.

The group could build a subcommittee of the Barre Buildings and Community Services Department tasked with investigating the possibility of building a community center.

Catalogue all the existing “community center” services occurring in the community and invite representatives from each organization to share how they offer services and whether they need additional space / would like to co-locate.

Build a coalition of community organizations interested in a community center – and begin meeting biweekly to build momentum.

Talk to other communities that have successfully built or operated a community center.

Consider whether the community kitchen could double as a commercial kitchen or food hub. Is such a thing needed or desired, to help incubate small-scale producers?

Identify locations that allow people to participate in the community center even if they do not, or cannot, drive.

Talk to people and groups in Barre who would access this type of a Center so that it reflects the full scope of the community and doesn't just cater to the middle-class, for example. It would be important that the site is physically accessible (in all parts of the space) to people with disabilities, and on the bus route so more people are able to get to the space. Involve more people in the planning, young people. Really making sure this is an idea in which people will show up and use vs. just a great idea.

Engage youth in the development of the project as equal partners, to truly understand what youth want and need.

Engage the people expected to use the center in its development. If the center is aimed at youth, the youth groups it's intended for should drive its design and programming.

Have a plan for operations and maintenance before the space is created. Capitol funds for renovations and constructions are available. Operations and maintenance funds primarily are community based.

Welcoming spaces: Ensure that this Community Center (and the recreational facilities, events, initiatives, funding, that it hosts) is physically accessible to all, AND truly welcoming to all. This means taking it seriously when signage is vandalized with hate symbols. It means physically building spaces that can be accessed by seniors, small children, and people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs. It means fairly issuing permits and allocating event space for events celebrating various communities, not just the mainstream or dominant ones.

### **Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations**

Connect with Let's Grow Kids to understand options and needs for child care, and determine feasibility for child care to be a part of the project.

Vermont Afterschool could be a resource for aspects of the community center focused on teens and youth. <https://vermontafterschool.org/>

Visit other community centers and talk to Recreation Departments in other communities.

Ken Russell runs a community center in Montpelier called Another Way, and can be reached at [ken@anotherwayvt.org](mailto:ken@anotherwayvt.org).

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission may have resources or the ability to connect you with similar projects done in other communities.

Essex Junction Parks and Recreation – Ally Vile, Director, [recmail@essex.org](mailto:recmail@essex.org).

Youth centers: Vermont Afterschool is a resource for youth centers, and may have advice on starting one up.

Mentor Connector: Another great resource for youth programming that may or may not align with the vision for the community center.

Washington County Youth Services Bureau, if not already involved, would be a great resource for understanding what gaps exist (if any) that could be filled for youth by a community center.

Work with existing social service agencies located in Barre and surrounding areas – maybe there is a way connection and sharing of resources. Capstone, AAA, VCIL, WCMH, JD Green-Aired Out.

“A Gathering Place: A Proposed Model for Developing Sustainable Community Centers in Alaska” is an interesting study on community centers:

[http://www.forakergroup.org/layouts/forakergroup/files/documents/resources\\_research/Foraker%20Community%20Center%20Study%202013.pdf](http://www.forakergroup.org/layouts/forakergroup/files/documents/resources_research/Foraker%20Community%20Center%20Study%202013.pdf).

### **Potential Funding Sources**

Let's Grow Kids works to increase the supply and quality of child care in Vermont. Their Make Way for Kids Grant program, which is annual, might be a resource for researching the feasibility of a child care center. <https://www.letsgrowkids.org/make-way-for-kids>. They can also be a resource for possible grants or funding opportunities, such as using ARPA funding. Contact [Jen@letsgrowkids.org](mailto:Jen@letsgrowkids.org).

Spark Connecting Community Grant through the Vermont Community Foundation: <https://vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/https://vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/>.

AARP Community Challenge Grant. The next round is Feb. 2022: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2017/aarp-community-challenge.html>.

With matching city funds, you may be able to apply for a Community Development Block Grant through the Vermont Community Development Program. Visit: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>

The Department of Housing and Community Development and the Vermont Housing Conservation Board have funding sources.

Federal recovery funding might be good to use here.

USDA Rural Development's "Strategic Economic and Community Development (SECD)" funding supports regional economic and community development planning: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/strategic-economic-and-community-development>.

## ► Start a Barre Housing Task Force

Many residents see a crucial need for more affordable, safe, and quality housing for people of all ages and income levels. A housing task force could expand housing options, encourage and support home repair, and improve tenant and landlord relationships. The group could identify ways to support and answer the needs of tenants, while also helping to connect landlords to resources and financing. Additionally, the group could explore and develop innovative housing models and solutions such as co-housing or the development of a housing fund that could support home ownership and repairs.

Community Chair: **David Sichel**

Facilitator: **Jenna Koloski**, *Vermont Council on Rural Development*

Resource Team Members: **Leslie Black-Plumeau**, *Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)*

**Shaun Gilpin**, *Dept of Housing and Community Development*

**Jenny Hyslop**, *Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)*

**Bonnie Waninger**, *Central VT Regional Planning Commission*

Community participants: James Alvarez, Melissa Battah, Margo Bluhm, Jacqueline Calder, Gio Camozzi,

and task force sign-ups: Brian R Carrier, Philip Cecchini, Venus Dean, Margaret Ferguson, Karen Hatcher,

Jacob Hemmerick, Samantha Hiscock, Sandra Jenkins, Kerry Kelly, Romana

Kurevija, Jeannie MacLeod, Susan McDowell, Cody Morrison, Joelen Mulvany,

Brooke Pouliot, Janet Shatney, David Sichel, Samn Stockwell, Tess Taylor, Tommy

Walz, Elaine Wang, Sara Winters

### What is the current status?

- There is no housing
- High rates of poverty in Barre
- Barre has a rental registry (one of few towns)
- We have many vacant buildings in the downtown
- Rents are high and are outpacing wages
- Mortgages are cheaper, but people can't get down payments
- HUD fair market rent has gone up 3% per year on average
- Losing single family homes to multi-family homes
- We need to pay attention to boosting home ownership
- Barre has a homelessness task force
- It is difficult to get into a shelter – people are freezing outside right now
- Lack of housing stock
- Limited access to information and resources
- Barre Housing Authority
- Programs for first time homebuyers – if you qualify it is difficult to get financing
- We have minimum housing standards in Barre
- Older housing stock in need of repair

### Action Steps

1. Conduct a housing needs assessment – both to determine need, but also current condition and quality of housing stock.
2. Research creative housing solutions and visit communities that have identified and implemented creative ideas. Learn about solutions both focused on development and housing as well as home repair and weatherization. Barre could then pilot models that seem like they could be a good fit for the community.
3. Conduct an analysis of current resources available to developers/landlords as well as renters and potential homeowners. Use this analysis to both identify gaps, but also to create a clearinghouse of information and resources that is available widely and actively shared.

4. Review current zoning to identify strategies to improve “housing-friendly” regulations. Additionally, review the permitting process to identify any opportunities for clarity and efficiency.
5. Develop strategies to improve skills within the community around home repair and housing rehab. Connect with the tech program/high school to find ways to partner.

### **Other Ideas for Action**

- “Cargo homes” as one potential creative solution
- Set up a community loan fund for upgrades, efficiency, and home ownership
- Connect with Mosaic to look at transitional housing for people who have experienced sexual violence
- Enlist vacant housing as transitional housing (67 vacant homes)
- Share information on renting and home ownership to help reduce barriers
- Improve accessibility in emergency housing
- Assess the City’s capacity for technical assistance and compliance support for developers/landlords
- Improve wrap around services for people in transition

### **Resources**

- Vermont Housing Data Website has housing data as well as links to sample housing studies <https://www.housingdata.org/>.
- Rutland has an example of a unique and comprehensive housing needs assessment that both shared housing need and combined with land uses and zoning to demonstrate possibilities for the future. Bonnie Waninger at CVRPC can share it. Contact Bonnie at [waninger@cvregion.com](mailto:waninger@cvregion.com).
- VHCB could support a housing needs assessment. Contact Jenny Hyslop at [jenny@vhcb.org](mailto:jenny@vhcb.org).
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission can help to build the data for a housing needs assessment. Contact Bonnie Waninger at [waninger@cvregion.com](mailto:waninger@cvregion.com).
- Capstone and Washington County Mental Health could be partners in data collection and service identification.
- The Barre Rental Registry and the professional inspection force can be sources of information and data.
- VHFA/DHCD have developed a Housing Committee Toolbox: <https://www.housingdata.org/toolbox/steps-for-municipalities>
- Shaun Gilpin at Department of Housing and Community Development. [Shaun.gilpin@vermont.gov](mailto:Shaun.gilpin@vermont.gov) or (802) 249-0014.
- Thriving Communities Program at CVOEO <https://www.thrivingcommunitiesvt.org/>.
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development “Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods” <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/CPR-Z4GN-Guide-Final-web.pdf>.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

### Action Step Recommendations

Check out the Housing Committee Toolkit. Learn more at <http://www.thrivingcommunitiesvt.org/toolkit/> and visit the Housing-Ready Toolbox at <https://www.housingdata.org/toolbox/steps-for-municipalities>.

Housing Ready Toolbox (<https://www.housingdata.org/toolbox/steps-for-municipalities>); 2016 Housing Needs Assessment Guide ([https://www.housingdata.org/download/assessment\\_guide.pdf](https://www.housingdata.org/download/assessment_guide.pdf)).

Review VHFA's Barre City Housing Needs Fact Sheet summary, August 2021 at: <https://www.housingdata.org/documents/images/Barre%20Housing%20Needs%20factsheet.pdf>

Speak with other Housing Task Forces in Vermont (see ideas for specific communities in the next section).

You can find data on housing in Barre at: <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/>.

For all these ideas, media attention will be important. Reach out to individual reporters early in the process and ask them if they'd like to follow it from the beginning. Appoint one person to be the media contact. Determine your target audiences and media goals. Research which reporters with which media are reaching that audience and reach out directly to them. Have a news hook – what's new and interesting? Weekends can be a good time to get media attention – especially Sunday when less is happening.

Consider whether the Barre Community Restorative Justice Center has, or could offer, programs to facilitate landlord/tenant relationships.

In the longer term, the group could establish a rental housing registration program, and use fees from the program to fund (perhaps with other city funds) a grant program for landlords to improve their properties. St. Johnsbury does this. While this may be a heavy lift, it helps identify where the rental stock is, and provides a source of funding to encourage people to invest in rental properties.

The Housing task force could coordinate closely with the Washington County Continuum of Care. Contact Will Eberle, Field Services Director, Agency of Human Services, [Will.Eberle@vermont.gov](mailto:Will.Eberle@vermont.gov)

Include people of all income brackets, have people who understand the need for physically accessible housing for people with disabilities. Figure out a way to have mediated discussions that push beyond for tenants and property owners. Go to people that live in Barre, including in Barre Housing Authority units to talk about what they wish was different.

Use a multi-stakeholder steering committee to ensure all perspectives are engaged.

Complete a housing needs assessment and market study to provide data and build a shared understanding among stakeholders, businesses, and residents.

Develop shared priorities for action before taking any actions so energy is used to maximum benefit.

Meaningful Inclusion: Ensure that this Task Force (and the meetings, documents, and funding that it produces) is physically accessible to all, AND truly welcoming to all. This means ensuring broad representation through diverse membership, and not expecting one person to speak on behalf of an entire demographic group. It means ensuring meetings can be attended by people who may have trouble getting to in-person locations. Perhaps do hybrid meetings, and make sure your virtual meeting platform has the option for

subtitles/translation. Find decision-making models or consensus-building models that center people's needs, not just "the process." Ensure that there are ways to hold the Task Force itself accountable if there are decisions made that are inequitable. Consider not only the needs of the community who is currently in Barre, but also the community members you want to attract and retain in the future. At the outset of the Task Force's development, devise a leadership structure that shares and rotates power, instead of hoards it.

Arrange for the completion of a Barre Housing Needs Assessment to identify housing needs and help prioritize those for action by the housing task force.

### **Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations**

Connect with Downstreet Housing & Community Development (DHCD), [downstreet.org](http://downstreet.org), to discuss best practices in forming Housing Task Force.

Connect with the Community Planning and Revitalization Office at the Department of Housing and Community Development for ideas, and/or to learn what already exists (if that is not already known).

Reach out to members of the Montpelier Housing Task force to see how they developed their scope of work, what's worked, and what has been challenging. <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/435/Housing-Task-Force>.

Contact Assistant City Manager Joe Kasperzak about the St. Johnsbury Rental Housing Registry program [jkasperzak@stjvt.com](mailto:jkasperzak@stjvt.com) and 802-748-3926 X 5.

2012 Rutland Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study, including its 2019 Update (<https://rutlandvtbusiness.com/revitalization-work/>).

Consult with the Human Rights Commission and the Developmental Disabilities Council for strategies on making meetings accessible. Use new methods and sources to seek members for the Task Force who may not be from the same pool of active residents.

Downstreet Housing and Vermont, Capstone Community Action, and Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission may have resources related to housing. Ask what resources the Task Force could access without charge, and where specialized consultant services would be most effective.

### **Potential Funding Sources**

VNRC Small Grants for Smart Growth – This small grant program helps community members organize, gather information, conduct studies, etc. that promote smart growth goals, including housing in compact locations. [www.VNRC.org](http://www.VNRC.org).

VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) may have funding for contracting for a Barre Housing Needs Assessment.

The Vermont Center for Independent Living may have funds for housing modification.



# All in for Barre Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held in-person and virtually with over 130 Barre City community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and through a paper and online survey.

*Although the prioritization work of the All in For Barre Community Visit Program requires a town to decide what is most important as it moves forward with Task Forces, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.*

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## Transportation

Visiting Team: Jon Copans (facilitator), Ben Doyle (scribe), Ted Brady, Rebecca Ellis, Laurie Fielder, Gary Holloway, Bonnie Waninger

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Lots of interest and skill in the area of cars (tech ed, Thunder Road, etc.). That interest should be channeled.
- Basic bus service. Can get from here to Montpelier.
- Washington County Railroad.
- Barre has good access to two essential highways.
- Easy access to interstate, which is good, but also a challenge because it enables a lot of traffic.
- There are some EV charging stations downtown (Pearl Street and Merchants' Row).
- One of the best bike shops in the state of Vermont.
- Great public works director.
- Lots of people who are passionate about transportation.
- Compactness of downtown and population density.
- About 20 miles of sidewalk.
- Very efficient snow removal.
- Lots of parking spots downtown. Ample parking.
- Bellavance trucking—really important for granite shipping.
- Bike path Mill Stone Trails recreational infrastructure.
- You don't actually need a gas-powered car—you can have an electric vehicle.
- Having charging infrastructure attracts people downtown and plan their trips around what is available.
- Have neighbors (Montpelier/Northfield) that are interested in innovative transportation solutions.
- Proud history of people working in the transportation industry.
- Lots of services/volunteer opportunities are within walkable distance of downtown. People can give back.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Limited bike lines on Hospital Hill.
- Debris on the road limits biking and makes it dangerous. Downtown is hampered by the car/truck traffic. The preference of cars makes it hard to work/walk downtown. Community is really centered around cars.
- Limited bus schedule on weekends.
- Current bike path on road is better than nothing, but that's about it.
- Snow removal is difficult.
- Hardcore bike commuters will use bike lanes, but others don't feel safe.
- Not everything accessible via bike or bus.
- Mufflers—people don't use them. Is it Thunder Road?
- There is so much parking that attracts cars.
- Lack of public transportation after hours.
- The route map doesn't necessarily line up with people who may have accessibility needs. Not enough flexibility in the routes.
- The last mile of bus service is tough to overcome.
- Topography of city is a challenge given the hills. Challenge for construction, walking, biking. We are a passthrough city for a variety of reasons.
- No transportation from ER—leads to trespassing or policy intervention.
- Lack of knowledge around transportation options from CMCV.
- The car is valued over people. More time is given to car moving through an intersection than the crosswalk.
- None of the parking has shade.
- Pretty disjointed public bike infrastructure (speaker had been hit twice by cars).
- Car culture is dangerous and when we prioritize it puts people at risk.
- Basic goods are not accessible to people without a car. Particularly for families. It's food desert.
- We don't have a stable population. 30% turnover in student population year over year. The population continues to churn. This prevents planning for transportation.
- Public health issues related to cars. We can't get away from cars. Some people can get by without a car, but some can't. we need to move to electric.
- Transportation network is the greatest challenge we face—everything else: grand list growth (slow), housing, etc. is connected. There are environmental justice issues.
- We can't solve Barre's transportation issues locally alone—there are regional issues.
- Not enough enforcement on speeding.
- On demand should be compromised of flexible routes.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Stronger bus service that is more attractive to people who also have cars. More bus usage would make downtown more pleasant.
- Should be more volunteer opportunities.
- More bike paths.
- Informal car sharing network could help. Give a ride take a ride.
- Financial incentive for showing public art.
- Police should help transport people from hospital—not arrest them.
- Need additional transportation from hospital. Physical and social connections to downtowns are challenge. Much better at UVM where there are courtesy rides to bring people home safely.
- Needs to be more investment from industrial vehicles
- Green Mountain Transportation Authority is a key partner that should be leveraged.
- Infrastructure is going to have to be updated and should be thought of in concert with efforts to improve walkability and transportation. Lots of projects coming down the pike and they should be smartly done.
- New plan in place for traffic calming and reduce trucking implications (need to think about enforcement of existing regs and the creation of new ones)
- Barre is going to be a pilot for a new on demand (ride hailing) service with GMTA. Like Uber but with buses. Would be for anyone and is same day on-demand.
- More muffler shops! Seriously, for lower income folks but need assistance for exhaust (wheels for warmth but for exhaust).
- Need more access to money to let people get things done—universal basic economic?
- An app service that allows people to report things to public works. See, Click, Fix.
- Assess transportation options with employers and the hospital. Also need to work with employers to get the information.
- Use bequest gift to build bike path connected to Montpelier. We should be connecting all of those. Multi-use paths came in first in an energy committee survey.
- More education about transportation apps. Make sure marginalized populations know about.
- More public places for people to sit—increase walkability and ultimately more biking. More placemaking to make the community walkable. Lots of fun art to look at already.
- Create a mechanism for an informal transformation network.
- Major plan in place for bike path that will go all the way down to Granite Street. Municipality is working on it, but it is a challenging process. Existing bike path meets monthly. Lots of opportunities. But a lot is hidden in plain sight.
- Add emergency service call boxes along bike and walking paths.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This has been an incredible conversation, and inspiring to see that the folks in this room all totally appreciate and want to underscore the importance / value of the arts.
- It's all about having a varied and diverse artistic ecosystem.
- It's clear that Bradford is a major hub for surrounding towns. That seems important to capitalize on, moving forward.
- Heard many times and want to reinforce the shifting narrative from art being a hobby to being a livelihood. Important to center dignity. Artists should not have to beg for funding.
- Focusing on the municipal budget can be powerful. I often say "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value."
- Important to recognize when one person is carrying too much burden / work. How can community members help share the load?
- Bradford has the best "backside" of any town in Vermont. Are there ways to capitalize on the view and setting behind Main Street?
- It's imperative to get youth involved in leadership positions.
- Bradford is a tremendous town with so many assets. Toot your own horns!
- Want to underscore the value of connecting with nearby towns and sharing resources and ideas. This can be mutually really beneficial.
- There is a real value in putting energy into structures that carry some accountability like an arts council.
- It's wonderful to see such a collaborative spirit among local artists, and also such a broad definition of the arts.
- It sounds like this is a community with a course that you're all ready to chart. You're already partway down the path to success.

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## Aging in Barre

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Michele Bailey (scribe), Beth Awhaitey, Jason Broughton, Xusana Davis, Scott Finn, Sarah Launderville, Conor O'Dea

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## What are the Assets in this Area?

- Senior Center in Wall Street Complex – walkable in the downtown (only open a few hours at a time for now)
- CVCOA – resources – SNAP, Heating Assistance, navigate for folks
- People care about each other in the community
- Not much agism in hiring
- Medical services are here, available and good to access
- Aldrich Public library a lot going on

- Walkable community in the downtown – and have many resources
- beautiful neighborhoods that feed into the downtown
- Wonderful restaurants
- Art gallery – SPA in Downtown
- Thursday food trucks in Carrier(?) park
- Neighborhood watches (email distribution lists, can be shared with each other or police if necessary)
- Front Porch Forum
- Great neighbors – look out for one another
- Transportation has improved
- Central VT Council on Aging (CVCOA) – Memory day at Historical Society
- Adult education that does technology training
- Housing sites have support service coordinators – Support and Services at Home(SASH) can go to people’s homes to help with computer or other issues.
- City and Town are a community in spite of the political dichotomy
- People are conscientiousness about wearing masks – COVID
- Governor’s press conferences were helpful to see – COVID
- Active youth sports programs in Barre
- Good group of Churches that worked together (Barre Interfaith Group) helped people during the pandemic – COVID
- Meals on Wheels – CVCOA
- Barre Mutual Aid – helped in terms of social isolation
- Barre Housing Authority helps with housing

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## What are the Challenges?

- Train and traffic noises – can be loud
- Lost adult day center (Project Independence – out of business Gifford finance gave it up) addressing loneliness, caregiving, assistance, caregiver respite for caregivers is now gone.
- Transportation – still not available as much as it needs. Transportation system can be complex to use and not convenient
- GMVT made some changes but could have communicated better
- Communication challenges so older people understand. Technology issues – don’t have computers and/or don’t understand how to use it. Some help at Senior Center and Library but how do you know help is there.
- Isolation – loneliness
- A lot of the programs available are income based and some not eligible; many are available as long as you are an older person – but need better communication about their availability.
- Taxes are an issue – how do we finance these services when on a fixed income
- Many citizens are seniors and on fixed income.
- Town and City challenging to work together.
- Local control is good but possess some challenges
- Concern with Safety – being able to feel safe walking down the street. (drugs an issue)
- Shelters are available for people without homes but drugs an issue
- How much of Barre’s reputation is perception and how much is real? When compared to other communities – are they really much different than other locations? How do you overcome those perceptions?
- How do you think about the Barre brand around Safety? Other issues?
- Navigating the medical services can be manageable but could be better
- Not a lot of communications with/between non-profits
- No opticians in Barre – have to go to Berlin for closest
- Not a lot of shops for clothing or other stores – have moved to other locations
- Three-year wait for some of the Barre Housing resources for aging in place.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Start a senior advisory council to get together to talk about issues for older adults – what are issues, needs, resources? figure out how to share – advise City Council and share information with all residents, housing sites etc. networking opportunities are important – could help for people who are working in silos – and do outreach.
- Get youth involved – find ways to connect youth with older adults (agism)
- Young people could be required to do community service and could help older adults etc. (and get credit for it at school) Intergenerational connections. Seniors could connect in with daycares too.
- Create a Front Porch forum adjunct geared toward seniors – a list serve to share, tell stories, seek resources
- Create a publication that has phone numbers instead of websites. Places people could call to get a variety of helpful resources – (moving furniture, technology)
- Create a community green space where gardens, games, chess, checkers, bochi could be played. Spaces where you can be active. People that are isolated are not going to go to a bar but green space or other space could be where (older) people could go to gather and socialize? Maybe it is an existing park? Should be some place where there are people who are engaging them, activating spaces to connect with people more regularly.
- Coordinate non-profit to bring coordinated services – check that not duplicating services and/or increase costs for services that are similar. All a bit siloed
- Add students from schools into the senior advisory group – or guidance counselors, school folks
- Create a Memory Care facility – in a way that keeps spouses together so they don’t have to leave the community and can stay together.
- Pearl Street alley – make it more active gathering space – engaging downtown areas
- Invite in more opticians, stores, etc. into city for seniors

- Create an all-age community center downtown for people (include daycares, teens, older etc. refreshments, activities, seniors could do volunteer work etc.)
- Find a grant-writer that could help with funding these ideas.
- Aging Resources place – what do you need to age? Could be central location for legal, financial, health resources etc. Help create legal documents etc. maybe could be the community center? (Capstone does have some of the resources for financial counseling etc.)
- Community wide resources (Medicare, housing, transportation, etc.) could be sort of like a 211 number (NH example)
- Create a yellow pages of phone number resources – not websites.
- Have an Older People/Senior Prom – Senior Olympics in Barre – Places/ways to party and have fun as you age. (There are dances at the Legion (dances/karaoke etc.)
- Some of these things are there. Community service hours required at the high school. Exists but should be communicated.
- Could the Council on the Aging be the one to pull all the services together.
- THRIVE in Washington County – has tasks forces on transportation and other issues but maybe they could focus on the issues for older adults as well.
- Create a collaborative group to coordinate services – invite community members to the group too
- Create travel opportunities – 2 or 3 day trips for seniors – someone to help with driving – but also to coordinate trips for seniors to other places to visit.

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Richness of the place, history, culture, community buildings – communication issues –speaking with one voice – whatever happened to the yellow pages? Have to figure out the money part.
- Making more connections with the Youth
- Sense of community and looking out for one another strong, long time residents and new people and being sure to be welcoming all in the community
- Core services in Barre – what has Barre lost to neighboring towns? – Built environment, Barre aging groups. What is needed?
- More as connected to quality of life. Fun- doesn't want to come out yet. – let each other know what here that makes the community better
- Barre Opera House, History Center, labor hall, historical societies were not listed as assets.
- Food trucks – activities – can be leveraged for people with different perspectives, love Front PORCH FORUM, so interesting to be here and listening.
- Older adults integrated into the downtown – connections to downtown & commerce, if you want to be in Barre as a business adapt to your audiences. This is an opportunity – the infrastructure is really there etc. really exciting and opportunities.
- Connection to people and the pride in this town. Challenges were quick – and solutions started to follow quickly – people help each other – perceptions need changing – getting back to basics. People know the richness of the community.
- MODERN LIFE – everything technology but can be difficult when not a technology native – how do we get information and share with one another? how to service and connect within the senior populations. Be sure having constant conversations – power will follow those who lead and who invite people to the table. Connection to the youth is rich opportunity. How to invite them to the table and make connections to the older people and do it together. Convening leadership, holding the heritage festival steering committee noted demographic shift and we will need to renew our populations attracting more diverse residents and visitors, more multicultural place, also the elders to have the power to invite and welcome people.

### Substance Use Disorder

Visiting Team: Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Alyssa Johnson (scribe), Leslie Black-Plumeau, Will Eberle, Josh Hanford, Michelle Kersey, Robert Purvis, Aly Richards, Gus Seelig

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Barre's History – way beyond most towns
- Turning Point
- Medical disease – complex of biologically based disorders that relate to disorderly use of substances. Biochemistry that hardwire in the potential for addiction.
- Disorder is clear medical definition
- Barre and Spaulding Students Against Destructive Decision group
- Spaulding has a Student Assistance Professional (SAP)
- Central Vermont Prevention Coalition – many folks are a part of that group
- Coalition that has been around for many years that brings together key partners around substance abuse – also includes police, housing, youth, social justice, community reentry
- Central Vermont Medical Center is starting 2nd year of a 3 year grant along with the Coalition on rural response to opioid use – shovel ready to get things done – Eva hired as project coordinator
- Been here two years – downfall – need help – told me to call 211, told them it would take 14-28 days to get a bed at Brattleboro Retreat Center – in NY when you call the crisis unit, they come and get you with police department and mental health and take to Addiction crisis center/ACC

- Waiting two months for Washington County Mental Health
- A recovery residence for women and children is being developed
- Derin Austin – Working Fields opened an office at the Office Block – excited to be here
- 51 Church Street – Vermont Cares at Free Clinic – Harm Reduction Office – Sterile syringes recognizing that people are using, and then make connections for different types of recovery when they are ready
- Maturity of treatment at CVMC, working with folks in Immediate crisis – able to plug individuals into systems and coordinate more effectively with folks in the room – matured in the past 4 years
- Able to take someone in immediate crisis and work them into immediate treatment – massive improvement from 10 years ago
- We would be in a far worse situation without the coordination
- Organizational relationships – Relationships are an asset – Peer to peer relationships as well – meaningful to many people
- Evidence from polling that there is a high degree of interest and compassion around this issue – less stigma and misunderstanding than many anticipated
- Central Vermont new directions – work on addressing youth issues. The earlier they start to use, more challenging – working on all substances
- Concern about alcohol and cannabis
- AA meetings at 114 N Main St. Mon-Sat every noon hour, 10 to noon on Saturday
- Same place at 8 pm | Speaker meeting at 8 pm
- Narcotics anonymous meetings as well
- Department of Corrections – in recent years, there is greater focus on the whole person and revolving door of return to parole from infractions. Shift going on there. Probation and parole in downtown Barre in controversial, but an asset and a challenge
- Daylight – no one is trying to cover the problem or challenge up. Good conversation and resources directed toward it
- When someone comes into contact with criminal justice system, there is a tremendous amount of support in Central Vermont and Treatment Court in Washington County is a good option – referral process from State’s Attorney. Excellent place to get into
- Local connections to treatment court
- Barre Community Justice Center

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## What are the Challenges?

- Lack immediate crisis stabilization location – can’t get folks into treatment the next day
- People need a safe stable place to be away from folks – only one place in VT (In Burlington)
- Element of cohesiveness missing – people come in looking for services, but as a librarian, wouldn’t know who to call (could be many of the folks in this room)
- When you call 211, would be nice to have a nice person on the phone, instead of being disrespectful or hanging up or saying that can’t help you, hanging up on you.
- Stories from 16 homeless residents hearing stories about playing games with their life
- Call 911 – Barre police don’t know what is going on – only getting bits and piece of the situation, don’t know what is going on.
- Nurses laughing, seems like a joke
- Need for a safe, kind, welcoming organization or support.
- 211 puts you on hold for a long time
- Washington County Mental Health – team with fire and police department show up. Take you up to Barre hospital and sit there and wait for so long
- Nashua NH has a safety room at each fire station, then can take you to addiction crisis center, hospital
- Medical professionals hard to be empathetic
- Funding is an issue – City of Barre has worked to get BROCC on board (~6 years). Included a half time mental health clinician with BROCC, but only half time during the day. Only so many hours that specific folks work
- Need specific funding source on the scene to plug folks in
- Multigenerational use of substances – exposure of use to kids makes them 2-7X more likely to use
- Emotional trauma on kids involved in these situations
- Staffing – even if the funding exists, there isn’t staffing exists to fill the position (Valley Vista)
- LGBTQ have much higher levels of usage throughout life
- Vermonters 18-25 are highest in the nation for alcohol, binge drinking, cannabis, cocaine
- Those in the military and their families, pregnant women are vulnerable populations
- Poverty and trauma – availability of economic opportunity
- The experience of poverty is traumatic!
- Social determinants of health – stable housing, broadband, transportation
- COVID – face to face meetings, time and energy pulled in many directions. Challenging to get into school to do work. Substance use has increased during the pandemic
- Consequences – can lose a child if trying to get treatment
- In Vermont one child per day is born to a mother with SUD
- Didn’t have as much of an issue before COVID – treatment centers and AA shut down
- Epidemic of pills, cocaine, opioids have gotten use – less has been done to save a person. Found someone unconscious at the bus station on Montpelier
- Mimic harmful things that are seen on TV – that’s the model
- Economics of the drug trade and access to money
- Alcoholism and prescription meds – doing a leave behind Narcan program – very taboo to talk about – progression in the field have been use – alcoholism, prescription abuse, mental health
- 2019 Wire BS – percentage of students that don’t participate in after school activities – can be really beneficial.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- When you call Barre 911, they should have someone from Barre PD and someone from Washington County Mental Health – more collaboration and support
- Additional support for families and ones connected with an individual – need to offer to support those around the person who is involved with a system
- Safe House for Children and Families who are going through an abusive system – only one shelter in Barre – shelter specifically for women
- Peer approach – AA and NA have demonstrated this well – bring able to connect with someone directly
- Turning Point working in the ER and having that look as an essential service vs. volunteer – fund things
- Non-categorical supports – so much of involved in being eligible for different services
- Workforce shortage – training program with stipends for peer support or some other community training so they could be employed when someone needs support – something less than professional services but more than a volunteer
- A way for coalitions or organizations to “put up the bat signal” when you have an idea but hit a roadblock – some roadblock that another group could solve – but shame that an idea stops for that reason
- Volunteer program – new beginnings – rock babies – stretchably programs
- RFP – here is the info we need – how do we learn about things more quickly to be more nimble in faster
- Working with police and social worker – someone at a community member who is interacting with folks on a daily basis, perhaps before intervention – sometimes librarians or others can see something coming ahead of time – how can you be a step ahead of that
- A lot of stigma – great survey – a lot of people who are supportive, still a lot of stigma in the state
- Understanding what substance use disorder is – education!!!
- A lot of funding – talking about treatment, recovery housing – when people are using and unhoused, can’t focus on their recovery. No housing for someone who is using!!
- Rehabbing a building for mothers and children in recovery
- Efforts to establish a low barrier shelter – run into the problem of funding, insurance, training, staffing – there are models out there, but not in Vermont >> ones in Burlington, Middlebury – don’t last because of funding and people. Very hard program to staff
- “Works with people in the most need who are the hardest to love”
- Resources for folks who WANT to be in recovery – make that pool deeper
- Sober living residences are hard! Relapse is part of recovery – where do they do? Watching someone who relapses can be very triggering
- Best chance of recovery when they have their own housing – housing first!
- Current shelter has a zero tolerance policy
- Recovery housing that keeps families together – families supports are a center of gravity
- More education from a prevention standpoint – kids in middle and high school get a year of health, and need more info about substance use disorder in all of their classes. Counselors who are supposed to be proactive dealing with violations. Families, COACHES, and other folks who are involved with kids
- “Where we are, where we stand, what we need to do” – Dr. Levine and Gov. Scott need the same focus as with mask wearing. Don’t have alcohol at every event!! Local ordinances
- What’s happening in the school system – PTA meetings?
- Evidence based, current and comprehensive education is also important – just say no doesn’t work
- Fast evolving education – vaping, for example
- We get information from a lot of sources – positive influence is the best!!
- Social media influences – where kids are getting their information – how do we infiltrate social, find influencers willing to do this
- Teachers, coaches, educators – need to be approachable, honest, transparent – like with sex ed! Don’t just say no
- DARE program is also wrong – a lot of parents grew up with that
- Lack of mentorship opportunities – develop them – Scouts “Drawback in culture of cell phones and computers”
- Youth club in Barre (not next to a vape shop)

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- A lot of resources and organizations mentioned, a lot of understanding of the problem, acceptance and understanding. Awareness of funding. Challenges – some of the same assets are challenges – acceptance can be a negative – connections with poverty and poorer quality housing. Need to hire someone to help. Challenges with housing first – education piece is key. Need a new model, need to emphasize the challenges – there is some romanticizing. How do we prevent more folks from entering the system
- Unbelievable to have this amount of resources and energy in the making. Ready to do the next two things – final level of collaboration. Acute intake gap, AND how to go way upstream on prevention
- Well coordinated – the type of work the fire department is doing is huge. 55% of Spaulding is an issue – prevention is low hanging fruit. When someone is ready to get into treatment, want to make sure there isn’t any delay
- Compassion and empathy in the community to collaborate and put together resources is impressive – bigger systems issues with staff capacity and how to move forward
- Bob – people used to be defensive and angry – one hell of a Coalition, but one piece of a community – impressed by the folks who are not part of the coalition
- Honored to work in this community – people go to the mat when folks are in crisis. Hopeful place to start. Structural issues with housing, need for places to detox. Difference in perception and awareness of resources between partners/institutional knowledge and the community level knowledge for individuals
- Need to work with the whole community – right people raw materials to solve this problem.

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## Zoom Forum 1

Visiting Team: Nick Kramer (Facilitator), Kate McCarthy (scribe)

*In this general session, attendees expressed interest in a number of topics: Substance use and misuse, accessibility, transportation, young families, home ownership in Barre, child care, and more.*

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have a fantastic library with great services and options! The librarians know my children.
  - The library offers some of the only non-religious youth programs.
  - I'm very impressed with the pool.
  - Our bike path, which goes close to the school, is an asset.
  - Clearly marked pedestrian crossings are helpful.
  - The cow pasture is a wonderful thing here in Barre, as an options for families or people with dogs to go and walk around.
  - The Granite Museum, its 12 acres, and the bike path are an asset – the path will one day connect to the city and Montpelier.
  - The Opera House is a great resource. It offers summer camps, a space for community meetings, and shows.
  - Downtown shops are an asset – Espresso Bueno has been transformative because it is a place where people gather and meet – Cornerstone, too.
  - We have a pretty terrific senior center that is under-acknowledged and underutilized. It has many great resources – health classes, social opportunities.
  - The Barre Partnership and Thursdays in the Park – if you ever drive through Barre on Thursday, you see the heart of Barre – people of all ages, and it is wonderful.
  - The People's Wellness Clinic is a huge asset to Barre.
  - We have a ton of services – senior center, Capstone. Having all those agencies here in Barre means we have a lot of resources we can lean into here.
  - We have a very good public school system, but we have really struggled to support it.
  - The Labor Hall and Rise Up Bakery are community supported and oriented. There are celebrations and programming; they are history and community gatherings.
  - Barre's service clubs are amazing – they do so much, including those fun sculptures on Main St.!
  - The coalition of the churches: the majority of churches have worked together to feed people, deal with homelessness; it is a point of pride that the denominations work together, and do it well, in Barre.
  - Barre Mutual Aid came together during the pandemic and helped people get their shopping done, get their medications – it was neighbor to neighbor. People got to know each other.
  - Barre's history is amazing, and unique.
  - Vermont Historical Society is in the former high school; so are the state library and the state archeology center. A lot of people come into town because of it.
  - The Restore is a huge resource! It encourages recycling, trades education, materials resources for 2nd hand objects and art materials.
  - The Times Argus has been an important institution for a long time, at a time when communication is so important.
  - Front Porch Forum is an important asset for communication.
  - The Rock City Chorus is amazing! Started with 16 people and has grown, and has done fundraisers with its concerts. That's the Barre spirit!
  - The train is an asset (shared one participant as the train chugged by!).
  - Barre's downtown is an architectural treasure. We are seeing other towns have to build town centers – Barre doesn't have to do that. Barre has invested so much over the recent years bringing infrastructure up – Barre is out in the forefront.
  - The Vermont Bicycle Shop is a world-class shop.
  - Studio Place Arts
  - AR Market
  - The waterway is an asset, but does not have easy access.
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### What are the Challenges?

- There is concern that if we don't really support our school system, it will affect this community.
- We need to start looking into more affordable housing opportunities. There's very little availability of rental apartments in Barre. We have a core of services, and need to be able to house folks who need those services.
- The Courthouse is an asset and challenge at the same time. Barre has a high percentage of parolees per capita. Reintroducing people to society is a challenge.
- There are many people who need support with mental health issues.
- There is a challenge getting kids to and from school – there are no school buses; people need to get to work and sometimes drop kids off too early.
- Getting people from Barre City to Barre town is hard – for example, to the industrial park.
- Another challenge is the lack of childcare in a 40 mile radius (or anywhere!). We want people to get back to work but having no childcare makes it difficult. In Barre, there are a lot of jobs, particularly low-wage jobs. Quality of childcare is uneven.
- There also needs to be childcare after school that's reliable, efficient, and kind.
- There is concern about the safety of streets, in terms of the speed of traffic through town as well as side streets. People noticed less traffic during COVID, and liked it!
- Make things safer for people walking, not just people in cars.
- We are lacking safe and accessible bicycle infrastructure – including safe bicycle parking. There is great potential!

- I would like to see more informal community connections, and a chance to connect with youth – this seems possible in a small community, but there are often many hoops to jump through [to do it through programs].
- Substance use disorder is a problem we all see in the community.
- There is a lot of “us and them” talk that happens. Some of it suggests that people who spend time downtown aren’t part of

the community. Our perceptions and judgement of people could be improved.

- Our community does not have enough substance abuse and mental health counselors to be able to properly help that population.
- Without stability, housing, community, and healing the trauma – we are not even going to touch some of the bigger issues, such as mental health and addiction.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- We say we are worried about attracting young families, but do not seem to be seeking to understand those who move here from away.
- More infrastructure to help moving around the community by walking and biking.
- Build relationships between the Senior Center and youth from the schools.
- Better utilize the Senior Center as a meeting place.
- Get back in touch with and share history
- Bus passes to kids to use the public busses in lieu of school buses.
- Bike paths and walking paths from Barre to Montpelier.
- Add infrastructure for all road users – well designed bike/ped infrastructure can also calm traffic and improve the road for all users.
- Millstone Hill, town forest is a huge state asset, that would be great to have transportation to from BC.
- A silver lining is the money that’s come in – for example, Vermont Afterschool’s programs. Can this be sustained?
- Many people in difficult situations have trauma histories. How can this be approached with an empathetic and healing attitude to these members of the community?
- Look at what the current process is when it comes to substance abuse – what are the systems, what are the contributing factors (like housing, access to recovery or mental health support), and how can this all be woven into the response in order to help people, not penalize them?
- What I am hearing is we need a system that heals and stabilizes people who have experienced trauma, the courts, and substance abuse.
- Use ARPA funds to increase housing options and support a childcare center.
- Transportation: I’m very excited about bicycle parking downtown, bike lanes on main corridors, a multi-user path connecting Barre-Berlin-Montpelier.
- Start letting kids know how important they are – there was acknowledgement of the efforts of Renita Marshall, with help from neighbors and local businesses, in supporting children.
- Barre needs more support, guidance, and ways of dealing with the trauma and difficulties people have experienced, who then find themselves addicted to illegal substances. Decriminalizing of certain drugs could help; money could then be used to provide the services people need to get their lives in a better place, instead of to fund law enforcement. Some of this has been tried with marijuana.
- The Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) approach is a way for people in the community to get involved in supporting people with substance issues. It helps people reenter, have temporary housing, find employment, find connections to mental health, and reconnect to people they know. Community members can get involved!
- I would like to see a community center for middle school through high school, with programs that teach life skills (nutrition, healthy snacks, budgeting/money management).
- Would like to see the BOR and auditorium updated so that the BOR can be used year round and the auditorium can host bigger events.
- Talk to more landlords about the opportunity to participate in programs like Pathways support. If there are barriers to engaging, talk to landlords about how programs like this can help minimize landlord risk.

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### **Reflections of the Community Visit Team**

- There is a strong sense of community pride, and good energy around making things happen!
- It came through that people valued the infrastructure in place: the streets, sidewalks, neighborhoods, and even the downtown.
- There was also a lot of pride in institutions: the library, the Vermont History Museum, the Granite Museum.
- Pride extended to the social infrastructure, too: the fact that there are many regional service agencies that support people. It was noteworthy to hear service agencies listed as an asset.
- Getting around safely – whether to and from school, or by a mode other than a car, or for people of different ages – is an important need but one where there seems to be a lot to build on, and energy to make it happen.
- There are some challenging narratives around what Barre is (or isn’t!) and who it is for (or not). These are hard conversations happening in a lot of places, especially in the face of change, so it is positive that the people in this session named that as important. Making sure that people are connected, and can be involved and included in a way that doesn’t make them feel left behind, is a huge opportunity.



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## Opportunities in the Face of Climate Change

Visiting Team: Nick Kramer (facilitator), Gary Holloway (scribe), Ted Brady, Rebecca Ellis, Laurie Fielder, Ben Doyle, Bonnie Waninger

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Work the city did to mitigate flooding has helped
- LED street lights
- Solar on municipal buildings
- Resident benefits of heat pumps, solar and other energy saving measures
- Capstone Community Action offers benefits to low income
- Down Street Housing has programs to support low income on energy efficiencies
- Green Up VT
- Returnables Bill help keep the street clean
- Global Warming Solutions Act has a Climate Council that is taking up action on climate initiatives
- Students have been monitoring things in science class to learn more about climate change and provide local documentation
- Cow pastures, granite quarries and other green spaces should be expanded upon or improved to help attract people to those areas
- Local food options are limited unless you have a car to drive to grocery stores – AR Market downtown is a new market
- Public pool with ADA access
- Small farm stands that have popped up but out of the downtown area
- Community Garden committee – not utilized that much
- Friends of the Winooski have work parties to help clean up the river
- City buildings have had energy audits and work has been done on many of them. Others still need work.
- 350 Central VT – gathering input to provide to Climate Council on behalf of Barre residents
- EV charging stations available to public – 4 of them
- CVRPC and City working together to help mitigate stormwater runoff
- Barre Pickers is a volunteer group that picks up trash
- GMP has an emphasis on renewable energy and offers discounts to customers on different programs
- There is an energy action committee – 3 active members and looking for new members to join

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### What are the Challenges?

- Rivers and lakes need to be cleaned up to improve water quality
- Buses are not frequent and limited in service area
- Sidewalks are not in as many places as they could be and need to be improved
- Slow traffic in congested downtown, noisy and polluting vehicles
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Are there alternatives to concrete and asphalt to more permeable surfaces?
- Plant more trees in the urban areas
- Save the green spaces we have in the downtown because there are not that many of them. Lack of space.
- Need more people power with volunteers to help on the various committees
- Online information is intimidating to elderly folks so providing more opportunities for them to access information – maybe 211 could help
- A lot of elderly in the community
- Schools have a 30% turnover rate of students which is indicative of transient community
- Farmers Market is small so look to encourage more vendors to sell in Barre – provide fresh, local food
- High energy burden which impacts low income residents the hardest
- The economics of food, transportation, housing is difficult for many residents
- Old housing stock – maybe 85% unweatherized and 15% weatherized – landlords can be a barrier for renters
- High percentage of renters and easier for home owners to make weatherization measures than landlords to do for renters
- The ROI can be a barrier for doing weatherization projects

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Conversion of large diesel trucks to EV
- Camp Street site has potential for community garden
- Compost facility
- Community solar – many residents can't do solar do to site constraints
- Incentivize people to walk more by improving streets; improve public transportation (increase routes)
- Ridesharing
- Make streets more accessible to pedestrians and bikes
- Food to low income – city could subsidize – local delivery or convenient location for pick up – incentives to local farmers and non-profits to provide the food and delivery
- GMT ride program in Montpelier should be in Barre as well
- Barre City and Barre Town schools have advisory committees – people were eating a lot of packaged foods and kids don't know how to cook. They could develop programs on how to cook and help eliminate packaging and chemicals in food.
- Education around weatherization solutions such as heat pumps, solar, etc.
- Communication can be improved – Front Porch Forum is a great tool but could build upon
- Connect and improve bus routes from Burlington to Barre
- Talk to 350 Central VT to provide input

- Water park would create a beautiful place downtown for kids to play and people to gather
- Website for how to do weatherization and how to get involved with climate change initiatives
- Incentive program to give back tires – \$5 return on tire redemption
- Improve river access

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Practical solutions were shared
- Use ARPA funding to solve locally led challenges – community visit is a good place to start to engage people in the discussion and identify priorities
- Great moment of opportunity to seize the moment in the next few years to tackle weatherization issues
- The historic built environment is a huge asset
- Technical school in town and lots of resources
- Problems are big and vary quite a bit – focus your energy on top priorities and boost up the energy committee and other similar type groups
- Cross pollination amongst interest groups
- Look for opportunities with schools to help educate the next generation of volunteers
- Get people to show up and help with community efforts – VCRD visit is a good place to start!

### Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Michele Bailey (scribe), Beth Awhaitey, Jason Broughton, Xusana Davis, Scott Finn, Sarah Launderville, Conor O’Dea

#### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Barre History – Core diverse history workers from all over the world history of immigration
- City established an equity diversity committee and adopted the VT State equity assessment tools and are working at adapting it to Barre and getting training on how to use it.
- Galvanizing moment where Black Lives Matter flag was raised. Signs of inclusion, solidarity, and showed a lot of support
- Barre City has 3 women on Council (unprecedented)
- Just having this conversation is a positive – great to see leaders that want to have the conversation – making progress
- VT Granite Museum – immigration history important– population skyrocketed and ethnic groups increased
- Barre Heritage Festival (When started in 1972? – polled community and – 29? different nationalities were represented)
- A lot of social clubs
- Barre considered to be a one industry town and revolves around that industry
- Barre City has an ADA Accessibility committee
- There are now some Bosnian populations
- Neighborhood watches have created some nice communities around Barre city and helped connect people.
- There is a program to inspect rental housing in Barre – every 4 years
- Women’s issues group
- Main Street redevelopment received a lot of grants and revitalize and investment in small businesses
- Police Chief did free community picnics – in the past – last year/this year cancelled by the pandemic.

#### What are the Challenges?

- History – If you look back, every population that arrived was greeted with negativity.
- Populations – created their own governance – checkered and back and forth rich history
- Barre’s population has been decreasing 22.8 % (?) live below poverty line. (State is around 10 %, so well above the state average)
- Women are statistically more hit with poverty
- Housing – 67 (?) vacant buildings – vacant buildings – tenants hesitant to complain against landlords and high rents. Don’t want it to impact future renting opportunities.
- City or school policies – concern. Are they really allowing for more diversity in creating systems and policies that may not work for a lot of people?
- Impression that there is an informal network of power so citizen participation is low and decisions are made by a small group of those in that power (maybe low participation related to poverty rates?)
- VT’s first federal hate crime happened in Barre.
- School system has been struggling – Concern with interaction or lack of interaction between school antiracism policy. People from outside barre city coming to meetings to speak and direct/overtake the voices of barre city residents.
- Some of the Zoom meetings are hard – racial equity committee – One time a former resident talked about it concern with developing the policy. Sometimes disagreeing with things can feel wrong. A lot of times if you don’t agree with the board – you are appealed to have the voice in the board – but then they move on.
- School and city Board meetings have restricted times for public comment so limits the ability for meaningful discussions.
- Committee had these discussions – open to the public – but seemed to be no common understanding of language/terms so that is challenging.
- People are fighting against equity – local minorities have to work hard to get their opinions heard. Majority of people are for diversity, equity –only a small group against it but they are vocal. Not any organized group against.

- There are common understandings but getting policies passed challenging.
- Getting policies written and approved
- Covert and overt racism does exist in the community.
- Racism is a huge issue – Mother has LGBTQ children and worries that her children are not safe – even going to the bathroom. There are public statements about phobia – racism.)
- Challenging to get people of color to participate in committees in the city. Sentiment/feeling is that they won't be listened to.
- Difficult to get people to participate (POC or LGBTQ). They feel they are met with the feeling that their feelings are not real, they shouldn't be upset. It's emotionally draining.
- People fearful – not listened to, disempowered – don't want to put themselves forward because they are fearful or nervous.
- VT as a state has a dual identity as being progressive and white and richer – the ideals of Vermont are contradicted. When people call it out there is push-back. Privileged as a state – discomfort among people in power. We are considered progressive so don't want to hear some of this.
- Some people should have the right to put up signs – if you are not liberal and your views are anything but that your voice can be silenced. Political signs taken down as example – everyone needs to take a look at themselves and not just point fingers.
- Inequity in the class system – inequity in property – other people speak disparagingly of people in Barre and its status of blue collar. Class and race.
- Public perception of the city.
- Data is a challenge. We need demographic data in the city. People are overrepresented in poverty, and in renters. Some of the data doesn't exist.
- Spatial segregation of poverty – lower income in flood zones, pollution, health issues, capital investments
- High tax rate in Vermont.
- How to get a broader population involved in the community
- Have to go pay for everything – scholarships may be offered – but feels like charity.
- Neighborhood watch – seems heavily police – not as much community building.
- There are a lot of grey areas and hidden agendas – if anything paid for with tax dollars should be open to more people.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- Develop policy for more equitable distribution of funds.
- Find ways to lower taxes in the state.
- Look at children and students – increase their opportunities – school choice may be one way to think about this. Allow the money to go with the students so they can get a better education (3 schools in Barre – St. Monica, Websterville Christian, Montessori school that aren't public)
- City agencies, nonprofits – go to the equity diversity group to get help in using the state evaluation tools and improve the basic quality of life in Barre – (this can include questions about poverty as well)
- Find ways to help students participate in policy making so they can see themselves represented in the policy – determining policies et.
- Bring art and beauty and community ownership into the community (Barre City Public Art Committee – exists and open to a lot of things)
- Find ways to make things more affordable or free – it is expensive to live here. For a young family it is not really worth it. Can't afford to go to the movies but can only go to the library. Got involved with the Heritage Festival to sell cupcakes so the kids could go buy something)
- Do community Pancake breakfasts – cheap – do them for free or low cost like \$1
- Create a community center, place to go where services and activities are offered more affordable/free
- Create an event that is attractive to all age-groups including teens etc. (Existing wonderful for young children but not so interesting for teens)
- Heritage festival could be really wonderful – picture giant potluck with cultures and families to share – (when went recently was just food trucks. Make it not just fair food trucks)
- Do the Heritage festivals to really allow them to share their foods and cultures. Celebrate it knowing that there will be more refugees coming in.
- Have neighborhood picnics in the park to build community.
- More robust recreation activities to build community. (There is a recreation committee – go to the city website)
- Have city create a paid position to organize recreational activities – for residents and also visitors (tourism and economic development).
- St. Monica's school used to do once a month – Lebanese music, dance, food etc. and it could be once a month that highlights /celebrates a different culture.
- Communicate more effectively about the newly refurbished pool that is open to a broader population.
- Create any excuse for a party or a parade.
- Promote Barre as a place where people might want to visit – but then also a place to live.
- Create a better "Welcome to Barre" letter when you move here– use words to say statement about welcoming, belief in equity, inclusion, highlight assets– (not just how to pay your bill)
- Offer lots of classes and activities that are available and accessible so you don't have to take on a stigma to be a part of it. (not scholarship)
- Offer good, funded trainings about equity and inclusion that include food, culture etc. (Not sure who would do it or how it would be funded. Accessible to community members)
- Teach history in school
- Community dialogue is important – understand people who are different from ourselves.
- Various organizations could get together to develop ideas – goals might be the same – but the approach might be different. Having a dialogue would be useful.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Activities/Recreation as bridge building opportunities
- Welcoming language – Tell the story of a broader Barre – beyond the granite.
- Reimagining Barre’s identity beyond “Scary Barre”
- Recreation needs identity
- Rich history, fears, met with hate, starting data – didn’t talk about disability issues.
- Paying people to do this really hard work – people have lived experiences
- Shared language, citizens, language matters, labeling people, some concepts are concrete and definable – forms of inclusion – so few people represented – make the hard investments.
- What I heard – people of color not wanting to speak.
- We want authenticity – Positive experiences – what is the trueness of any society. We as a community are going to pay attention to our community /safety.
- Didn’t talk about disability or gender.
- You care about these issues and the future of Barre – We have an opportunity to grown by learning from one another. How do we engage at the next level – We have to learn from one another in new ways. Just a step to start the conversations.
- Belonging: How we care, belong, and treat one another. Will be important welcoming new people to Vermont.

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## Housing & Homelessness

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (facilitator), Jon Copans (scribe), Leslie Black-Plumeau, Will Eberle, Josh Hanford, Michelle Kersey, Robert Purvis, Aly Richards, Gus Seelig

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- I am looking for housing. It is great to have temporary housing and to have the many resources and providers here in Barre. Mosaic. Turning Point. CAPSTONE.
- Social Services as well. We are fortunate to have them here in the City. This is also a dense place, walkable if need be.
- There is a nice and effective consortium of the church community that helps to promote services.
- There is some affordable housing stock in the area, relative to other areas around us.
- I’ve met some folks who are struggling with homelessness who have been good neighbors (speaker lives next to the Good Samaritan House).
- Wonderful education is available here. Youth Build. Spaulding High School that has building trades to train up folks to fix up our homes in Barre.
- Lots of cross-organizational awareness about housing. Awareness that housing is healthcare. Looking at Thrive and other initiatives at CVMC, things take a while to come to fruition, but there is greater awareness of the connection of issues. Housing underlies a lot of stuff.
- Capacity in terms of the existing housing stock, and also within the underlying infrastructure. Fiber networks, water and wastewater. Easier to add housing here than it might be elsewhere.
- Large and strong housing continuum of care. Many different organizations that come together, and used to meet in-person in Barre. Housing Review Team.
- Presence of the state is very important, with people trying to access housing vouchers and other resources.
- Good Samaritan Haven has vision to go beyond just shelter. Bought the motel, taking over the Phoenix House. Really important. Not just shelter in place for a few months.
- Landlords have an interest in homelessness and housing.
- An asset – those who are currently houseless are really organized and are advocating for themselves.
- An offer of an amplifier and microphone.
- Having Downstreet in this community. Amazing organization to have right here in Barre.

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### What are the Challenges?

- High property taxes
- Strict zoning
- Eviction process (too slow).
- Perception of landlords.
- Challenge of finding housing for those of limited means. More than those on fixed incomes can afford.
- Age of the housing stock. Too old. Condition isn’t great in many instances. COVID market has made renovation much more expensive.
- Need for more social workers. People don’t know how to connect with social workers. Police don’t provide social work. “Trespass” those who are homeless rather than connect them with resources. Being on the street is unsafe.
- When Good Samaritan House tells people they can’t stay. What happens to them? When people don’t fit there, where do they go? Need a better spectrum of services. At times there is a lack of social work services.
- As a previous Americorps member and now an employee, there is a rulebook. No one is just kicked out.
- Educating the community about what resources are out there. For example, we house people in a 15-bed facility for corrections.
- “Hard to house” folks who have limited themselves at the shelter or have some history that means they can’t be co-located. What program to “stick them in” “to place them in.”
- People who come into our community from corrections. Community needs some education. Law enforcement also needs to appreciate this.
- I have been looking for a place for a few months. Contacted 25 places. ¾ of the places don’t respond at all.

- Current landlord. Landlord tenant laws are exacerbating the problems. There is capacity there, but I can't take the chance on anyone with a questionable rental history or credit check. Agencies do me no good at all when I have a challenging tenant. If I had some community partners, I would take a risk. I am way better off allowing a unit to sit vacant rather than take a chance. We spend \$100,000's per unit through public programs, that is not affordable. 24 Keith Avenue as an example. Barre has old housing stock we need to put \$ into it.
- I work in social services, new to the area. Is there a comprehensive resource list that lists shelters, food pantries, etc?
- Vermont 211. Survivors Guide.
- I am one of the homeless in the community. At the motel here in town for the last year. Come October 1 we are on our own. I don't know what we are going to do. Fill out lots of applications.
- When I was homeless, I had to rely on apps on my phone to fill out applications. Never heard anything back. Giving out your personal information every time.
- There is a challenge that there is an assumption that if you are homeless it is your fault. If you are homeless it is because you've done something wrong. I'm having a hard time sitting with that.
- The income requirement. Income 3 times more than rent makes it extremely difficult. I am on disability, so those are out of reach.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- Opening a dialogue with landlords to figure out what is available and what needs are. Maybe some matching. Once you are incarcerated, you lose everything. People coming out have nowhere to go. Vouchers are security for a landlord. Vouchers are an asset.
- Clarification – vouchers are not guaranteed. If paperwork isn't completed, voucher isn't paid.
- Retention is key. Help mediate problems. Is there something CJC can provide, or the landlord, or the tenant, to resolve the situation? Our relationship with our landlords is how we do our jobs. All based in retention. When we say we are going to do something, we need to do it. Systems issue. Needs to be enough people who want to work right now.
- I used to own one that needed a little TLC. When people get older and have a rental property, they can't afford to fix them up. Workforce development to train the next generation. People need to learn how to fix their own housing. Organizations like Habitat for Humanity. Also need to train people to be electricians and carpenters etc. Great places. Youthbuild. Spaulding H.S. Train the next generation how to fix these houses up, to beautify Barre.
- Barre Housing Authority. Support system disappears once people find housing. Tough population.
- There are homesharing programs, where older people who have homes and want to stay will share them with someone who rents a room. Homeshare Vermont.
- Homeshare program has very serious vetting process. Automatic exclusions.
- Borrowed from the City Plan, as an owner of an old Barre House. Revolving Loan fund in Montpelier for homeowners to do rehab. Providing some easier credit for those who need/want to rehab their home.
- Shared ownership. Opportunity. Gives us all ownership in our collective community together. Home and belonging. Maybe a bit more abstract, but it could be more concrete. Maybe through co-ops or something, ways to build ownership.
- Repurposing buildings by the Berlin mall as an example. Figure out how to make new housing out of old building stock. Alternative housing models. Tiny homes.
- Zoning doesn't allow housing in most places in this city. I've tried to develop housing in this city and it hasn't been successful.
- Mixed housing is desirable. Market value and people who are low income. More integrated approach to housing.
- Zoning can be changed.
- A space for people who are hard to house, with services and cameras. Shift away from the hotel model.
- I have worked in such a program. 24-hour staffing. That model works. Not one-size-fits-all. Can't just be a one-year lease or the street. When someone is kicked out of the one shelter in town, there should be another option for them. A community with various resources for them.
- People need to pay close attention. What is going to happen with all the \$\$\$ for housing that is flowing into this community. May flow into these agencies and the city council. We need to pay attention to that. Communication. Pay attention and participate.
- Funds coming into Vermont are not being divvied up correctly. Going to Downstreet vs. private landlords. Restrictions when it is given to private landlords.
- More financing to private landlords without all of the restrictions.
- Sometimes those making the decisions about who can stay in a shelter aren't qualified or in a position to make these decisions. "Hurt people hurt other people." There should be appropriate process. Not fair currently.
- Idea – matching funds to the people who need the housing. Large sum of money administered as a trust. Use the funds to pay for housing. Match people with paperwork, who can smooth over relationships. Lift people up from their situation.
- You are describing a payee.
- As I sit here, I hear a lot of talk about the shelter. It doesn't accommodate females.
- Point of contention. "We do accommodate."
- Housing is healthcare. Look at healthcare outcomes. Get healthcare involved in the housing of those with chronic conditions.
- Is there a winter shelter – there is something we can do.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Honored to be here to listen. You have an asset in your services. So many dedicated organizations here in your city. Assets, your services. Challenge in information sharing. Marrying those is actually free. Task the Council or Homelessness task force with this resource directory. Federal ARPA \$\$\$ Barre is a qualified census tract. That is an opportunity. Owner or rental rehab. Creating some down-payment assistance options.
- Some gratitude. This is an issue that people care about. And to see the different groups in the same room speaking with the same weight is powerful. Scope of need very large. Tremendous resources in the room. Many coalitions working on this right now. That is both a challenge and opportunity. 8 coalitions operating in Washington County right now. Lots of opportunity to get involved right now. One over-arching theme.
- So grateful to have those who are experiencing homelessness speak so articulately. Responsibility on both sides here. Let's help people be good tenants too. Forging relationships with landlords (Sarah as an example). Has to be a two-sided relationship to make that work.
- I'm amazed by the courage and bravery of those here today. Having all of these perspectives present is really important. All are important parts of the conversation. This is a work in progress.
- It is an honor to be able to come into a room like this. Lots of emotion in the room – you don't always see that. The amazing lived experience is a huge asset. Stick with the process. Maybe some quick fixes. Public-private partnership seems key as a theme.
- Really intense and important conversation. Shout-out to my colleague Josh Hanford – VT Home Improvement program has been met with great success. Housing has never been more expensive in VT. To buy and rehab. Good Sam just picked up funds for rehab of housing on Barre-Montpelier Road and Phoenix House. We have a supply shortage. We need to address it.
- Thank everyone for the courage to speak openly and honestly. I work on this day in and day out. Rarely do I sit in a room with this mix of people. All speaking openly and honestly. One area that stands out to me – could help repair the trust breakdown with landlords. With new \$\$\$ and resources, could landlords be a part of a rental risk pool. Pool of funds in case a tenancy didn't work out. When connections fail, housing is lost, and everyone suffers. We have to be able to find a way to bring more units on line. This has been brewing for a long time. Under-building new units for a long time. There are improvements happening. 915 new housing units since this pandemic started. There have been positive improvements in this area – we need to keep it up.

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## Zoom Forum 2

Visiting Team: Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Kevin Lambert (scribe)

*Focus and interest in housing, homelessness and racial equity/diversity among most attendees.*

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Housing to support working-class barre residents. Downstreet Housing and Community Development, Capstone Community Action; two dynamic orgs with great track records. These non-profits are two of many holding up the barre community.
- Good Samaritan Haven does good work as an emergency shelter. There are other effective central Vermont orgs. COVID increased the cooperative nature of things; Barre's ability to collaborate was notable during the pandemic.
- Vermont is a small city. All the non-profits know each other. Networking is effective, as is the sharing of resources. People work well together, even during COVID. Messages and connections get where they need to go through non-profits and churches.
- Jenna: Healthy networking is not usually among the first assets we hear about, and it's huge.
- Barre is a deeply pragmatic and solutions-oriented community. Deep range of volunteers, often who dig into particular projects and stick with them for a long time.
- Barre cemeteries and history. Look to how 100 years ago, the granite industry led the way to revitalizing the area and created strength for this city. New Americans brought culture, food, politics and strengthened community during the turn of the century. From 1890 to 1910, Barre's population tripled. This tells us how important a diverse population is to have in a community, so our history is an asset.
- The Barre Diversity & Equity committee has been doing a lot of work since its inception a year ago. Diversity in Barre is more pronounced than times in the past, and it's an asset for the community. We're working on initiatives to address equity issues including housing, education and city resources.
- The Heritage Festival explores our rich heritage, and over the years we've had indigenous communities participate. A satellite of Vermont's refugee resettlement, so Barre is able to provide that kind of support and welcoming atmosphere.
- Affordability of housing allows for single parents, or restructured or co-parenting families, to have a place to land after reorganizing. Numerous friends have moved here after family reorganizations.
- Informal education and shared-interest groups are popular here, like genealogy, for instance. It's a community asset that may connect to the third step of opportunities.
- Different organizations like church groups participate and contribute to the wealth of the community—in the integrative sense of the word—and they support people in transition. Whether it's single moms, parolees or folks looking for a new start, people in Barre work together to support those in need.
- There are neighborhoods around town that have a very cohesive, friendly feel, and a helping network.

- Some communities are walkable and have well-maintained sidewalks, so the porch culture there is strong. Neighbors touch base on a regular basis.
- Good opportunities for improvement with different grants that come to the city, like NBRC grants, arts & infrastructure,

transportation. People are thinking about how to better Barre in all different ways. We're one of the larger cities, so people are looking to us and at us.

- Route 302 goes through the city, so our location is another asset in general.

## What are the Challenges?

- Some neighborhoods are more difficult to maintain neighborly ethos because of their built environment. They're on hills, don't have sidewalks, and the traffic is fast and heavy. We need good sidewalks for folks who want their neighborhoods to feel safer and have more confidence in the built structure.
- Engaging community is much more challenging with advancing age. It would be great if we had more ways to hang out together.
- Housing crisis. Barre like the rest of the state is becoming unaffordable, almost across the board. For a person to afford a 2-bedroom apartment in Vermont, they need to earn \$24/hour, or roughly \$50,000. There are not a lot of Vermonters who earn that kind of money. Homelessness, and how much of a person's wages are taken up by housing costs are real problems in Barre, and across the state.
- Services are not accessible. Everything is online. Some people don't have a phone or a computer. Capstone and Good Samaritan are great, but getting information out is all online. We're missing people with disabilities, and those whose voices can't be heard because they don't have the access. There's a huge accessibility challenge. Felons who have done their time and want to get their lives back on track don't have options to participate in the community once they're out of prison.
- BIPOC folks in Barre talk about how chilling it was to have those weekly demonstrations downtown and other symbols of white supremacy in our town center. It's very scary for BIPOC community, and we can't discount expression of these ideas that represent direct harassment and danger to their lives. We haven't grappled with the impact of that. A small statement of support for BLM became a culture war.
- A friend moved out of Barre because, as BIPOC, she was scared to come into the city. It's apparent how unfriendly the town is to the BIPOC population.
- The Diversity and Equity Committee is dealing with these issues, and we've heard the same thing from people in and out of the community, that Barre is not welcoming to people of color. BLM was nixed by a city counselor, and we had done a lot of work on that issue as a committee. We're symbolic of a culture they don't approve of. Our committee would like to be more reflective of the BIPOC community. There's a lot of division in Barre. Not just on the diversity component but on the equity component, whether it's access to city resources or housing. These are not easy challenges but they're being addressed, and it makes me hopeful. I grew up gay in this

community and that wasn't good to be when I was a kid; now there are rainbow flags on Main Street so there's been progress. Sometimes this town has a reputation that is not in line with reality.

- The homeless and people with disabilities are treated differently. People say, "We don't want to see homelessness on our streets, or homeless people camping out." What people don't know is that we already have that. They don't want to see it, but there are people outside sleeping. Homeless shelters are maxed out. We need residents to help solve the problem, not just say "We don't want to see them."
- Homelessness and housing, and the inequity in that resource, is the big challenge we face.
- A couple of neighbors didn't want to join the Diversity Committee as a Black member in this community because they'd stand out. They'd prefer to fly under the radar. It's a complicated, sad and angering dilemma.
- With the treatment and names I'm subject to as an old person, I can't imagine what it's like for BIPOC and Native American friends. Coming here with an accent won't feel welcoming. We don't have a good history of treating BIPOC with friendliness. We have to figure out as a community how we want to treat people.
- Participating in a committee or project is rewarding when efforts are taken seriously and utilized in a meaningful way by local leaders. It's quite dispiriting for folks on the Diversity and Equity Committee who put themselves out there and then they're not respected or well-regarded by the rest of the community. If I donate my time, it needs to be connected to effective systems of change. People want it to be connected to something and respected, not dismissed and given a pat on the back. People's time is valuable. Participation, especially if you have two jobs or a single parent, is difficult. When the fruits of your labor aren't clear, it's hard to get the participation you need. That's why everyone loves the community garden, because they can see the fruits of their labor, and they're real.
- Barre's reputation—"Scary Barre"—is ingrained. In a lot of ways, the story needs to be different. It's defined by the past. The story we want to tell is different than the story of the protests from last fall. That story is very loud and consumes the room. Collectively we need to start telling the story of our city.

## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- The BLM flag issue isn't dead. We shouldn't shirk from issues; we should make them a public thing and challenge people's perceptions. It's not always comfortable or fun, but it's useful. Asian American violence was addressed by the city council based on our activity, so we're making ourselves heard.
- Setting up a reading lesson for kids at the Aldrich. Read a graphic novel and talk about it. We're not doing HUGE things, but little things add up.
- There's a Facebook group with 140-150 people from Barre that talks about doing positive things in the community.

Sometimes a concern comes up, and it brings us out to the streets to hold up signs about what we value about our community. It's a way for people to communicate without feeling exposed to harm.

- Reading against racism. Selective reading list for the elementary and middle school levels.
- Discussion groups. We've been talking about Parker Palmer's 'Healing the Heart of Democracy' as an idea, and as a way to work on relationship-building and mutual respect.
- It's tough to access things—forums, conversations, events—during the workday. People with disabilities are treated differently, too. We need interpreters for the deaf. There needs to be a systems overhaul; and so many things we can

think about to make things better. Extended hours on weekends. Services for folks who work in hotels. We have field medics in Montpelier going into homeless encampments with food, but not Barre. They take inventory of what people need in Montpelier, but not in Barre. We need a municipal housing task force.

- Some people don't live the lifestyle that brings them to a forum like this. They're working on a car, bucking wood, etc. We don't have capacity for communication with people who have different styles of experiencing the world. We need to find a way for people who aren't showing up at Zoom meetings to be models for the community, and to communicate with the community.

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## Addressing Empty Buildings & Downtown Vitality

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Ted Brady (scribe), Rebecca Ellis, Laurie Fielder, Jenny Hislop, Gary Holloway, Bonnie Waninger

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The people of Barre
- Proximity to resources such as major development-related partners such as ACCD, Capstone, PVT, and others (Statewide partners that are really local partners)
- Beautiful and cohesive downtown
- Great infrastructure thanks to City Manager Steve McKenzie
- Large labor market and availability of workforce (second largest in Vermont)
- Surrounded by cool things such as working landscape, Hope Cemetery, Millstone, etc.
- Central convening point for lots of Vermonters – central focus for events etc. (Labor Hall, Granite Museum, et)
- Parking
- Barre Area Development Corporation
- City Council and Administration are active in trying to deal with the problem – looking for ways to support private development similar to City Place project
- TIF Capacity – have two years to identify additional debt to include in TIF program (plus TIF consultant helping to identify opportunities and private developers)
- A lot of agencies willing to put their energy and resources in
- Barre Development Loan Fund – business loan fund housed at Vermont Community Loan Fund to help small businesses create jobs
- Diverse economy in downtown Barre
- Barre Partnership (Tracy Lewis) – downtown program that puts on programming like the farmers market and concerts in downtown
- Recent success stories – AR Market, bike shop, kitty café, hardware store, restaurants
- Pandemic helped businesses rethink their businesses – such as the deli that fed the homeless and stores that provided service through the internet
- Barre Merchants Bureau

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### What are the Challenges?

- Lack of a downtown grocery store
- Some of the property owners of the vacant buildings
- Profitability – hard to make a business work downtown based on watching several small businesses start and fail
- City government is not adequately staffed (professionals do a lot of admin work)
- Capacity
- City role is to catalyze development, but development needs private players to actually do the development
- Retail has significantly changed with the advent of box stores and the internet making typical downtown business operations unviable
- Existing historical retail model does not work
- Lack of big employers downtown (lots of people commute out of town)
- Lost 400-500 jobs (hopefully temporarily) from City Center during the pandemic
- Real or perceived crime issues – the moniker “Scary Barre”
- Barre is not a destination – its where people drive through or live
- Pedestrian safety – not a fun town to walk in and sit downtown because of traffic (noise and safety), poor crosswalks
- Unwelcoming to new residents (“outsider”, “not from here” comments)
- Environmental obstacles make development difficult, including brownfields, flood issues, historic preservation issues
- Barre City / Barre Town dynamics
- Generational issue of youth not feeling fully engaged in their community

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Explore state incentive program to attract businesses to downtown
- Attract a college downtown
- Utilize space to serve youth development



- Create opportunities for small businesses to prototype and test drive their ideas – such as providing pop up space at Currier Park concerts and farmers market
- Build continuous sidewalks (raised crosswalks) similar to European countries
- Placemaking efforts to make downtown more attractive
- Create makerspace / incubator space
- Create more mass transportation options for people to get into town
- Create a coalition of existing building owners who have successfully developed projects and businesses in downtown to engage landlords that haven't successfully utilized their properties
- Encourage downtown shops to stay open late on certain days (open later and close later) to accommodate those commuting out of town to shop downtown
- Post an alternate truck route around Main Street
- Leverage granite sheds and other industrial spaces to engage youth (teach skills, create economic opportunity)
- Leverage the industrial “vibe” by embracing the authentic heritage
- More yoga in downtown
- Invite a mosque, Hindu temple, or other religious sites to downtown
- Utilize more of the performance space / large spaces like Elks Club to invite youth to participate in musical / performance / recreation opportunities
- Communicate to people about the resources and businesses in downtown (several times during the session, participants made suggestions for businesses/initiatives that already existed)
- Incentivize private developers to redevelop their properties
- Redevelop upper floors of downtown buildings into housing
- Cultivate existing businesses – whatever is good for them will be good for any businesses interested in coming to Barre
- Create an indoor event space

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Other communities are jealous of the built environment of Barre – “the good bones” of the downtown – that attracts bike shops, stores and restaurants
- It takes partnership with organizations, private developers, and state agencies to overcome the challenges Barre faces
- Bring together building owners – even if it has happened before – as there is little to lose
- Barre has a lot of pride, and it should be put to work to break stereotypes
- Sometimes it takes a while for a garden to grow – continue cultivating it, and watering it. There are a variety of successful redevelopment stories that demonstrate building the infrastructure and putting things in place has long-term results
- Clearly heard that the community is proud of the downtown
- Density and infrastructure are great assets
- Great to witness the strength of the community – great resources – from the opera house to the granite industry to great downtown – surrounded by great capacity in city government and supporting non-profit organizations
- Lots of low hanging fruit (downtown programming) and longer-term projects (redeveloping downtown)
- Be authentic – but recognize the authenticity is complex and deep and involves race cars (Thunder Road) and classical music (opera house)
- Rally around a big idea as previous communities have through the visit process – great things can happen through process.

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## Recreation, Arts & Culture

Visiting Team: Nick Kramer (facilitator), Paul Costello (scribe), Beth Awhaitey, Michele Bailey Jason Broughton, Xusana Davis, Scott Finn, Sarah Launderville, Conor O’Dea

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Barre Opera House and its people
- Studio Place Arts – a place with contemporary art classes and studio space
- The Granite Museum has a unique collection of work by local stone artisans.
- The reopening of the pool after significant improvements
- Barre has a number of active, committed artists & musicians, more so than many cities its size.
- Lots of public granite sculptures on Main St
- The Old Labor Hall, which is on the historic register and has seen significant improvements recently.
- The Aldrich Public Library does a great job
- The Mill Stone trail network and quarries
- The Cow Pasture is a great outdoor space.
- The Rock City Chorus is the only chorus around that people actually dance to!
- Fantastic playgrounds
- The VT History Center
- The bike path between Barre and Montpelier that is in the process of being connected
- Hope Cemetery and its incredible art
- An independent bookstore
- Great latte’s at Espresso Bueno
- Barre is a short distance from great hiking / biking & paddling.
- Barre has a world-class bike shop and a bike club that operates out of it and rides all around Central Vermont.
- The outdoor skating rink
- The Barre Auditorium
- The AR Market has great food and a restaurant in process.
- Barre has the only sushi option in the area.
- The Meltdown
- Public arts statues
- A number of arts groups, especially for seniors

- Barre’s several thriving social clubs do a lot around the arts & recreation.
- The ball fields & Barre Youth Sports – lots of team sports options for kids
- Thunder Road
- Hanaford and Quality market
- Central VT Special Olympics
- Central VT Runners
- Children’s Theater Corps

### What are the Challenges?

- There is a significant lack of public green space, particularly in North Barre where the average income is lower.
- Every town in the region tries to do everything independently, instead of collaborating together.
- It’s hard to raise funding when there aren’t enough people in the community. Public funding is a perpetual challenge. Sometimes it’s hard to even pass the school budget. There is a perception that taxes are already too high—no one wants to pay more.
- Barre lacks a good recreation committee. The existing parks & recreation is underfunded.
- There aren’t a lot of free options.
- Barre has a very low income population—more than 80% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch
- Wellness can be a positive and a negative—much of the population struggles with obesity.
- There are pervasive mental health issues across the population.
- Many cars lack mufflers and there is significant noise pollution.
- There is no strong centralized communications hub.
- People are still recovering from the pandemic.
- Some folks feel that Barre has lost a strong connection to its cultural heritage.
- Many people with financial resources have left the city for the Town over the years. There is a lot of burnout in those remaining in the town.

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- The river could be a great recreational resource. It would be great to have a kayak access somewhere upstream and a put out somewhere around the Granite Museum.
- Focus on efforts that reconnect Barre to its cultural heritage and use that rich history to welcome newcomers to the area.
- Building a welcoming and inclusive space will help to reignite the spark of ethnic and cultural diversity.
- Build a welcome wagon, or a volunteer program for longer-term residents to partner with newcomers to welcome and orient them into the city and its events and groups.
- Bring back the Barre Heritage Festival
- We need to invest more money in our parks & rec department.
- Can we help arts and cultural groups by building a local community philanthropic fund focused on helping non-profits raise money? This could help connect to local businesses and large-scale donors.
- Create a centralized communications hub or communications process to advertise events and cultural opportunities.
- Create a city-wide events calendar
- Look for funding for a full-time position who could serve as a liaison between different groups in town, help with communications to the public, and help local non-profits apply for grant funding.
- More events with street closures.
- Look to models around the state like up in Hardwick for creative food networks and opportunities to bring the community together around local agriculture.
- Revisit Barre’s master plan to identify arts & recreation priorities, and leverage it as a tool to support work in the arena, particularly with regards to walkability.
- Building on heritage—could we build a focal point for Barre to be known for besides granite?

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This community clearly has a huge number of valuable assets in this arena. It seems like a lot of the challenge is about how to spread the word.
- It’s great to be part of this conversation where this group is thinking seriously about identity, diversity & inclusion. It’s important to, as conversations unfold about attracting new residents with diverse identities, to avoid cultural extraction. It should be a mutually beneficial, cultural exchange.
- Great to hear the focus on accessibility coming up several times in this conversation—that’s definitely something I’d want to underscore: the need to continually approach anything you do with a lens geared towards accessibility.
- It sounds like Barre is at a critical juncture of reinvention. There is obvious deep community history and pride in that history. How do you leverage the rich traditions and cultural diversity of the city and reimagine a future identity built on a thriving arts and cultural sector rooted in a new wave of diverse residents?
- There is so much money available right now, and with so many great assets already in place in Barre, the question is how do you make sure Barre groups and businesses are accessing the support available to them and driving forward local projects?

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## Supporting Barre Students & Families

Visiting Team: Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Will Eberle (scribe), Leslie Black-Plumeau, Josh Hanford, Michelle Kersey, Robert Purvis, Aly Richards, Gus Seelig

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Aldrich Library – only free place to go in community that doesn't involve religion, free stuff to do, librarians are friendly and listen to children and families.
- Activities – Soccer (free), figure skating, busing – being able to send preschoolers on the bus is very helpful.
- The children's librarian is wonderful.
- Lots of youth sports available.
- Great police and fire department and pool – which is very affordable.
- Lots of playgrounds (especially the ones with porta potties in barre town).
- Trails, bike paths, cow pasture, paved roads.
- The property both schools sit on have beautiful outdoor areas, trails, bike paths, gardens etc. (this was a huge asset during COVID).
- Quality of the educators in the school system has been great.
- Free meals for all kids – breakfast lunch and dinner.
- Mutuo, Elks, Lions, Kiwanis, rotary etc. – (social clubs) (many of these have been big supporters of the schools – particularly Rotary).
- Rotary gives every kid in barre atlases and dictionaries.
- Rotary made a huge mask donation to all schools, Lion's club gives away glasses.
- Nice ball fields.
- Close to medical care, hospital, doctors, close to shopping, concerts in the park, farmers market.
- School facilities are very well taken care of, lots of resources put into keeping them safe and up to date.
- Community supported a bond to build a new alternative education facility.
- Trade program at Spaulding (Central Vermont Career Center).
- Washington County Family Center.
- Wildlife assets.
- Cross proximity to the granite. Barre Granite is more durable than granite from China. Some graveyards will only allow Barre granite headstones.
- Great Headstart program at Capstone.
- Growing childcare partnerships.
- Capstone is a huge asset for families.
- There is a range of educational options (Choice academy, public schools, alternative school, tech program etc.).
- SUD-related supports – sharps containers.
- Free breakfast.
- Great hockey rink.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Limited options for teenagers to have a place to go, feel like they belong.
- Planned parenthood—I'm against abortion.
- Spaulding doesn't have bus transportation for its students.
- Before and after school care for families.
- Really wish there was an after-school program.
- How to contend with the state allowing people to grow marijuana in their homes (this is a challenge for youth).
- Openly transphobic remarks on the school board (recent event).
- Huge lack of high quality affordable in the Barre area (problem across Vermont – particularly huge problem in Barre).
- Cigarette smoke in public places.
- Drug use. Fatal overdoses. Increase in families being heavily impacted by extreme drug use.
- Lack of diversity and inclusion.
- Transportation for families to get to schools – not kids going to and from school – but families with unreliable transportation have a hard time getting to events. One dad walked his kid in a wagon 3 miles to an open house.
- Decreasing sense of community unity. Growing difficulty accepting differences.
- Lack of a dedicated place for our teens.
- Need more community.
- Need more volleyball courts.
- Hard to meet new people.
- Hard for people who have to live alone without anybody.
- Very low rate of student engagement with after school programming. (Barre was strikingly higher in lack of engagement with after school activities than other surrounding towns).
- In Barre City many sports are cost prohibitive.
- Trying to coordinate activities that work with split custody situations is difficult.
- We don't have a diversity of houses of worship (mosque, synagogue, etc).
- Dabble day was wonderful, paused due to COVID, would love to have it back. Same with a milk and cookie night in the library, the local principal would read to kids. The challenge is these don't happen enough and aren't available to a wide age range of students.
- Lack of variety of sports/extracurricular options, no year-round pool.
- Would love to see our community exist in a way that's inclusive without the negative stigma for kids.
- Recently removed protections to tenants that limit how much they're expected to pay.
- The existing tech programs are going great but we don't have enough kids going into them to meet the workforce needs.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Should expand programs that attract young people.
- Expand the arts.
- Expand curriculum offerings to include education on smoking/SUD perils.
- Love the Burlington YMCA – has childcare, fitness facilities, pool etc. – would be wonderful to have something like that in barre – including a teen space.
- Invest in more work-based learning opportunities.
- If you attend the school you automatically get free lunch and breakfast, could that be expanded to include subsidized access to sports, extra-curricular activities etc.? Could that be expanded to kids not in the school system?
- We need to find ways to improve affordability and inclusion.
- One of the reasons you can't find available/affordable childcare – there isn't enough of it because people don't get paid enough to be childcare providers – we need to find a way to pay people enough to improve the availability of providers to meet the demand.
- We need to make a concerted effort to make living in this area affordable. (More affordable/high quality housing).
- Create a tenants' board/union to work to solve problems with landlords/housing affordability etc.
- We have a population of kids in Barre who go to preschool and kids who don't. There's a lot of literacy focus at doctor's visits, but no numeracy focus. The expectations for kids entering preschool is higher than ever. Create an outreach family for families – utilize places like the library, hubs of community, where we provide early learning kits – materials games etc. to engage kids in math learning.
- In Washington State there was a program that provided childcare, and taught parents what educational benchmarks their kids should be meeting, and provided educational supports to meet them.
- Revalue working with your hands, trades etc. – to help meet workforce needs – this could be a program etc.
- Community building events have gone well – we need to do more of them and continue to build community and unity.
- A partnership with the city and bus providers to enhance transportation resources for families.
- Expand the adult career technical program to help adults who are out of work join the trade's workforce.
- Work to destigmatize working in the trades.
- Heritage festival brings tons of people together – do more things like this – that include multi-generational gatherings and include all socio-economic backgrounds.
- More free community events.
- Have events open to other communities with subsidies for all Barre residents.
- Having a park or city space dedicated to multi uses could attract multi-generational multi-use space which could grow community.
- A teen run café by and for teens. With dollar slices of pizza and free stuff to do.
- Create a youth panel to ensure there's youth voice helping to drive this. Go to where youth are “meet them where they're at.”

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## Zoom Forum 3

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (facilitator), Kevin Lambert (scribe)

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The municipal swimming pool. We want to renovate it with a splash park but didn't have the funds. It was wonderful to more than double our attendance at the pool, based on a 'Summer Matters for All' grant that cut the cost for people in half. We had young and old swimming; new families. It was very successful, and we're looking forward to branching off and bringing in new members next year.
- Vermont Granite Museum had roughly 10,000 visitors last year. People are amazed about all the attractions in Barre, and how they can stay the whole day.
- Architecture, parks, restaurants that vary in menu choices; we have it all. Not just a place to get off the highway—we want to try and sell Barre as a destination. Spend 24 hours here, stick around a couple days. Explore in and around the town and city, and explore the other resources.
- Food Truck Thursday in Currier Park has really brought people out. It's been successful and fun, and people have had a really good time.
- Large amount of rental properties and affordable places to live.
- A lot of parks and several municipal buildings are assets. Groups can designate a meeting space through the city, even at the police department.
- Good downtown and businesses. TrueValue expanding its business. New businesses coming in monthly. Partnerships among businesses are of huge value, along with Barre area development.
- A decade ago, there seemed to be a big gap in the younger generations that were engaged in the community. Maybe that's the effect of the opioid epidemic; not sure. Now, we're seeing young people who have been able to come here and start new businesses. There's opportunity for growth and for people to be successful. The older generations in Barre have been so welcoming to these different business owners.
- The community support is strong and exciting and has been a phenomenal experience.
- Millstone Trails, ReSOURCE, and the Granite Museum are all attractions for residents living outside of Barre. I'm appreciative of the things Barre has to offer us as guests of the community.
- We have an active senior center. Nonprofits, the city and town make contributions to it. We have good membership, and we

stayed active during the pandemic. Tuesday lunches. Twice a month we do a fundraiser dinner. Senior trips have been popular. Recreation, arts and culture; we're doing things for older people to help them be creative. Basket-making, carving, etc.

- I don't see a missing generation of people due to opioids; I think they're missing because they're working. I want to see everyone be able to spend time together; all the generations.
- The city staff is a huge asset. They're really good; they really want to help people and get things done. Also, we have a lot of talent within the city; individuals who are high-profile and represent the city well.
- Quarries are assets. Wilson industrial park and the town schools. The asset of being able to expand in Barre town is large. People there have more money, so there's more financial assets to build the city.
- The people of Barre are a tremendous asset. People with different experiences, backgrounds, walks of life. Listening to

those people and their perspectives, considering what they have to offer moving forward, will be important.

- Our cemeteries are beautiful and assets to the city. St. Monica. Elmwood. Such beautiful pieces of art there. We're doing a better job of showing the Barre heritage through our history.
- The city schools' proximity to downtown is an asset. It allows children to be exposed to things they might not get to do if the locations were spaced out. Proximity is really good between educational facilities and the municipality.
- People's Health and Wellness Clinic. It's a good hub for alternative and complementary healthcare. Acupuncture, physical therapy, biofeedback, etc. You're able to find practitioners here who are willing to work with that. For people who don't have healthcare or who are transitioning, it's a good option. They do traditional healthcare as well.
- The Granite City Garden Club, as well as these community forums, are both assets.

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## What are the Challenges?

- Opioid epidemic.
- A bad spot in the downtown area where things look bleak.
- Pool opens later and closes earlier in the year than people want because high-school and college kids go back to school and sports starts, so there are no lifeguards. It'd be good to stay open later, but lifeguards are the limiting factor.
- A downtown building has been vacant for 20+ years on Main Street
- We don't have the funds to do the things we could do to make the city better, like a splash park.
- Buildings are older, which is a challenge in itself.
- Parking is a challenge; we don't have great space for everybody. People want to focus on walkability, but we also have to think about parking needs for our buildings.
- Transportation affects a lot of these things. We have a great downtown bike shop but no good bike parking.
- No sidewalks on hilly neighborhoods. Need to make public transportation more reliable.
- There is no teen center or place where kids can hang out or be creative. A maker space where people can come together and do arts/crafts, wood working, and learn skills and be productive together. A community center would be amazing and helpful and inclusive.
- We need more recreation and community programs during the summer.
- Visitors at the Granite Museum are surprised to learn a lot of the stuff that makes Barre special. They know about Montpelier; they don't know about Barre. We've tried to get the message out there with some of our marketing materials, but this is something that's currently lacking.
- It's hard to find an available doctor when one is needed quickly. The closest was in Berlin. That was a challenge when I needed emergency help.
- It's also difficult to change doctors.
- Niece struggles with childcare. She had to leave her job and be a stay-at-home mother. The state has hefty regulations on child daycare; hard to say if that's an asset or a challenge. The government getting involved can make things difficult.
- It's a struggle to find care for younger children. Staggered classes mean different schedules, and Spaulding doesn't offer bussing so my older child can't watch the younger ones. My family structure is such that we *could* handle childcare, but it's difficult because there's no bus ride home.
- *[Offer from attendee to drive daughter home from school. Neighbor helping neighbor; real-time community building!]*
- It would be nice for people to utilize resources without city staff having to be there monitoring it. Especially the pool, which closes at 5pm.
- A self-service community center doesn't work because times have changed. We can't open a building where kids would come in, play hoops and lock up. Liability-wise, unsupervised recreation in city facilities is not feasible. We can do a better job, but the challenge is to staff facilities, and keep the positions there with funding.
- A \$1 million bond is still being paid off by city to fund the Vermont Granite Museum project, which has several million to go to finish the envelope as planned by the city in '98. We received \$160K in grants for Stone Arts School, but it's still sorely lacking funds. The plan was to connect the campus to the bike path and create new green space. Everything is still in the planning stage. We've been working hard with the city and community members, but need more help from the community to make it happen.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- We need to get the good information about Barre out there in a nice, neat package. It has to be a better story.
- When completed, a splash park at the pool could open earlier and close later because lifeguards won't be required.
- Busses aren't convenient for getting to work downtown. A bike path would make it much easier for people to navigate the city.
- A bike path would make Barre a destination. Rail bikes could also work. We need to be creative in bringing people into town and increasing our economic status. It's worth spending money on.
- Linking up with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail system by extending it into central Vermont would be huge.
- If everyone took one day a week, three days a month, to help someone in need, it could make such a difference. It's a barrier we could overcome.
- Use Front Porch Forum more to reach out and seek/offer assistance. There are people who need help, and there are people who will help.
- Splash pads would be great in every park we have, and a local water park for each area. It's a lot of money; what is the cost for a splash pad?
- Quite expensive, along with the cost of how water is handled and circulated. We're still hoping for Rotary Park!
- Is there time for adults in the evening to do lap swimming, not requiring lifeguards? With the facilities we have, it seems we should support more adult activities. More time for adults in the evenings means more activity in general, which is good for the community.
- More access to recreational facilities can be a revenue source. Risk is involved, obviously, but isn't there a way to manage it? We can mitigate risk with contractual language and cameras, and pre-paid access cards.
- Can Barre Senior Center be the replacement of Project Independence (adult day program run through Gifford Medical that was closed in June)? Winters are long in Vermont; we need to get the elderly under one roof so they can be together and share time together during that season. Any discussions about that in city council or elsewhere?
- No conversations about that subject in city council.
- The Senior Center is more of a social club and way for people to socialize, have activities and share food. Project Independence was geared for people who required adult daycare, and this involves staff and support. I don't see them being a match because they have different purposes.



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# Ideas from Barre Students

As shared in a group conversation with 3 Spaulding High School Classes on September 23rd

## What are the Assets in Barre?

- We have plenty of sidewalks
- Many churches
- Public library is an asset – branches of Aldrich Library
- Programming
- Access to Wifi
- We have good recreational areas
- Tennis courts
- Walking paths
- Playgrounds
- The school is an asset
- Public events in the summer – have seen multiple public events happening
- Barre Heritage Festival
- Barre Farmers Market
- Food Trucks set up – Cornerstone Tater Tot truck
- Live music in the summer at Currier Park
- Small shops and cafes – Kitty Korner Cafe
- There are places in Barre where homeless people can go and get food (churches help with that)
- Meals on Wheels program – deliver food to homes
- Foliage and other natural features
- Statues – Granite Capital of the country (NOT SANDSTONE!)
- The Opera House
- Benches and giant zipper in galleries around city
- A bunch of interesting little things – small shops, zipper, etc.
- A lot of the recreational fields are open to the public and anyone can use them anytime – Barre Town Fields are publicly accessible

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## What are the challenges / things you would like to change?

- Traffic cones and sign in the way on Hill Street
- Spaulding is not doing busses – concerned about safety of streets with kids walking to school
- You can't see the sidewalks 8 months out of the year
- The potholes in the roads – poor quality
- Worst road in Barre is the main road to our school
- Road work/road closures get in the way of getting to school on time
- Barre Town School doesn't have walls for their classrooms – they have dividers. Some kids have a hard time focusing in that setting.
- Sometimes construction projects start but then take FOREVER to be completed.
- Either Barre Town or Barre City votes the school budget down every year. Seems like poor planning and many people that just see their taxes going up and aren't connected to the process.
- On Main Street there are a few empty stores that should be filled. There are very few restaurants and shops like Montpelier has.
- There isn't enough stuff to do in Barre. Especially in the winter – other than sports.
- The perception as "scary Barre"
- Reputation depends on what area of Barre you live in. In some places there is a lot of noises, maybe strange people, a lot of activity on streets at night that can keep kids up
- My family has had their car broken into multiple times
- My car was egged multiple times in the church parking lot
- There are people that end up here in Barre that may have been in jail
- My house got egged last year and our car has been broken into
- Different parts of the city are very different – different experiences of the city
- I would be nervous to walk alone in downtown Barre. I don't feel safe walking down the street even in the daylight – especially at night.
- We have to walk to and from school. Feeling safe should be a top priority during that time.
- There is a lot of drug use in Barre. Many have seen needles lying around.
- Childcare is very hard to find in Barre. I helped raise a young sibling and we had a hard time finding daycare for him. I had to miss school to be home with him.
- We are coming out of a pandemic and everyone is short staffed and has management problems. No people to work.
- There is no place to walk to for groceries in downtown Barre.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Pave informal walkways to school
- Share a clear road work schedule
- Clean up the snow on sidewalks more often
- Get rid of the Dollar General
- Make it safer downtown.
- Barre City should invest more in public transportation so people don't have to walk.
- Expand bus times to better fit the needs of students and for work.
- Place more cameras around areas of high crime – more visible surveillance
- Address loitering in the City – put up no loitering signs
- Expand access to free mental health care. It seems like there is a lot of mental illness among homeless people in Barre. A place people can go for free.
- Invest in programs to transport people who need to be at the courthouse. There is a bus stop right outside the courthouse and people concentrate/loiter there. Rethink placement.
- Boutiques and interesting stores like Montpelier. Retail for browsing.
- We need a Target.

- More retail could bring jobs and more reasons for people to come to Barre.
- Create an area where people or companies can post jobs. Community jobs board. (could be at the school)
- A place to go for young people in the community – elementary through high school – not just a teen center but open to everyone. Wifi, trusted adults, place to work on homework, safe. Could be an affordable option to childcare challenges.
- A center in Barre like the YMCA in Burlington – can play basketball and other activities but also a place to do homework and hang out.
- A place where businesses can rent out to host activities.
- Safe spaces for needle drops.
- We have a lot of sports teams – we should also have other activities like card games, video games, etc. Not everyone is athletic.
- Create a small convenience store or shop for food – a small grocery store that is walkable to downtown. Examples – Quality Market and Trow Hill (closing down)
- We should have more dances – Winter Dance, Homecoming Dance, etc. A teen or community center could hold events like that.
- Schools should feed their kids more. Portions are too small. More consistent quality as well.
- We should give away extra food at the end of the day. Some businesses do that at the end of the day. The pantry in the office is “sad” this year.
- We should have a prepared meal that kids can bring home.
- We had a veggie cart in the elementary school that kids could take home. We had it before the pandemic. We should bring it back.
- We should bring back fun community-building activities. Both in the school and in the community. Fun tournaments like cornhole, soccer, events on the rec fields – lip sync battles!
- Knowing that Barre is a safer place would bring me back. Make it a place where you can hang out.
- We should have the ONE thing that people come to Barre for. Chik-fil-a, Target

## Additional Action Ideas

Here are the ideas residents contributed through a paper and online form

- Create a city where the homeowners are fairly taxed, not overtaxed. We need to increase the tax base by becoming a place where new businesses with good paying jobs will want to locate. We can't survive as a bedroom community to Montpelier, Waterbury and Chittenden County.
- My biggest concern about All in for Barre is what is it capable of really doing. We have already seen that those in power rarely listen to the citizens at large. We tell them we can't afford tax increases, taxes still go up. We tell them school costs are too high for us to afford, school budgets still go up. What makes you think this will be any different?
- Provide more signage, etc. to highlight Barre's interesting history.
- Addressing Downtown Vitality by creating the right environment for craft and solo/small manufacturing. Barre is a city of doers and makers, and should embrace this history to create the future (commercial production kitchen space for rent, pop up stores opportunities, downtown store vacancy regulation, public central list of spaces for rent, craft shared space, ...). Add trees and repair parking lots (with good signage) to create reason to shop in downtown. I have prior engagement on Aug 25th and won't be able to come, but interested to participate.
- More COVID-friendly weekly events like Thursdays at Currier Park to get neighbors out of their homes and face-to-face
- Barre City Bus circulator (Montpelier has one), retake unnecessary parking spots for bike lanes, more sidewalks, downtown “central park” near the water, fix downtown intersection, open day shelter at Good Samaritan, less conservative talking points at cutting taxes at any cost just to save a few pennies while screwing over younger people, reinvest in neighborhood parks & basketball courts & playgrounds that have been neglected.
- Safe pedestrian and cycling passage along the major routes between Barre and the Cross Vermont Trail. It is time to complete this after 20 years of talking about it.
- An indoor recreation center for residents of both city and town that includes an indoor swimming pool, an indoor walking track, pickle ball/tennis courts, and fitness equipment. Charge membership on a sliding scale.
- A free meeting space with kitchen that is open to all later than the library's hours (it closes at 6 or 7 pm).
- Local events calendar so that groups can coordinate and not conflict when they schedule events.
- Indoor, year-round farmer's market / flea market / craft vending.
- One or two reasonably priced new clothing stores for all sizes.
- Create a Maker's Space and or community center
- Continue to make improvements downtown, encouraging and offering incentives to empty building owners for mixed use development. Smaller stores, pop up stores and affordable housing options could benefit so many of our residents.
- Continue to welcome a diverse population, make people aware that we welcome them to our city.
- Create a marketing plan to bring more people to Barre. Showcase the historic homes around town, to improve the reputation of Barre City – it's not scary here!
- Focus on traffic calming and speed limit compliance. Redirect large commercial trucks away from our neighborhood streets.
- More sidewalks and crosswalks, bike lanes, signage that blinks and warns if you're driving too fast. Hill St, Perry St, Camp St, Summer St are particularly problematic with excess speed, inability to safely cross and large trucks driving too fast.
- Plant more trees and flowers around the City, creating green spaces, summer shade and a general appearance that shows



- we have pride of place in our City. Work with the local garden club and nurseries or ask for volunteers to assist in this effort.
- Address the noise coming from cars and trucks that seem to be missing mufflers. Thunder Road is a destination, it's not the whole city. Between the motorcycles and the loud cars and trucks sleeping at night is really difficult in my neighborhood. Create an ordinance for noise levels and enforce the state inspection requirements on all vehicles.
  - Thank you to every one of the hard-working City of Barre employees! Our Leadership Team, Fire, Police, DPW and office workers do a great job taking care of all that needs to be done! So much progress has been made in these last few years, I'm confident we can continue to make Barre the best place to live! Thank you!"
  - We need to bring in businesses that have affordable products. We need a regular grocery store so people that don't have cars can't have access to affordable food. I think we need entertainment options in Central Vermont. It was great having the summer outdoor movie venue and the pool did come our beautiful but I heard it's very slippery. The auditorium could be used for different types of concerts, or other events. There is only one arcade for the children and one theater!
  - Reduce the traffic that is clogging our streets, neighborhoods and downtown from outlying areas. Barre's downtown is unpleasant because of the traffic – too much, too loud, and too rude. They all seem to be going 'somewhere else', and in a hurry. Our downtown is an unpleasant place to be with the traffic, noise, exhaust and pace that cars and trucks and motorcycles race through. If Barre City is a pleasant place to live – and it can be! – then, it will attract residents, not lose them (like we lost in the last 10 years). The bones are all here, but Barre City needs to look out for Barre City residents, first. And, if Barre can attract more residents, businesses will come – not the other way around. I long for the day when there is a really great breakfast spot in town.
  - As for community, this community is \*very\* divided. I am a newcomer to town (last 3 years) but the message I hear from many long-time Barre residents is that we want new residents, but they want it to be the way it was when Homer Fitts was here (1950, 1960? 1970?). Barre residents should welcome new residents and be open to new ways of doing things – the way things were is not coming back, nor is what has been done working to make it happen, but instead they should be open to the idea that what's new might be even better. Holding onto dreams of 'what was' and living in fear of change is preventing Barre from becoming something great. I follow the Barre City Fan Page on Facebook, and the pure meanness and anger of long-time Barre residents is nothing less than astounding. Some native Barre folk seem to live for attacking everyone who is not 'from Barre'. This is a mean little city with mean people. That is not the way to make new residents feel welcome, or for new residents to recommend that their friends, family and others move here. (hey, you asked....). Also, the fiasco over the Black Lives Matter flag was a stain on our community – picked up and ridiculed on national, and international media – OVER A FLAG. Shame on us. All that a person of color considering moving to Vermont need do is Google "Barre Vermont, Diversity" for years to come and see how this community denies the existence of racism and would support and welcome them. Again – shameful, and embarrassing.
  - Quality of life – what is a good quality of life? For me, it's community (Barre's is rooted in the past and seemingly dismissive of anything or anyone new). In spite of that, I have found a wonderful community here, but all of those new friends are also from elsewhere, and they can see a better Barre, and have a bigger perspective that is open, inclusive, and welcoming. Can't people here just be nice to other people? Wasn't that an important quality that was valued back in the days that native Barre folks long for? Niceness, and civility? If there is a strong enduring community (which there isn't for new residents, even if those who read this are FROM Barre, I have not been welcomed as a new resident nor really have any of the new residents that I've met – that's why we have found each other), if the environment is pleasant (far less noise, traffic, pollution, litter), then a diversity of small businesses will come and the quality of life will spiral up. I also want to make clear that I do not see poverty, homeless people, or crime as the problem here. The problem is how we react to those issues and how Barre treats and looks at the people that are impacted by those things that is the problem. So if this is a popularity contest where those who speak most, win as far as 'how do we fix Barre' – so be it. In the end, Barre will become what Barre wants, one way or the other. I am also not optimistic that the folks who are leading this All In for Barre charge are unbiased or want to hear about other ways of doing things, that might actually improve things! Time will tell. There hasn't been any real open-ness or interest in adapting or changing much, yet. One look at the Fanpage can show that.
  - Vacant store fronts
  - I want to comment on something that I find disturbing in Barre that I believe impacts our economy, community, and quality of life. This is my second post. When you enter Barre City from Berlin (Route 62) and stop at the intersection of Route 62 and Main Street – the ENTRANCE to our City – to your left, on North Main Street, there is a large Confederate flag displayed from the second story balcony of an older home (could be apartments now). It is big, and it is very visible. I imagine that this section of roadway has thousands of cars pass by every single day. I understand free speech, BUT if you are displaying a Confederate flag in this space and manner, it can only mean one thing – an overt display of racism and racist attitudes. What a blight on our city! I am not a person of color, but I am horrified at what they may think and feel entering a city, possibly for the first time, and seeing that display. I can only imagine that they would get the hell out of town quickly. And, yet, we say that we want new residents, new businesses, tourists, visitors to come and experience our city, spend their money, stay a while. Maybe relocate or invest here. Apparently, only if they agree to be in a place that shamelessly puts up with racist messages such as that flag. There is racism here, and it is openly displayed. In the weeks leading up to the Presidential election, people openly waved Confederate flags in our downtown – I have pictures of that. Free speech is one thing, but community standards and norms are another Apparently, there are enough people here who are OK with those messages that it has not been deterred. That is problematic.
  - Affordable housing. road maintenance. more accessible public transit.
  - Okay, so I'm going to add just one more comment about this process and what a barrier is to economic, community

development and quality of life. I participated in one of the Zoom forums last night, but I did not personally know most of the others in that forum. So, when the discussion turned to challenges that Barre faces, I was not comfortable speaking up about what I see as Barre's problem with racism and racist symbols, attitudes, etc., and here's why: Over the past year, friends of mine HAVE spoken up in various venues, committee meetings, and in online forums, and have been dismissed publicly by others in our community. In one instance, a person of color who courageously spoke up was ridiculed by a person who was a candidate for City Council, who said "bull \_\_\_\_" to that person's stated, lived experience. Others in the community have loudly and clearly stated that there is no racism here (but there is!!!), simply because they don't think they've seen it. If the take away from those past, public conversations is that if you speak up, you will be ridiculed, disbelieved, and dismissed, why would people speak up? If you have never experienced racism (abuse or other traumatic events), then you cannot understand how deeply personal sharing those experiences can be in a public setting with people you do not know. Add the treatment that you've received in the past from your community when you have spoken up, and you probably won't. People who have not experienced this do not understand it. And, so, when the Zoom conversation turned to Challenges last night, I did not speak up, and I regret that. Undoubtedly, there are many others like me. I think this way of sharing my thoughts electronically is valuable, because it is not subject to judgment in a community forum during the forum or after. Thank you for that, but I still regret that I did not speak up last night.

- Fostering businesses (restaurants, food stores, clothing and goods) downtown so that the downtown area grows increasingly vibrant; addressing climate change head on and looking at how Barre will adapt (why can't we get a dedicated bike path from Barre to Montpelier – not one that still puts you in the road with aggressive and sometimes angry drivers); providing health services (mental and physical) that are affordable and easy to access.
- More bike infrastructure, traffic calming in downtown barre (continuous sidewalks), a car sharing service (Zipcar or something similar), pop up businesses or more Thursday concert type events where entrepreneurs can take low risk bets.
- Having more family friendly events that will draw more people (and more dollars) to the area.
- Find space for a branch of Community College of VT in Barre to make it easier for people to attend classes. Work with the Career Center to emphasize technical skills and job retraining for underemployed adults.
- This community needs more child care options both for young children and for school age children. There should be space in an after-school program for every child who needs one.
- I have a six-year-old granddaughter who attends Barre City Elementary. Last year my husband and I watched her both before and after school. We drove her to school every day. When the school was on remote instruction we had her at our house two days a week. She received kindergarten instruction at a daycare in Stowe for the other 3 days. My son-in-law works in Stowe, so we made it work. School starts next week and my daughter is still looking for a before/after-school care option

that will work with the Barre City Elementary. She can pay for care. While there is a Y program at Barre Town Elementary, there is no program for Barre City Elementary. My granddaughter is on the waiting list for the Barre Town program, but we will have to provide transportation. Some things to keep in mind. Children from low income families end up latch keying at young ages when parents have to work. These children are safer when they are in a supervised situation. When parents are unable to work the community must support them with housing subsidies and food assistance. There are many needy families in Barre. Having safe, reasonably priced after-school care would make it easier for parents to work. An after-school program at Barre City School would make the community more desirable to middle class families. More homeowners, more money spent in local restaurants, and more money spent in local stores. After-school programs can provide enrichment activities for students. That might be art, homework help, or STEM. All activities that middle-class families find desirable. We are paying for heat, AC, custodial staff and maintenance on school buildings. The children are already there. We wouldn't need to transport them to different locations. If there can only be one Youth program for the Barre community, a school bus could be used to transport children to and from Barre Town Elementary. In the morning children could get on the bus at BTEMS and ride to BCEMS. The busses are going there anyway. In the afternoon, a bus could take the children back to BTEMS. It seems like I see empty busses headed back there after the last bus run. Thanks for taking the time to read through my thoughts on this topic. I'm sure we aren't the only family navigating the problem of scarce child care options. Fixing this problem will make Barre a more desirable place to live.

- My background is in water quality and community ecology. I also have a strong interest in environmental and economic justice. With those two focuses in mind, I believe it is very important that Barre City makes its natural resources safe, resilient, accessible, available, and welcoming to all people in the City, whether or not they own a home, have a car, or are disabled. The city should be thinking about how to restore sections of the Stevens Branch most used by residents for fishing and cooling down. Town resources like the Cow Pasture should have accessible trails and public transportation for access. Swimming holes in the Stevens Branch should be identified and made accessible. In relation to climate change, as the temperatures go up in the summer months, people should have access to cool themselves. The river is the best option, but splash parks in the more densely populated and low-income areas should be established to allow kids and families to retreat on those hot days. Flood vulnerable areas in low income neighborhoods should be identified and assessed for the "next flood" (if this hasn't happened already). We have these river and forest resources that go unnoticed and uncared for. A walk down the Stevens Branch through Barre City illustrates how the river has been ignored and historically used as a stormwater basin. The city has taken some steps to mitigate impacts to water quality and I recognize that resources are limited, so don't want to sound like I don't appreciate the work of the Council, city staff and its employees.

- It would be AWESOME to have a teen center where kids can learn to fix bikes, cook a meal, and share time with other kids and families!
- I have lived in Barre for three years. One thing that needs to happen is that Barre does not value its sense of place, or care for what it has. What does that mean? As I have been out in different parks and public places throughout the city, one thing that is striking to me is that \*everywhere\* I look, there are things that need repair, that are abandoned, broken, dirty, etc. Street signs are tilted and leaning. Fences around ball parks and play areas are tipped, leaning, falling down. Park infrastructure is rotting (Rotary Park). Park signs are old and falling down. We just revamped the pool (and it looks beautiful) but the sign for the pool area is old and decrepit, paint peeling (paint it or get a new one!!!!). People are allowed to litter our downtown with signage advertising all manner of events, things, sales, whatever and leave it for months – no one picks it up, no one seems to care. We do no need signs on streetlamps lining Main Street every 50 feet that say the same thing – this looks trashy and cheap, and is unnecessary – why not let the beauty of Barre’s old buildings downtown be the centerpiece? Residents are allowed to pile furniture, junk and just plain trash all around their houses to rot, and it never gets cleaned up (do they ever get cited? is there any way to help them clean it up?). Sidewalks are crumbling. Literally – stand anywhere in the city and take a hard look – everywhere, there are signals of disrepair, despair, and seeming un-care. How does this make for a destination for people to visit? What’s lacking here is a sense of pride in place. And, a commitment (and likely the funds) to fix and maintain what it is that we have now. If we can’t replace or repair a fence around a ballfield, how can we possibly hope to maintain splash parks? If I had a choice in how to spend the ARPA money that the City is receiving, I would use it to fix every single little thing that needs fixed. Picnic shelters are rotting in parks. BBQ pits are filled with burned trash. Park signs are missing or damaged or decaying. Street signs – same. Create a team of Public Works people who do nothing but fix the hundreds, if not thousands of small repairs that are needed to bring the City up to snuff. Create a hotline or online form where residents can report these things, then respond and fix it. I am extremely wary of building or constructing ANYTHING new that needs any future maintenance – we seemingly haven’t been able to properly care for what we have now. And, until we do, there should be a moratorium on any new public infrastructure.
- On the transportation, it was suggested to think wild ... I would suggest to make downtown Barre main street a pedestrian area – as we have roads to go around. Most likely impossible as it’s a federal road, but would be amazing for stores (all parking is in the back already).
- On the downtown vitality, having one point where all the downtown stores vacancy info is would be valuable. With offers / template to rent it for a pop-up time (holiday season for craft people – could be the downtown craft). There are amazing industrial buildings around that needs to be redeveloped (Joshua Twing Grittsmill, Blackwell street (river / train track building then other buildings on the left past the river, ...)).
- On transportation, more trees are needed on many streets. The town should agree to limit the sidewalks (some are badly supported so why have them), to have more sidewalks. If we can’t maintain, we should not build.
- On transportation, pedestrian crossing should be much better marked.
- On vitality, Barre could build on their history as doers and makers and become a craft / small enterprise hub where it would be easy to start a shop (short term lease, ...) or rent a workshop. Maybe even a test / commercial kitchen to be rented by the hour.
- The farmer market has moved a few times, but the current location is not conducive to gathering, and is not visible at all. Why not do it at Depot Square.
- Barre has an asset with its river but for some reason it’s the worst housing there.
- As someone new to the City in the past three years I see immense challenges and immense opportunity. Meeting those challenges and rising to the opportunity will require that the city shift in ways uncomfortable and difficult – as all change is. If, however, the city, its people, and its broader stakeholders do not adapt, and instead lean into comfortable ways of doing business, I believe the city is on a path of self-destruction and insolvency. Barre city’s population is dropping, its grand list growth (the basis for providing city services) is slowing, its tax rate is stressed, its infrastructure is aging, capital needs are piling up, and there is grossly inadequate investment in the things that suggest we’re done digging ourselves into a deeper hole. To meet these challenges, we must collectively act. Key actions that I believe are critical include: 1) developing new ways of sharing power by not only improving communication and transparency, but providing clear pathways allowing people to take a seat and shape outcomes that improve lives in the City (make communication everyone’s job/neighborhood advisory councils and congress/public participation ordinance); 2) prioritizing livability, investment, new and improved housing, equity, and wealth-building for residents in Barre City over sprawl in other communities and locally-subsidized regional services that erode quality of life and sustainability in Barre (build 100 homes in 5 years on existing infrastructure/open a co-housing support center/establish a revolving loan fund for essential code improvements/city-wide traffic calming, bicycle, pedestrian, and freight plan/make investments in under-served neighborhoods/plant trees/establish a business incubator center/etc.); 3) retaining and strengthening a pride of place by focusing on physical improvements and pride of maintenance for shared public spaces: streets, parks, cemetery, arts, beauty, etc. – we must be all-in on this, especially (functional capital planning/fix-it first ethic/renewed aesthetic care); 4) re-defining Barre City as a far more inclusive, more welcoming, and more supportive community than it is today by cultivating a culture of upstanding and leadership in every setting (a citizens’ leadership academy and annual conference/ethics, diversity & gender bias training for city staff/etc.) There’s a lot that keeps me up at night thinking about the future of this special place with amazing people, but I’ll end with the most literal: excessive vehicle noise. The sensory of experience in Barre must improve for us to make progress. Barre can plan

for people or places, or it can plan for cars and traffic. It will get what it plans for, if it plans at all versus just reacting to crisis after crisis. Increasingly, Barre has become a traffic sewer for sprawl – and an increasingly blighted place as people with means vote with their feet to escape underdressed impacts of eroding quality of life: noise, safety, air pollution, and more – principally leaving the poor behind to absorb a regional environmental injustice. Our long-term success is not linked to a community that supports, underwrites, and induces wealth extraction away from the city for sprawl consuming farms and forests in adjacent communities. New times call for new methods.

- One thing I would like to see, and I don't know under which category it falls, is better signage, and welcoming signage when you arrive in Barre, at the city limit. Every town has a nice sign, except Barre, so it's no surprise that we are simply seen as a passing town. Especially on route 63, it could actually raise awareness that you are arriving in town. Something that makes a statement – that could mix granite (there is such a sign by the museum, but you can't read it), and plants or wooden sign.
- I feel that the Barre Opera and the Barre Auditorium are underused (or maybe they are used but not communicated enough?). St Johnsbury has Catamount Arts, Randolph is very active, but I feel we could do more with those spaces. I would love to see more festival organized at the auditorium (Outdoor gear expo, ...), and more shows at the Opera (theatre, ...).
- Barre has a (strong) manufacturing / economic base and it would benefit from making it well known. Maybe similar to "open studio weekend", it could be worth doing an "Open Workshop weekend" to show all the local companies that are already established here (VT Salumi, Trow & Holden, Butterfly Bakery, Granite cutters, ...). It's both to show people how dynamic Barre is, but also it may help those companies finding workers.
- Continued forums for community members to discuss asserts, challenges, issues and develop possible solutions. At this point I see assets, challenges and issues, but can offer no solutions. Perhaps during continued forums action ideas will present themselves.
- I would like to see greater openness to different ways of being and acting in our community. Specifically, recognizing that existing economic and social norms may no longer serve our community. In truth, the status quo has never served all of our residents, and digging in on romanticized visions of the past precludes current possibilities that may at first appear 'different' or 'outsider' or 'too hard'. The "it's the way it's always been" excuse shuts down conversation, ideation and creation. At the same time, I want to make sure we don't spend too much time reinventing the wheel...there has been a lot of effort already to create action-oriented plans for Barre's economy, community and improved quality of life, and I hope this process draws on those existing documents/plans/ideas as well as what is articulated (/re-articulated) in this process.
- Bicycle parking downtown (Portland's Bureau of Transportation has an excellent visual of functional types of bicycle parking >> <https://portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/58409>)

- Expanded bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure on main corridors (i.e., painted bike sharrows / protected lanes on 302, Hill St; traffic calming via public art, curb bump outs, pedestrian islands, speed bumps, lower speed limits; increased enforcement of road rules)
- Opportunities for localized buy-outs of vacant downtown buildings to turn them into dynamic maker spaces, small business start-up locations and public-private partnership spaces)
- Universal pre-K; public banking; community ambassadors; investment in community infrastructure rather than PR campaigns, etc.
- I feel like I'm not informed enough to have action ideas though I'd love to continue to hear more. The few minutes I was listening, I agreed with the need for affordable childcare as it's taken me almost 3 years to find a registered home daycare for my twins. Maybe we could help by creating a list of Barre vendors to help meet the SOV requirements (fence installers, etc) or have a loan program so that someone can meet these requirements. I'm also a recovering addict and believe that our community needs such services as the Turning Point Center but I think that real changes need to happen societally and not necessarily programmatically. I believe it's the stigma and shame that will keep people using. There's so much controversy in our area regarding addiction I'm not sure that any action taken by Barre City would be taken without criticism but a campaign trying to end the stigma would be nice. Through a Facebook video, I found out that Barre City pays one of the lowest per student costs in the State and I'm sure there's a lot about our city government and expenditures that I'm not aware. To create an informed voter base, maybe we could post more information like that on FB and other forms of social media. It could help to drum up a more diverse voice to really serve our city. I would love to hear why the vote would go either way before we have to vote or why our water has another boil notice or why school budgets went up again. I'm sure I could dig up that information but again, working fulltime, twins, etc. I just don't have the time but I do find a few minutes to scroll through FB or throw on a video while I work. Just a few ideas. :)
- I think a reasonable step for inclusion/creating a sense of community/improving life for families would be to create a sliding scale fee or simply removing fees for things like registering pets, having egg laying hens, etc? The cost of living is obscene.
- Work to create incentives for business to establish in Barre, perhaps through a partnership with the state (ARRA funds).
- A better unification of the communities, joining trail systems in some nature, and community revitalization project.

## VII. All In For Barre Community Visit Participants

Bill Ahearn	Claire Duke	Becky Mackvil	Ed Rouse
Luke Aither	Elliot Dy	Jeannie MacLeod	Deb Sachs
Joe Aldsworth	Krista Dy	Renita Marshall	Cerese Sanborn
Josh Allen	K Edraney	Cynthia Masi- Neuenfeldt	Joel Schwartz
James Alvarez	Margaret Ferguson	Laurel Maurer	Janette Shaffer
Holly Anderson	Stephanie G	Whitney Maxfield	Joe Shardroui
Martina Anderson	Amy Galford	Susan McDowell	Janet Shatney
Pete Anthony	Amanda Garland	Scott McLaughlin	Joshua Shivers
Daren Austin	Stephanie Gauvin	Amos Meacham	David Sichel
Kate Aylward	Mark Gherardi	Patty Meriam	Chad Simmons
Daniel Barlow	Paige Gherardi	Christian Meyer	Michael Sitton
Melissa Battah	Ann Gilbert	Bob Minsenberger	Ellen Sivret
Lori Belding	Jenn Grablutz	Samantha Miscouk	Kristine Smith
Russell Belding	JD Green	Jack Mitchell	Sonya Spaulding
Krissy Bellevance	Amanda Gustin	Lee Morigan	Samn Stockwell
Christian Betheuil	Karen Hatcher	Hannah Morris	Nathan Suter
Heather Blakey	Herb Heath	Cody Morrison	Diane Swan
Margo Bluhm	Jacob Hemmerick	Maureen Morton	Tess Taylor
Mary Ellen Boisvert	Chris Hennessey	Beth Mueller	Amber Terway
Colleen Boyd	Lucas Herring	Siddhesh Mukerji	
Doug Brent	Carol Hilton Van Osdall	Joelen Mulvany	Sharon Toborg
Jacqueline Calder	Samantha Hiscock	Bob Nelson	Elaine (Eli) Toohey
Emel Cambel	Kris Hunt	Rachel Nelson	Oliver Towmbly
Marykay Cammins	Sandra Jenkins	Katherine O'Day	Hannah Towne
Gio Camozzi	Jackie Johnson	Danielle Owczarski	Suzanne Trahey
Cindy Campos	Kathy Johnson	Patricia A Paola	Carl Van Osdall
Kirsten Capron	Corinna Jordan	Keith Paxman	Marichel Vaught
Amanda Carlson	Brian Judd	Emilye Pelow Corbett	Lisanne Velez
Brian R Carrier	Ellen Kaye	Bob Phillips	Ann Wallace Allen
Dan Casey	Kerry Kelly	Brendan Pierson	Tommy Walz
Philip Cecchini	Stefanie Kingzett	Faith Pizano	Leslie Walz
Kris Cecchini	Marianne Kotch	Shannon Planck	Elaine Wang
Beth Clarke	Romana Kurevija	Loren Polk	Mark Waskow
Ginger Cloud	Kevin Lambert	Fred Pond	Teddy Waszazak
Alison Coffinbarger	Nick/Nicolas Landry	Bob Pope	Linda Webster
Hillary Cole	Karen Lane	Nancy Pope	Marie Weissman
Paul Cook	Olivia Leclerc	Brooke Pouliot	Matt Whalen
Stefano Coppola	Amy Lester	Stephanie Quaranta	Martha Wheaton
Winna Curran	Tracie Lewis	Mike Rama	Pamela Wilson
Dan Currier	Jackson Liffert	Lisa Redmond	Susan Winslow
Julia Davis	Lisa Liotta	Ericka Reil	Sara Winters
Venus Dean	Jackson Lipfert	Joe Reil	Nancy Wolfe
Rick DeAngelis	Rebecca Lo Presti	Joanne Reynolds	Peter M. Zakvewski
David Delcore	Andrew Lory	Sarah Richards	Eva Zaret
Mark Depman	Phayvanh Luekhamhan	Christopher Roberts	Svetlana Zhexembeyeva
Jim Deshler	Timothy Lveders-Dumont	Clare Rock	and many more...
Alexis Dexter	Carol MacDougall	Kate Root	
Margaret Donevan	Steve Mackenzie	Bern Rose	
Greg P. Drew	Becky Mackin	Joanne Rouleau	



## VIII. Visiting Resource Team Members

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