

VERGENNES MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2014 – 2019

Adopted by Vergennes City Council on _____
Approved by Addison County Regional Planning Commission on _____

This plan is available online at <http://www.vergennes.org>

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1. PLANNING OUR FUTURE

1.1 ABOUT VERGENNES

Vergennes is located in the northwest quadrant of Addison County bordered by the towns of Ferrisburgh, Panton and Waltham. It is Vermont's oldest city and the third-oldest incorporated city in New England, being succeeded by Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut. Our City was created in 1788 for many reasons, but none more important than the vision that this vital



Otter Creek Falls circa 1877

incorporation would pave the way for a great industrial center. Indeed, the creation of our City was necessary to develop the Otter Creek Falls to their fullest potential. With a fall of 37 feet and a basin remarkably free from flooding, it was an ideal site for industry. However, the falls lay at the boundary of three towns. In 1785, when asked to lay a tax to defray the cost of building a bridge over the Otter Creek near the falls, the towns of Panton, Ferrisburgh, and New Haven balked and the dreams of harnessing this valuable waterpower seemed in jeopardy. The solution to the problem was a political one. The Republic of Vermont decided to create its first city on the site, and only the third in New England at the time. This way Vermont could increase its stature in its attempts to be accepted as a state and simultaneously unlock the potential of the falls.

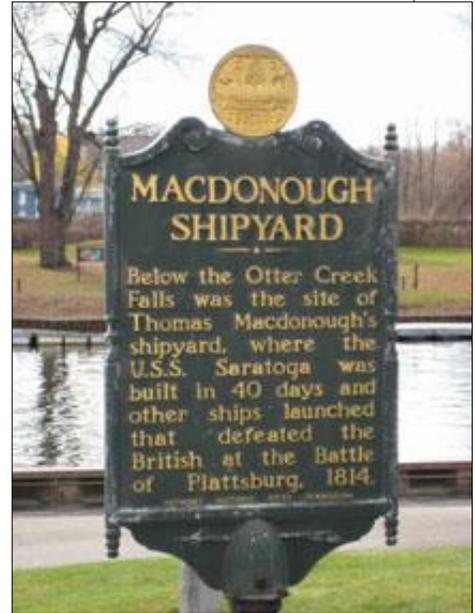
Thereafter, the path that Vergennes followed differed markedly from the rest of the towns of Addison County. As historian John D. Smith remarked in 1886,

"It should be remembered that the history of Vergennes must be different from that of a farming town. A different class of people located here. Their pursuits and avocations were different. With only 1,200 acres in her territory, the farming interests within her limits was of small moment. Those who expected to live by farming settled elsewhere.

1. Planning Our Future

Manufacturers, merchants, and professional men, with such mechanics and laborers as were needed, composed her population."

The early settlers of Vergennes battled against frontier conditions to establish Vermont's first city. The crude beginnings of industry emerged on the falls; gristmills and sawmills were erected and iron making was begun. Vergennes made an unsuccessful bid to become the state capital and the building constructed for that purpose became a multi-purpose meeting house. Even a newspaper was started, a rare occurrence in frontier Vermont. However, it wasn't until the beginnings of the 19th century that Vergennes would make its first significant leap forward. This was when the Monkton Iron Company was established by a group of Boston merchants hoping to take advantage of President Jefferson's embargo. When the disagreements with Great Britain dissolved into war, Commodore Thomas Macdonough chose Vergennes as his naval base on the lake. However, after Macdonough's decisive victory at Plattsburgh Bay and the subsequent end of the war, this brief but eventful epoch in Vergennes' history came to a close.



The next boom in the city came after the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823. Vergennes became the state's largest shipping port for the next five years and the outlines of its retail sector began to emerge. The commercial center would continue to grow and reach maturity in the 1840s with the advent of agricultural specialization in the surrounding countryside and the coming of the railroad. Vergennes continued to be seen as the commercial center for our surrounding communities, providing goods and services, not just for our residents, but for many towns in northern Addison County.

Our city's true "golden years" extended from the close of the Civil War until the turn of the century. Encouraged by a flood of duty-free virgin lumber from Canada, a number of wood-finishing industries sprang up on the falls and the city flourished until new tariffs in the 1890s dried up the flow of Canadian lumber.

Although not on the scale of the Victorian era, Vergennes maintained its claim as a regional industrial and commercial center into the 20th century. The Havilland Shade Roller Company survived the shakeout of the 1890s and was joined by a fledgling hydroelectric plant and the L.F. Benton Company spark-plug factory on the falls. The city still had a vibrant "downtown" and was buoyed by an expansion of the State of Vermont Reform School for Troubled Youth. In 1907, the school began a major building program that added nearly a dozen new structures over the next fourteen years. By mid-century, Vergennes had lost much of its diversification and as the years passed, it became more and more dependent on one company, Simmonds Precision Products, and its successors. Although the business has long been a loyal and valued corporate citizen, the downsizing of the 1990s revealed the danger of relying too much on one employer.

Vergennes has since been proactive in luring other companies to complement the stature of Simmonds, now owned by United Technologies Corporation. Country Home Products, Inc., direct marketer of outdoor power equipment, moved much of its operation from Charlotte to Vergennes in early 1996. Two-thirds of the company's over 200 employees work out of their facility on Meigs Road. Nathaniel Group and Plymouth Toy and Book, operating as WowToys, also moved into industrial space constructed in the 1990s on Panton Road.

A revitalization of Vergennes began in the early 1990s, principally through the volunteer efforts of Friends of Vergennes Opera House. Restoration of the Opera House provided a beautiful space for music, theater, and community gatherings; many view it as the heart of our city. The restored

Opera House brought community members to our downtown; and local entrepreneurs responded with new restaurants and shops.

In 2001, our downtown was recognized as one of the first Downtown Development Districts by the State of Vermont. To support this designation, the non-profit Vergennes Partnership was formed, to support investment and focus on the revitalization of our downtown. Ultimately, the revitalization of our



Our vibrant downtown

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community is the result of committed energetic and caring volunteers working in partnership with businesses and City leaders. Vergennes citizens are grateful for their efforts.

Throughout our history, the City of Vergennes has been a municipality based on industry coupled with an important retail and service sector for our region. Today our thriving downtown offers an eclectic mix of dining, shopping and theater. A walk down Main Street takes one past buildings and houses that portray our city's rich history, attracting residents and visitors alike. Vergennes strives to be a friendly, welcoming place and we wish this legacy to continue.

1.2 OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Vision can be defined as “an image of the future we seek to achieve.” When a vision is developed as part of a community planning initiative, it is intended to reflect the broad views of the community. A vision statement generally arises from within the community through strong leadership and engagement. For the purposes of this plan, the Vision presents a sense of how Vergennes is seen now and how it will be viewed in the future. More importantly, it provides the background and backdrop for both the municipal development plan and the goals and policies that are forwarded by the plan.

A participatory process was conducted to help the planning commission articulate the vision for Vergennes. At one of the public forums held for the plan update, community members identified key elements to consider for inclusion in the City’s vision, such as: intelligent development, accessible, historic, human-scale, central market, self-sustaining, walkable, and affordable. Many words or phrases were suggested but none were more prevalent than preserving the city’s character. This sentiment was also strongly expressed through the community survey, conducted as a part of the planning process.

Listed below are some of the views expressed by respondents in the last question of a recent survey, which asked, "How do you describe the City of Vergennes you'd most like to see in 25 years?" The following responses offer an excellent representation of what the community envisions for the future of our City:

We have a historic downtown center with thriving local businesses. Customers walk from their homes. Economic opportunities are abundant in Vergennes because we have maintained our small town character.

Vergennes is alive with opportunities. It is the "place to be" and people frequently visit the downtown shops and restaurants. There are many parks for the kids to play. Our schools are up to date with the latest technology and our children are well prepared for the future.

We have maintained our community feel while still expanding our retail outlets, restaurants and recreation activities.

We are an active, safe community with a variety of services for all ages.

Vergennes is a popular recreation spot for a range of activities from walking to running to cross-country skiing to biking.

Vergennes is an amazing place to live and raise a family. It has a strong sense of community with a rich heritage and history.

We have some of the best historic architecture around. There are incredible restaurants, a fantastic Opera House with nightly shows and great small shops that provide us with all we need. We truly are a self-sufficient community.

Vergennes has maintained its small-town feel while offering all of the modern amenities that make a city livable today.

Vergennes is a caring community with lots of opportunities for getting involved and helping others.

Vergennes is a self-sufficient, safe, friendly place to live and pursue goals.

The planning commission reviewed and acknowledged these statements in its effort to understand the community's values. Based on this perspective, the planning commission has articulated an overall vision for Vergennes' future:

"We are a vibrant and friendly community with a wealth and diversity of business and job opportunities. We have kept our small-town feeling and identity, while continuing to grow and prosper. We promote the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources. We are forward-thinking and embrace innovation and self-sufficiency while maintaining a strong connection to our past. Our historic architecture remains intact and our neighborhoods are attractive, affordable, and carefully designed to be walkable and complement our community character. Our City and services are designed to offer shorter distances to shop or work. Our parks, open spaces, and waterways provide visual charm and a wide diversity of recreational activities that connect our schools, neighborhoods, and business community. We are a destination for arts and culture exemplified by the great variety of festivals, concerts, plays, movies, sporting venues, and cross-cultural events that take place here. We are a full-service community where people feel safe and secure and our children are well-prepared for the future."

1. Planning Our Future

1.3 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizen participation is an important component of any public planning effort, and most particularly, the municipal development plan. The municipal development plan is an opportunity to express community vision and values and to provide a tangible representation of what a community wants to look like in the future. The best municipal development plans are developed through a collaborative and inclusive community participation process. While public hearings are the state-mandated approach to involving the community, municipalities are encouraged to provide community involvement from beginning to end of the planning process, from surveys to focus groups to newsletters and so on.

The first public gathering to kick-off the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan Rewrite project was held on Wednesday, April 2, 2008, at the Vergennes Opera House. Approximately 60 people were in attendance and those present included the Mayor, Aldermen and Planning Commission members, as well as a representative cross-section of Vergennes residents and business owners. Prior to the workshop, a member of the Vergennes Planning Commission, conducted individual surveys with townspeople that asked the question, “What do *you* love about Vergennes?” Over thirty flyers were developed from the responses and were displayed in various locations throughout the city. This promotional effort laid the foundation for the April 2nd workshop where participants were invited to “Come Tell Us About Your Life in the Little City.” Community members gathered to share their thoughts about life in Vergennes. As the evening progressed, the group was asked to participate in a discussion that would address components of the municipal development plan, which, ultimately, helped develop priorities for the plan’s goals and objectives.



Younger citizens get involved at the first public forum, exploring the aerial photograph and places they recognize

Another important part of the process in updating the municipal development plan was the public opinion survey conducted in June of 2008. The Vergennes Planning Commission distributed a questionnaire to obtain the public's views on a variety of community values and priorities. The survey asked 36 questions about land use, the environment, recreation, transportation, energy, and other related issues. A total of 154 surveys were completed online or submitted by hand or by mail.

A second public workshop to promote the rewrite of the municipal development plan was held on December 15, 2008. This workshop was aimed at updating the community on the progress

of the planning effort and garnering further input. The evening included a summary of the first public meeting and a discussion regarding the results of the survey. Proposed district changes were also presented. Approximately 35 people were in attendance including a mix of state leaders, the Mayor, Aldermen and Planning Commission members, and a diverse group of Vergennes residents and business owners. After introductions to content and goals of the second workshop, and



A group photo of participants from the 2nd workshop

an explanation of the difference between guidelines and standards, the participants were tasked with addressing issues such as district changes, identifying important visual and cultural resources, and finally, key elements of a vision statement.

A final piece of the public participation process includes the involvement of the local high school. The Vergennes Planning Commission recognizes that our young community members may see possibilities for the future of our community that are not obvious to those of us that

1. Planning Our Future

have lived here for many years. As today's high school students, the future this plan outlines helps guide our leaders of tomorrow. Thus, the planning commission has sought the fresh ideas of our younger generation, with the support of the high school administration and staff. This is an ongoing project, which will hopefully provide a unique perspective to the continuing development and maintenance of the plan.

In December 2013 the Addison County Economic Development Corporation nominated Vergennes to the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) as a community who would most benefit from their Community Visit Program in 2014. The Community Visit program is a four-month process involving a series of public meetings, facilitated discussions and community events. The VCRD come with no agenda, but have a visiting resource team of over 30 state, federal, business, non-profit, and philanthropic leaders who can help a community identify and realize common goals.

The first meeting in the Community Visit Program was held on Thursday, February 6, 2014 with the VCRD and the Community Visit Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consisted of a cross-section of approximately 25 community members. During the course of the meeting, the group identified nine topics of interest for community discussion and possible action:

- Municipal & Non-Profit Resources
- Tourism
- Recreation & Entertainment
- Role of Municipal Government
- Basin & Riverside Development
- Connecting Youth
- Transportation Infrastructure & Pedestrian Safety
- The Future of Economic Development
- Vergennes Community Center

The next Community Visit meeting was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 and consisted of nine 90-minute public sessions, with three sessions running concurrently at three different locations.

The sessions were held at the Vergennes Opera House and at the Bixby Library. We also held a free community dinner. Well over 100 community members attended the sessions.

On Wednesday, April 16th the next stage in the Vergennes Community visit was held at the Vergennes Opera House. The VCRD returned to Vergennes to present a synthesis of the big ideas that Vergennes community members generated at the set of forums in March. Over 100 community members discussed the ideas and championed directions that they thought would have the greatest long-term benefit for Vergennes, voted for their top priorities for action, and joined task groups to move them forward.

As a result of this meeting, the three priorities for action to advance the community are:

- Improve Transportation and Parking
- Advance the Vergennes Economy & Expand the Community & Economic Development Capacity of the City
- Redevelop the Vergennes Falls Basin & Open a Riverwalk

The final Community Visit meeting was held on Wednesday, May 21 at the Bixby Library. The VCRD brought a new Visiting Team of state, federal, regional, non-profit, and philanthropic leaders to Vergennes to help task force groups as they developed action steps and resource ideas to move these projects forward. In conclusion, the public forums were very well received by attendees and many agreed that it was a worthwhile and productive process. The sharing of opinions and ideas through these workshops and the public opinion survey only helped to infuse the planning commission with a strong sense of community support. The summaries, notes, and ideas generated from the public participation process provided some clear directives, and encouragement, for the plan update.

1.4 ABOUT OUR PLAN

The City of Vergennes is enabled by state statute to develop and adopt a municipal development plan pursuant to Title 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117. The plan automatically expires five years after the last date of adoption. Before the plan expires, State law requires that it be reviewed and the information on which it is based be updated. The City may either readopt the

1. Planning Our Future

plan with updated data, or develop and adopt a new plan. The City's first municipal development plan was created December 19, 1972 and last adopted by the City Council in September 29, 2009.

The municipal development plan is one of the most important documents our city can develop. It is the tool we use to set broad goals and objectives for the community, and to guide land use, growth, development, conservation and business activities in Vergennes. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring the continuing viability of our community's cultural and historic traditions. It is a research document as well as a guide that helps give direction to our local leaders, the business community, and private citizens. It helps us to make informed decisions about a broad range of issues and to create the type of community that we envision. The municipal development plan is also the key to implementing local regulations and allows us to participate in certain state programs and receive grant contributions and external funding for municipal projects. All developments and subdivisions, including those required to obtain a permit under Act 250, must conform to the City's duly adopted municipal development plan.

The preparation and maintenance of the municipal development plan is the responsibility of the planning commission. The planning commission submits the plan to the City Council for final review and adoption. This plan will continue to evolve and grow with changing conditions, needs and opportunities and is intended to be a "living" document.

Statement of Our Goals and Objectives

It is the intent and purpose of this municipal development plan to encourage the appropriate use and development of all lands and structures in the city in a manner which will promote the health, growth, safety, efficiency, prosperity, economy, and general welfare; to protect all residents from overcrowding, from traffic congestion and the invasion of through traffic, and from the loss of peace, quiet and privacy; and, to protect and preserve significant natural features, wildlife, and the health of natural systems.

In order to fulfill the intent and purpose of this plan, the City of Vergennes shall pursue the following general policies and goals:

1. To encourage citizen participation at all levels of municipal governance, and to assure that decisions are made in the open.
2. To consider the potential impacts of economic and residential growth and development on the City's facilities, services and infrastructure.
3. To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and open countryside.
4. To actively promote a strong, balanced, and diverse economy that provides satisfying, rewarding, and stable jobs while maintaining high environmental standards.
5. To develop and maintain the city as an economic, commercial, industrial and public service center for northern Addison County.
6. To promote access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to meet the needs of all residents.
7. To promote safe and affordable childcare and to integrate childcare issues into the planning process.
8. To increase the education of residents about the city's historic structures, areas and sites, and to promote their preservation.
9. To promote safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for all residents.
10. To provide for and maintain transportation systems that are safe, convenient, economic, integrated, and energy efficient; and that respect and enhance the integrity of neighborhoods, the downtown, and the natural environment, including diverse public transit options, and paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.
11. To identify, protect, and preserve important natural features and open spaces including: significant and fragile natural areas; water resources; wetlands and shorelands; and significant scenic roads, gateways, waterways, and views.

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12. To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vergennes' natural resources and to maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, and land resources, including the restoration or redevelopment of abandoned developed lands.
13. To protect, maintain, enhance, and where compatible, increase indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities.
14. To encourage the efficient use of energy, including the construction of energy efficient buildings, the weatherization of existing buildings, the efficient operation of City government buildings and vehicles, and the development of renewable energy resources.
15. To work with surrounding municipalities in order to develop and implement mutually beneficial planning objectives.

2. SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

2.1 OUR HOUSING AND POPULATION

Overview

One of the first questions a community should ask when planning for the future is “How many people live here?” Information and characteristics about our population provide the foundation for how we should adequately plan for our City’s infrastructure and services, from housing, to transportation, to community services. For example, a community with an aging population may need to develop more affordable or assisted-living housing, or provide transportation services for elderly or disabled people, or offer community programs that educate and inform the public about eldercare and aging. Whatever the issue or trend may be, understanding how our community might grow allows us to better meet the needs and desires of our residents now and in the future.

Historic and Current Settlement Patterns

Vergennes is a reasonably concentrated urban settlement, much more than its surrounding communities or nearly any other town in Vermont, with 1065.0 people per square mile (compared to Addison County at 47.8 and Vermont at 67.7 per square mile). Early housing and development centered on the downtown area, the adjacent mills and work along the Otter Creek. The city was created in a classic New England town-centered pattern. Relative to today, houses were smaller, had less land, and were built closer to one another and to City streets. Households were also larger with extended families typically living in one home.

In the 1940s, an increase in the use of the automobile and consumer demand spawned an outward growth in the city with one-family houses spaced further apart than their predecessors. Lot sizes and setbacks increased in order to accommodate larger houses with garages and lawns. As housing spread, it continued to be relatively concentrated, partly in

2. Supporting Our People

order to minimize the costs of extending municipal water and sewer systems as well as the limitations of the city's small land area.

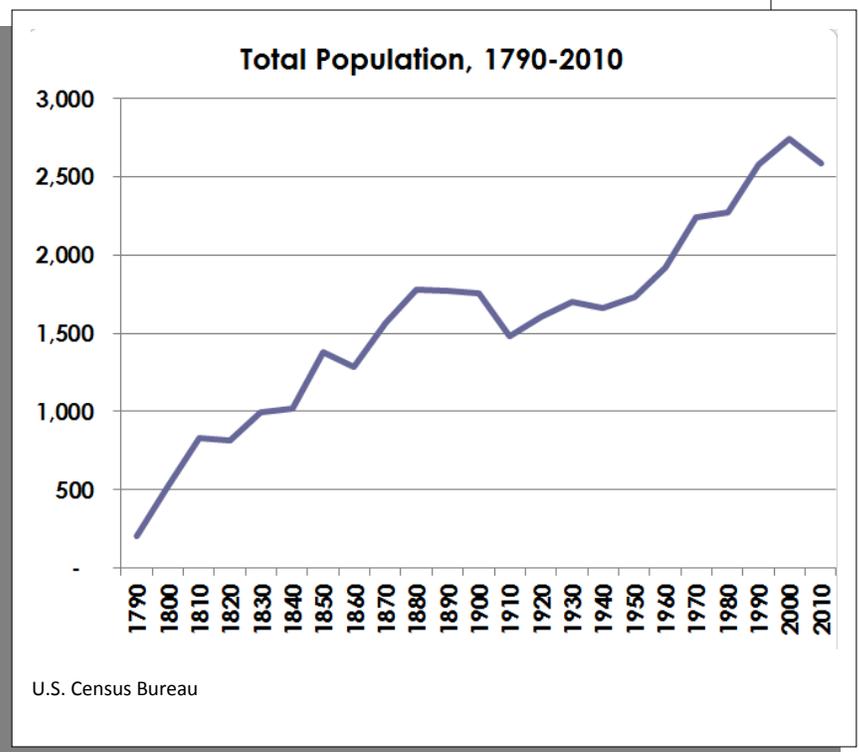
One reason residents enjoy living in Vergennes is the balance of housing types, prices, and open spaces. The mix of housing types includes one- and two-family dwellings, multiple-family buildings (apartments, and condominiums), mobile homes, nursing homes, and senior housing. Because of our relatively low housing costs, low crime rate, good schools, fine library, recreation facilities, opera house, dining opportunities, and shopping, Vergennes is a very attractive community to homebuyers throughout Addison County. Coincidentally, much of the "housing demand" in Vergennes comes from outside our community. A shortage of affordable housing units in Chittenden County has also contributed to Vergennes home sales.

Population

Since its establishment in 1788, Vergennes' population has been on a relatively steady incline, climbing from 201 individuals 220 years ago, to 2,588 as of 2010. Historically, population in Vergennes rises in good economic times and levels out or dips in times of economic distress.

This is illustrated in the graph at right. However, U.S. Census estimates indicate a declining trend from July 2000 to 2010, with an average population reduction of 5.6%. This is compared to an estimated increase in growth from 2000-2010 for Addison County at 2.4% and 2.8% for Vermont as a whole.

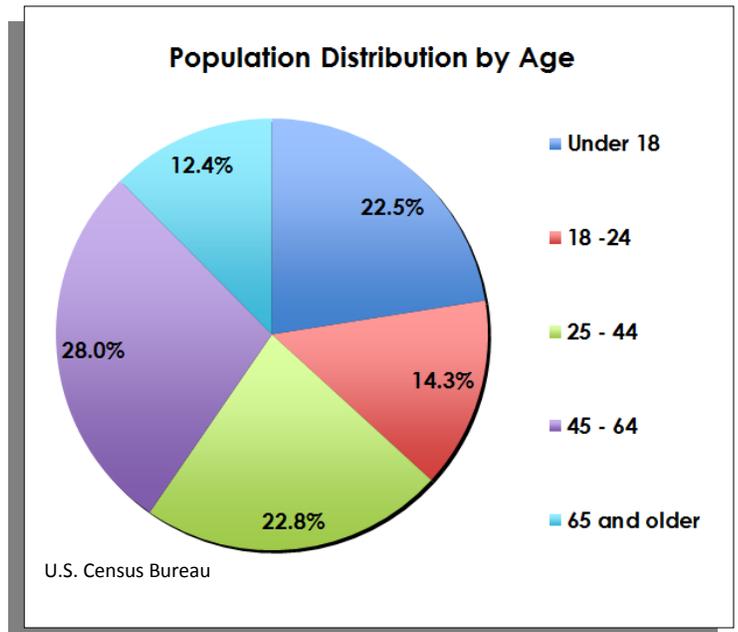
Population growth in Vergennes in the 1990s was modest, due to slow economic growth. The population



in 1990 was 2,578 and 2,741 in 2000 - a 6.3% growth rate. Using historical population trends and census information, the Vermont Department of Health projects a high population estimate of 2,489 and a low estimate of 2,395 for Vergennes for 2020. The state projects a high population estimate of 2373 and a low estimate of 2,201 for 2030. This model does not include other factors like the local economy, environmental constraints, or infrastructure capacity.

The age distribution of our city is generally spread out (see chart below). The median age at the 2010 Census was 36.9 years. For every 100 females there were 95.6 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 90.7 males. However, our city's rate of natural increase (birth rate minus death rate) has declined significantly from 249 people in 1960 to minus 5 people in 2012. This indicates that we are no longer experiencing population growth, in part because of a decline in birth rates and families with children.

Many factors influence population changes from economic conditions, to housing availability, to commuting costs. If the populations of Chittenden and Addison County continue to grow, and migration out of the city centers into the suburbs and surrounding towns increases, then we may experience pressure on housing and land inventory in Vergennes and our neighboring towns. If our aging population continues to grow, it may amplify the demand on goods and services, particularly healthcare and the need for more institutional, non-family housing.



2. Supporting Our People

Housing

Housing and the number of housing units are largely affected by our population and household size. A household includes all the people who live and work together. A household can also

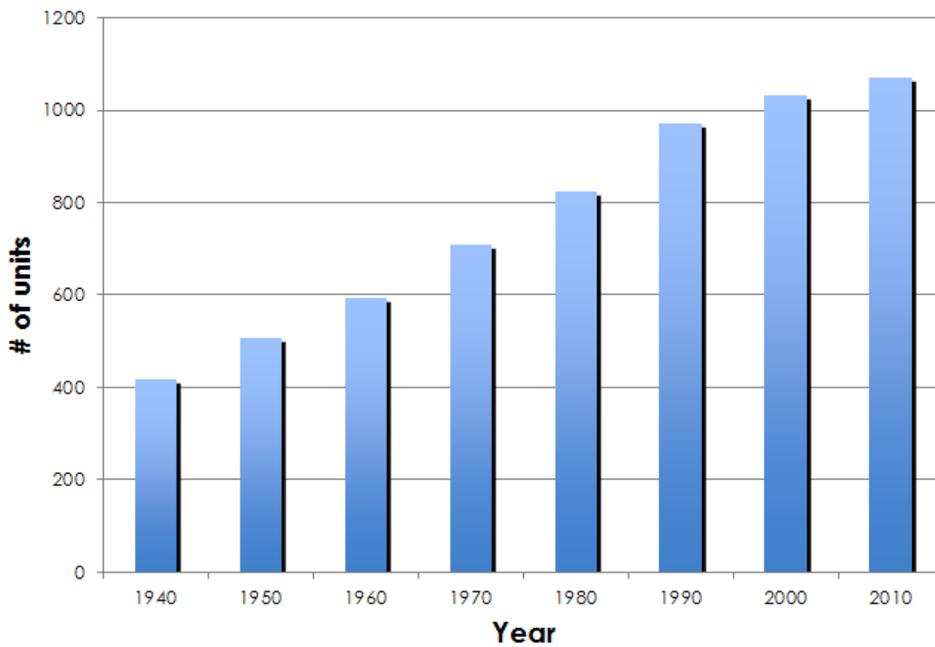
consist of one person living alone. Several households can occupy one housing unit, which explains why a town may have fewer housing units than it does households.

Average household size helps to measure housing unit use and future housing demand. For example, if the average household

size were to decrease from 3 to 1.5 people, then the number of housing units needed for each household could potentially double or even triple, even with a declining population. More households also amplify the demand for housing and services as well as the need for more land use and more materials consumed for construction.

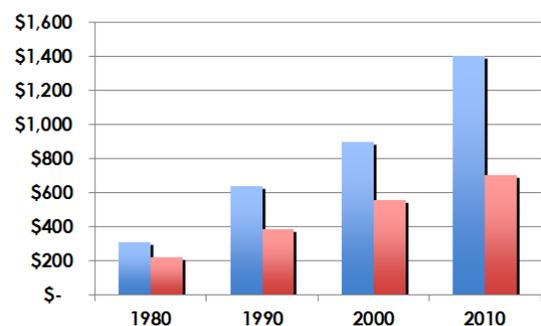
There were 994 households in Vergennes in 2010, 28.1% of which had children under the age of 18

Total Housing Units, 1940-2010



U.S. Census Bureau

Ownership Cost vs. Rental Cost



U.S. Census Bureau

living with them, 43.0% were married couples living together, 13.7% had a female householder with no husband present, and 37.9% were non-families. Average household size in Vergennes has been generally consistent with county or state averages, which indicate a trend towards smaller families. Since 1990, average household size in our city has declined from 2.51 to 2.31 in 2010.

In 2010, there were 1,072 housing units in Vergennes at an average density of 446.7 per square mile. Of these units, only 15 were seasonal. More than half of the housing stock is one-family (62.1%) and primarily owner-occupied (65.2%). The vacancy rate for homeowners was 2.1% and 5.4% for rentals. Vergennes saw the most structures built from 1999 to March 2000 with 21 units. This is compared to 43 units from 1990 to 1994 and 59 units from 1995 to 1998. ACRPC projects the number of housing units needed to accommodate households to be 1,096 by 2015.

According to the 2000 Census, just over half of the city's residents in 2000 had moved into Vergennes since 1995; of those 25.6% moved from another community in Addison County, about 34.7% moved from elsewhere in Vermont, and 15.5% moved from outside Vermont. Since 2007, 40 primary residences have been sold at an average price of \$195,344.

There is a growing gap between household income and affordable housing. The generally accepted definition of "affordable housing" is if a household is paying no more than 30 percent of its income for rent and utilities or for mortgage, taxes and insurance. This standard does not include the

Some housing facts from the Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign:

- The median purchase price of a home in Vermont in 2010 reached \$195,000, a 3% increase from 2009. A household would need an annual income of \$58,000 as well as \$16,000 in cash (for closing costs and 5% down payment) to purchase that home. More than 81% of Vermont households have incomes below \$58,000.
- The median income for all Vermont households is \$52,000. A household with that income could afford a home priced at about \$175,000, assuming it has about \$14,000 in cash for closing costs and down payment.
- The median price for a newly-constructed home in Vermont was \$290,000 in 2010. A household would need an annual income of about \$86,000 and \$24,000 for closing costs and down payment to afford that new home.
- The average fair market rent for a modest, two-bedroom apartment reached \$990 in 2010, a 7% increase since 2009 and a 58% increase since 2000.
- A Vermont household would have to earn \$19.03 per hour, or \$39,595 annually, to afford that fair market rent.

2. Supporting Our People

rising costs of other necessities, such as health care, fuel, and child care. The median monthly home ownership costs in Vergennes as of 2010 were 25.6% and for rental costs were 27%.

The Future of Our Housing and Population

Goal

To ensure the availability of safe, livable, affordable housing for all Vergennes residents that satisfies the diverse needs of the community, manages growth, and is compatible with the character of the community.

Policies

1. Accommodate a range of housing options, including owner-occupied, rental, affordable and manufactured units to meet the needs of all Vergennes residents.
2. Support public, private, and/or non-profit efforts to rehabilitate or upgrade the city's housing stock.
3. Continue to enforce the Vermont Department of Health minimum health and safety standards as they apply to residential rental units.
4. Ensure that safe, affordable housing is available for the elderly. A range of living situations including, but not limited to, independent living and assisted living should be considered.
5. Encourage partnerships with non-profit housing agencies to provide assistance with financing affordable housing projects, as feasible.
6. Identify and maintain an inventory of substandard rental housing and seek opportunities (financial or otherwise) for improvement.

7. Support the development or redevelopment of new low-cost housing and other low-market housing to meet the needs of all residents.
8. Encourage development that is compatible with historic context, existing architecture, and community character.
9. Maintain an open and communicative relationship with our bordering neighbors so that we may monitor growth trends and anticipate potential impacts on our City.

2.2 OUR ECONOMY

Overview

Our community has retained the feel and function of a traditional New England town. Our city remains intact while the surrounding countryside remains relatively open and free from typical suburban strip development.

Our city has seen significant investment in commercial properties. While employment grew in high-wage sectors, the percentage of Vergennes residents working outside the city and/or county grew as well. Recent job growth was largely fueled by the rapid expansion of Country Home Products and Nathaniel Group. UTC continues to be the dominant employer in the region, although a number of manufacturing jobs have been shifted to other facilities within the company.

The Central Business District continues to undergo extensive renovation to both public and private infrastructure. Specialty retail as well as new restaurants has played a significant role in the revitalization of the downtown, while adding to job growth in this sector. Private investment, in combination with grants, historic tax credits and low-interest loans through our Designated Downtown status conferred by the State, has resulted in commercial activity in several previously marginal buildings. The result is that more traffic and tourism is drawn into the downtown not only from Addison County but the broader region as well.

2. Supporting Our People

For such a small area, our economic base is equally spread among varying sectors. The larger number of businesses we have provides us with a higher degree of local diversity and stability to endure business turnovers. It does not, however, lessen the impact of larger economic events that affect local economies. To maintain the character of Vergennes as an economic, social, and cultural center, we must pursue growth that balances high yield (in terms of economic activity and job creation) with low impact on our community's infrastructure. Creation of economic opportunity within the city is critical to providing sustainable and invigorating employment opportunities balancing our community's talented labor resources.



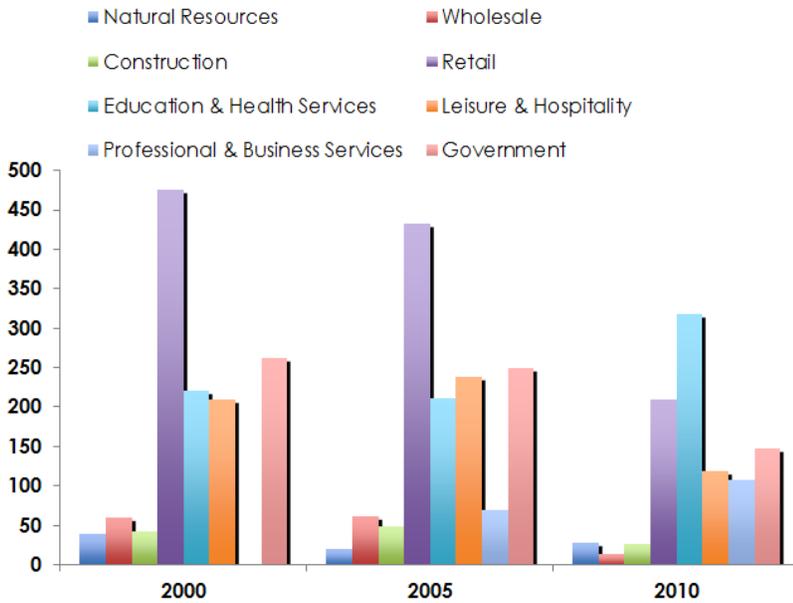
Restaurants, like the Black Sheep Bistro and Vergennes Laundry seen here, have played a significant role in the City's revitalization.

Employment and Wages

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, Vergennes had a labor force of 1,420 people in August 2013, 6.0% of which were unemployed, down 0.3% from this time in 2012. Nearly 27% of adult residents have a college degree, compared to county and state rates of 32.62% and 33.27% respectively. Most Vergennes residents (73%) commute out of the city for work, 41% of whom work outside of Addison County and almost 3% out of state. The average commute time to work is about 27 minutes.

According to the Vermont Department of Labor's Economic and Labor Market Information (see chart on next page), the city's resident labor force in 2010 was spread out among occupations, with 17% employed in retail trade, 12% in government, 26% in education and health services, 10% in leisure and hospitality, 9% in professional and business services, 1% in wholesale trade, 2% in construction, 2% in agriculture, and the remaining 23% in manufacturing or other services.

Employment Trends for Primary Sectors

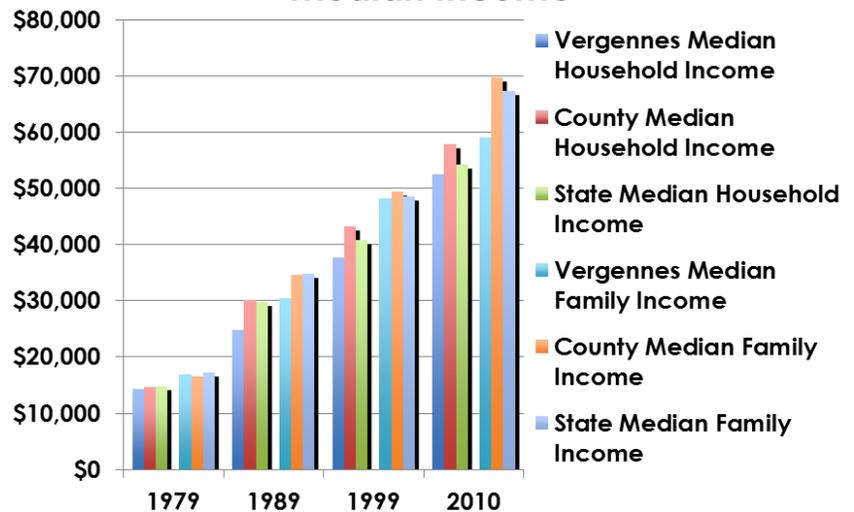


VT Department of Labor

The median income for a household living in the city was \$52,472 and the median income for a family was \$59,079. This is nearly \$5,300 less than the county household median and \$1,700 less than the state household median. Family median incomes for the county and state were \$69,683 and \$67,274 respectively (see chart below). Male individual workers had median earnings of \$26,481 per year compared to female individual workers earning \$19,189.

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, the average annual wage paid by Vergennes' employers in 2006 was \$41,690, which is nearly \$8,000 greater than the county and \$6,000 greater than the state. The difference between income and wages can be attributed to people's place of residence and where people work, as well as the possibility that more than one worker supports a household. About 6.2%

Median Income



U.S. Census Bureau

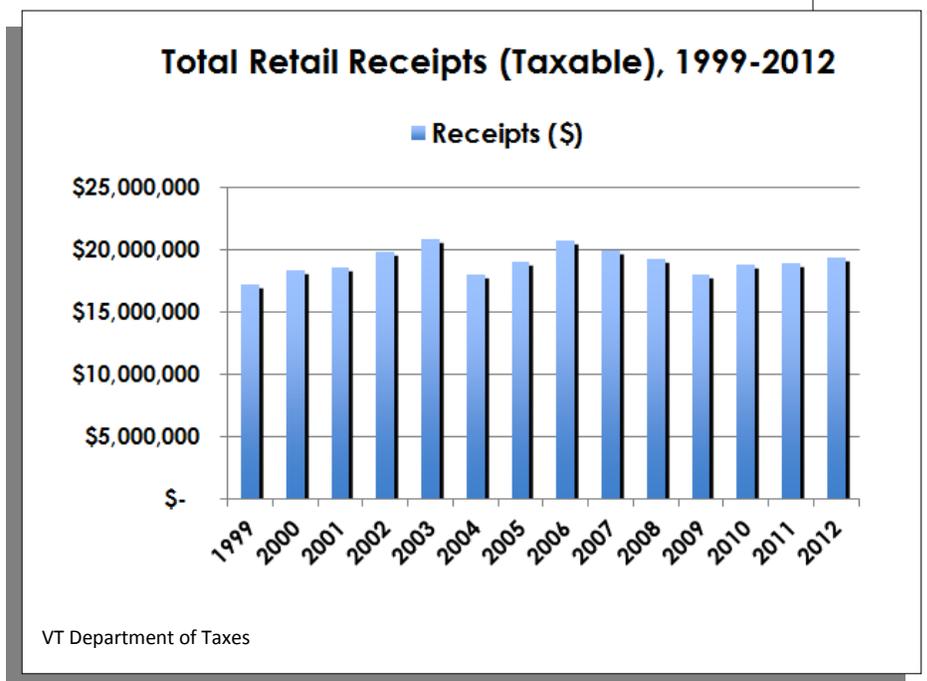
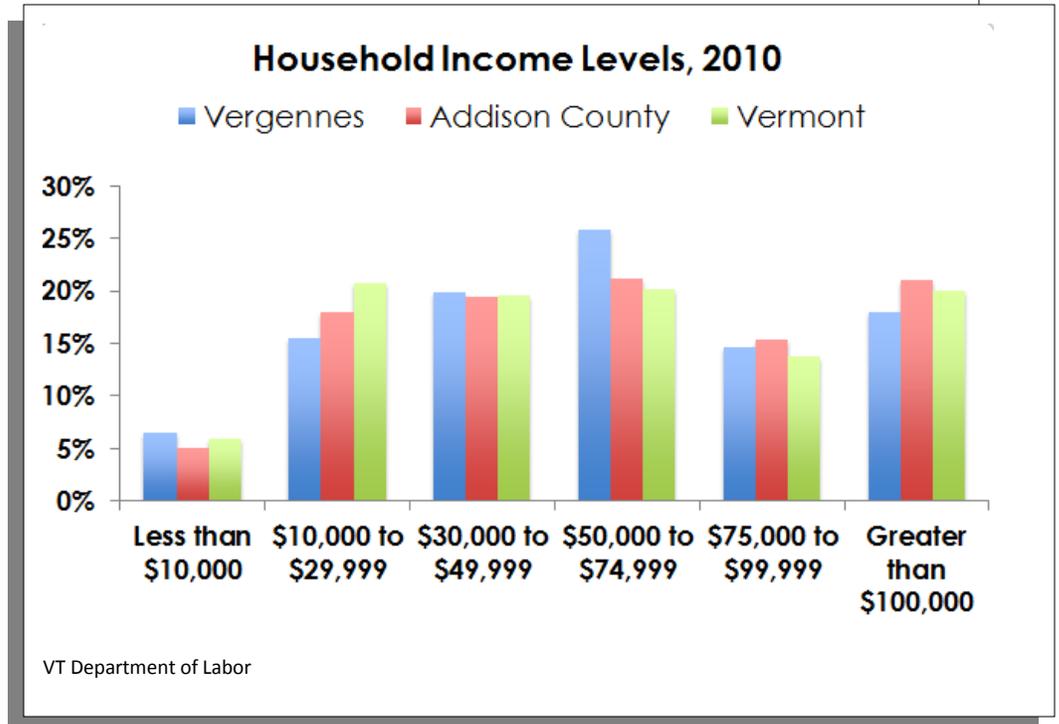
2. Supporting Our People

of families and 20% of the population were below the poverty line, including 8.5% of those under age 18 and 16% of those ages 65 and over.

In addition to employment and wages, another useful measure of economic activity may be found in the gross retail sales, restaurant receipts, and commercial accommodation rentals generated by Vergennes businesses. The

table below shows total sales receipts reported by Vergennes businesses for each fiscal year between 1999 and 2012. Taxable receipts include all retail sales subject to the Vermont sales tax, excluding groceries, medicine and apparel with a purchase price less than \$100. Total annual retail sales have had little variation since 1999, when considering inflation.

Vergennes faces a number of challenges in upcoming years, including the ability to effectively



compete for tourist dollars in an increasingly competitive market; to sustain the local economy through national economic cycles; and to provide goods, services, and jobs that provide living wages to support our residents.

The Future of Our Economy

Goals

To provide a stable and diversified economy that offers rewarding jobs and continually seeks opportunities for economic expansion while having a low impact on the City's infrastructure and historic character.

Policies

1. Continue to support additional small to mid-size industrial and commercial businesses that are compatible with the character of the city.
2. Support a committee to promote the economic development of Vergennes. Develop a plan to attract new businesses and support existing businesses that are compatible with the character of Vergennes.
3. Establish a capital improvement plan and budget for the City.
4. Work with regional, state and federal agencies including the Vergennes Partnership, Addison County Regional Planning Commission and the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to:
 - a. Promote high yield/low impact growth, particularly undeveloped and under-developed parcels in the Industrial District and the new Northern Gateway District.
 - b. Develop a targeted marketing plan for job creation.
 - c. Promote tourism-related commerce.

2. Supporting Our People

- d. Maintain and promote the Downtown Designation as a tax incentive to continue the revitalization of the Central Business District.
5. Maintain the unique character of our downtown and the Otter Creek basin, a feature that is key to the success of local businesses dependent on tourism.
6. Create and maintain innovative promotional materials, including enhancement of the City's website, to attract new businesses and support existing businesses.
7. Maintain and enhance the appearance, function, and commercial viability of the city by improving parking, sidewalks, streetscape, pedestrian amenities and streets; move utility lines underground.

3. SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

3.1 OUR COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

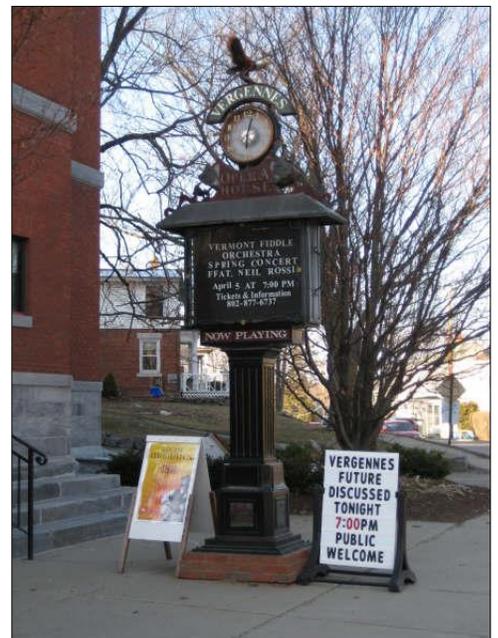
The citizens of Vergennes depend on a variety of volunteer, public, and private services for health, safety, utilities, access (roads), and city management. Our community has a responsibility and an interest in assuring that the required services and facilities are available as needed and will continue to be available into the future.

City Hall and the Vergennes Opera House

Our City Hall was built in 1897. Administrative offices including the city manager, city clerk, and zoning administrator currently occupy the ground floor. The historic Vergennes Opera House is located on the second floor.

Friends of the Vergennes Opera House (FVOH) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration, revitalization and preservation of the Opera House and arts in our community. They are largely responsible for fundraising and the ongoing management of the Vergennes Opera House. The FVOH have raised and spent over \$1,250,000 on restoring the Vergennes Opera House; City expenditures and grants bring the total building investment at about \$2,000,000.

The restoration of the Opera House is ongoing with several modern improvements completed which include heating, air conditioning, electrical systems as well as the entire exterior of the building (including new storm windows and painting). Just completed is the sprinkler system making the entire building compliant with updated fire and safety codes and regulations. The future plan is for the FVOH to



A local artist created the clock/sign located just outside City Hall

3. Serving Our Community

occupy the former ticket booth on the first floor. This will allow for the FVOH operations to continue in a more conducive place to serve the public.

In the beginning of 2014, the FVOH started working with the City to upgrade and improve the entryway and courtyard leading to City Hall. Upgrades include a restored marquee, new concrete sidewalk and granite curbing to complement the existing city scape improvements along Main Street. A twenty-five year lease which provides for a twenty-five year renewal option between the City of Vergennes and the *Friends of the Vergennes Opera House* was approved by the voters at the 2004 Annual City Meeting.

Police Protection

The Vergennes Police Department is a municipal law enforcement agency providing services for the City of Vergennes. The department is comprised of five part-time officers and six full-time officers, including the chief of police, a detective, and patrol officers who provide on-duty coverage twenty-one hours a day, with officers on call for the period of time that there is not an officer on duty.

The Department enforces Vermont motor vehicle law, criminal law and juvenile law, as well as city ordinances. The department provides complete police services and works in collaboration with the community to address and solve any civil issues. The department staff also works closely with the city and area schools, providing mentoring and education to students, and serves as truant officers.

In March of 2014 the Vergennes Police Department moved into its new stations at 8 Main Street. This state-of-the-art facility provides an optimal space for police officers to investigate crimes, process persons in custody and train its staff. The facility was designed and constructed with a future target capacity for ten full-time officers, as well as an administrative Clerk and a school resource officer.

Over the last two years, the department has proactively pursued individual as well as collective training, and now has a canine unit, a criminal/narcotics investigation detective and a commercial motor vehicle enforcement officer; ensuring comprehensive police services are available to the public.

The department continues to make effective use of available federal and state grant monies to upgrade its communications and information systems in order to make officers safer and more effective in the performance of their duties.



What do you love about Vergennes?
"I love how safe it is."
 Representative Diane Lanpher

Fire Protection

The first organized fire protection in Vergennes began in September 1801, when the City Council appointed a number of fire wardens to patrol the city. In January 1876, the Otter Creek Hook and Ladder Company, Number One, the City's first volunteer fire department was formed. Over the years, equipment was updated, from horse-drawn hose carts to modern, motorized fire trucks. Vergennes has enjoyed a robust volunteer fire department from the 1870s to the present time.

Vergennes has a thirty-five person municipal fire department with an extensive countywide mutual aid agreement with 17 area towns plus several towns in Essex County, New York. The department serves our city as well as the surrounding towns of Panton, Waltham, and part of Ferrisburgh.

Major Fire Apparatus		
YEAR	TRUCK	SPECIFICATIONS
1994	Engine	1,500 gpm, 1,000 gallon capacity, Class A Foam system
1994	Engine	1,500 gpm, 1,500 gallon capacity
1998/2008	Hose-reel Pumper	1,250 gpm front mount pump, 300 gallon capacity, hose reel capable of holding 2500 feet of 4" large diameter hose

3. Serving Our Community

Major Fire Apparatus		
YEAR	TRUCK	SPECIFICATIONS
1998	Ladder Truck	1,750 gpm pump, 300 gallon capacity, Class A Foam system, 75' ladder and built in generator.
2002	Rescue/Pumper	1,500 gpm pump, 500 gallon capacity, Class A Foam system, 10kW generator, Cascade air system, hydraulic rescue equipment, water and ice rescue equipment, high and low angle rescue equipment and a large assortment of rescue equipment.
2011	Pick up	Personnel carrier and brush fire equipment.

Capitol Replacement Plan		
YEAR	EQUIPMENT	ESTIMATED COST
2018	1994 Engine	\$350,000
2018	Start truck replacement program where one truck is replaced every 5-8 years	

Our department is housed in a modern three-bay fire station which was totally renovated in 1979 at a cost of \$260,000 and includes a 4,500 square foot apparatus room, meeting rooms, kitchen, showers and restrooms, hose tower, storage rooms, communications center and office. The station is designed to permit community use by the public and meets all requirements for handicapped accessibility.

In 1988, our department initiated a cadet firefighter program with the expressed purpose to encourage youth to develop an awareness and understanding of the role of the volunteer firefighter in the community. The cadets provide assistance to the department and participate in all required training, which enables them to become fully qualified for admission to the department upon reaching the age of eighteen.

The New England Fire Rating Bureau of the Insurance Services Office issued the Vergennes Fire Department a rating of four (based on a rating scale of a low of nine to a high of one). The best rating attainable by a volunteer response department is four. The significant factors in maintaining this impressive rating is a combination of excellent response time, personnel training, the performance of apparatus, and water flow through the hydrant system. Commercial and

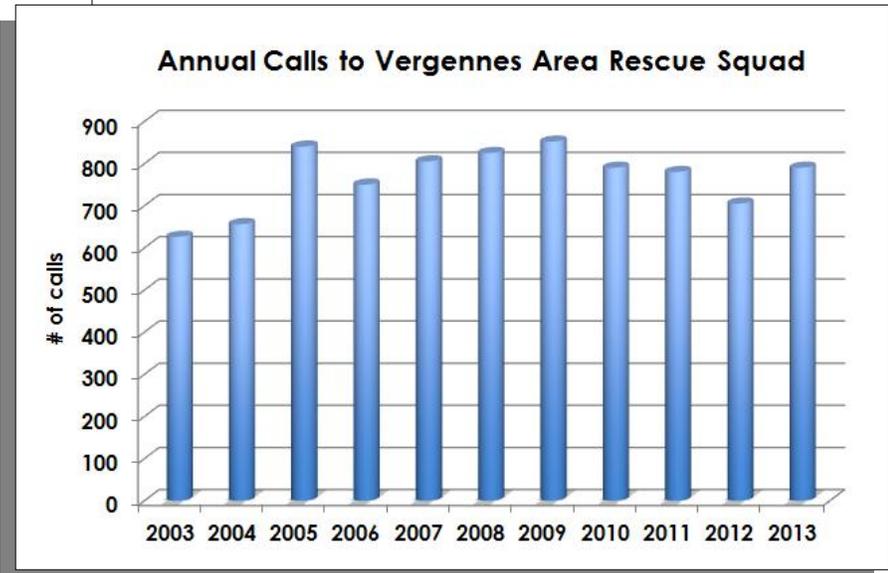
industrial properties, multiple-family dwellings, and municipal and school buildings benefit from significantly reduced insurance premiums as a result of this rating. The department's high quality service is also evidenced in how the citizens of Vergennes rate their fire/rescue services. The majority (88.9%) of the 2008 City Plan survey respondents found services to be good (24.8%) to excellent (64.1%).

Fire/rescue received the highest marks in the 2008 survey, with 63.9% of respondents extremely satisfied with their services.

The department maintains a committee of officers and firefighters whose purpose is to review any building developments within the city relating to road location, width, hydrant location and other matters relating to fire protection. Plans are reviewed and reports are given to the planning commission and development review board.

Health Services

For a relatively small city, Vergennes has abundant and diverse private medical and health services. These include medical and dental practices, as well as massage and alternative health services. There is a free medical clinic on alternating weeks at the Little City Family Practice facilities, and free health screenings for seniors during the senior lunches at the senior center.



The Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS) provides our emergency response services. It is a non-profit volunteer agency serving Addison, Bridport, Ferrisburgh, New Haven, Panton and Waltham, as well as Vergennes. There has been a significant increase in the number of calls over the last few years, and the trend is likely to continue. For those without insurance or

3. Serving Our Community

deductibles, VARS offers a yearly subscription program to alleviate financial hardships.

While the VARS is required to respond to any call regardless of ability to pay, in January 1995, they began billing patients and insurance companies for services provided. The VARS Community Training Center offers CPR and first aid classes to individuals, organizations, and private groups. VARS volunteers provide bicycle helmet fitting and child seat installations, every 3rd Saturday of the month, at no charge to the community.

Public Works

Our Public Works Department is located in the municipal garage, which was constructed in 1980. This facility allows for an efficient means of housing City vehicles and equipment. The old Public Works garage was initially converted to the recycling center; but, it is now used for storage; recycling activities are conducted on the grounds adjacent to the building. The salt shed is also within the compound area and is in need of either improving or replacing.

Our Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining roads, sidewalks, municipal buildings and parks. Additionally, the Department clears snow from both roads and sidewalks; receiving frequent praise from the community for their significant and successful efforts to maintain our roads during winter weather events.



The City's salt shed is in need of repair or replacement

Water Service

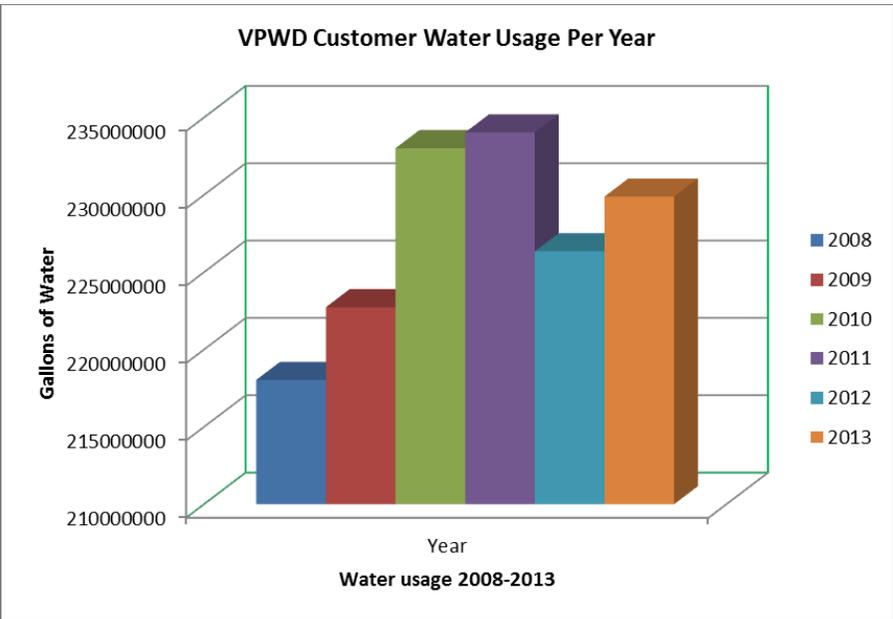
The Vergennes-Panton Water District (VPWD) has provided Vergennes with water service since 1973. The District is a municipal corporation (24 V.S.A. § 3341) chartered in the State of Vermont. It serves the City of Vergennes and the Town of Panton, with oversight provided by a Board of Water Commissioners with four representatives from Vergennes and three from Panton. Our

water is treated at a facility at Arnold Bay in Panton and pumped into the distribution system. Water is stored in the southeastern corner of the City of Vergennes at the Stone Crusher property.

Between 2011 and 2013 the water treatment facility underwent significant upgrades. The work

was designed and overseen by Otter Creek Engineering. Enhancements include installation of new filters, new pumping equipment and variable flow devices (VFDs), new computer software to enhance operators' control of the plant, a new dehumidification system and heating system.

The system is expected to have adequate residential,



commercial and industrial capacity well into the next decade. According to population projections completed by Otter Creek Engineering the plant will be capable of meeting the future growth needs of the Vergennes-Panton area. The new plant will allow for a 17% increase of daily water usage from the previous maximum daily demand of 990,000 gpd to 1,330,000 gpd.

Like all water systems, VPWD requires ongoing maintenance. Twenty-five to thirty-five percent of the Vergennes lines are old and will be upgraded as issues arise or as development drives the need for additional capacity.

3. Serving Our Community

Vergennes – Panton Water District Average Consumption	
CUSTOMER TYPE	AVERAGE GALLONS / DAY CONSUMPTION
Residential (4,500 customers)	270,505
Industrial / Commercial	133,207
Agricultural / Commercial / Industrial outside of Vergennes	192,025

Wastewater Treatment

The upgraded tertiary wastewater treatment system is capable of treating wastewater at an average design flow of 750,000 gallons per day. Based on the flow records for the year ending December 2013, the plant treated an average of 329,000 gallons per day of wastewater.

While the sewer system has capacity to serve our current average daily flow rate, it does on seldom occasions overflow into the Otter Creek during significant rain or snow melt events. The City has a mitigation agreement with the State, which includes reducing inflow and infiltration through sewer pipe replacement and other measures. The system is expected to have adequate residential, commercial and industrial capacity well into the next decade if the remaining inflow/infiltration is eliminated. The City is also addressing illegal roof drain connections, sump pumps and other devices that deliver stormwater to the wastewater collection system. There still remain areas within the city that need attention relative to the upgrading of the collection system.

In a 2007 Charter change, the City voted that extending sewer outside the city limits requires approval by the voters, on a case-by-case basis. Respondents to the Planning Commission's 2008 survey appeared divided on the question of what might constitute an appropriate sewer extension.

According to the results of the 2008 City Plan Survey, Vergennes' residents support the extension of sewer service to surrounding communities for small commercial (39.8%), while extensions for large commercial (39.1%) and industrial (33.9%) are unfavorable.

Stormwater

Vergennes has a separated stormwater drainage system. In August of 2012 Vergennes completed a stormwater infrastructure mapping project in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. As part of the plan the City developed up-to-date municipal drainage maps in a GIS format. The maps show the paths that stormwater runoff travels from where it falls to receiving waters and they include features like pipes.

The stormwater mapping project identified a suite of projects that could be undertaken to improve stormwater management in the city including four high-priority projects. The high-priority projects were as follows: modify an extended detention pond on the Vergennes Union High School property to a wet pond, build a bioretention area treating runoff from the Country Home Products parking lot at the end of Meigs Road, build a wet pond to treat runoff from the neighborhood bounded by Main Street, Monkton Road, and Walker Avenue, and modify an extended detention pond serving the area around Bowman Road, Green Meadow Acres and Booska Court. Funding for these projects may be available through the Ecosystem Restoration Program of DEC, Section 319 funds or the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

As of December 2013 the state had issued 15 stormwater permits within the city of Vergennes. Some of these permits are managed by the city while others are the responsibility of landowners.

Solid Waste

The City is a member of the Addison County Solid Waste Management District, which operates a transfer station in Middlebury for all member towns. The transfer station receives waste from haulers and transports it to a disposal site outside the county. The district also collects household hazardous and special wastes. Vergennes operates (by contract) a recycling facility for our residents and those of Waltham, Addison, Panton, and Ferrisburgh. Residents are served by private trash haulers or utilize the private drop-off location at our recycling center for trash disposal. The center is staffed by employees of the contractor and is open Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

Parks and Recreation

3. Serving Our Community

We recognize that recreational programming for our citizens helps to foster an active, involved, and vibrant community. Many of our families depend on recreation programming to provide children with creative, supervised activities outside of the structure provided by the schools. City residents have access to several sites owned by the City of Vergennes. We also have access to a recreation trail connecting Vergennes Falls Park to UTC. Below is a list of the recreation areas within our city (and shown on the Community Facilities and Utilities map):

Parcels Devoted to Recreation	
P-1 Vergennes City Green	0.6 acres
P-2 Macdonough Park	1.2 acres
P-3 Vergennes Falls Park	6.5 acres
P-4 Pumphouse Island	0.2 acres
P-5 MacIntosh Memorial Park	11.9 acres
P-6 Fisher Memorial Park (Currently undeveloped)	7.1 acres
P-7 Vergennes Veterans' Memorial Park*	2.7 acres
P-8 Western School District	0.2 acres
P-9 Settlers' Park	0.9 acres
Total acres:	31.3 acres

* The Vergennes Veterans' Memorial Park includes tennis courts, basketball courts, ice-skating rink, Skateboard Park, and The Sam Fishman Memorial Pool.

While these areas are diverse in topography, size, and location, improvements should be made to make them safer, more enjoyable, and relevant to the community. There is a lack of a public playground area within the city for young children to play in during school hours. In fact, 63% of the 2008 City Plan survey respondents identified neighborhood parks and playgrounds as a recreation facility that should be built. In 2013, the City received a \$21,000 Recreational Facilities Grant from the State of Vermont to construct a toddler playground in proximity to the Sam Fishman Memorial Pool.

Our City and community volunteers strongly support family and recreational activities in Vergennes including:



Children enjoy petting goats at Vergennes Day

- Community Garden located at the Northland Job Corp Center property
- Farmers' Market at the Vergennes City Green
- Vergennes Memorial Day parade
- Youth Fishing Derby
- French Heritage Day
- Vergennes Day
- Green-Up Day
- Summer time Concerts on the Green by the Little City Jazz Band and City Band

An essential part of successful recreational programs is easy and safe access. In our small community of Vergennes, this should be accomplished by ensuring safe pedestrian and bicycle travel throughout the city, including sidewalk improvements and enhanced crosswalk awareness and safety. Recent studies have identified opportunities for additional sidewalks and bike/pedestrian trails along the downstream side of the Otter Creek Bridge, as well as connecting our downtown schools with the Park and Ride in Ferrisburgh and the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh shopping center.

Indoor recreational space in the City of Vergennes is limited other than for school clubs and sports programs. The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes remains a significant asset to the community providing recreational and developmental programs and activities to approximately 500 young people each year through the operation of the Club's Teen Center after school and during school vacations. The Boys & Girls Club is currently located on School Street in a rented storefront facility with close proximity to area schools. The Club continues to search for a permanent home by purchasing or building a facility that can be dedicated to meeting the needs of the organization and the community.

For seniors we have indoor recreational activities twice a week during a senior lunch program at the senior center. This program serves about 40 seniors each day.

3. Serving Our Community

As funding permits, our residents, and our community, would be well served by refilling the position of a recreation coordinator. The recreation coordinator would organize activities for a variety of age groups in different venues throughout our city and would write a recreation newsletter outlining events.

In the 1930s, the City of Vergennes purchased and developed a water reservoir on a 685-acre parcel in the town of Bristol to supply water to the city. The so-called Watershed Property supplied the city with water until the Vergennes-Panton Water District completed its new treatment facility at Arnold Bay in Panton along with a new transmission main to the city. Because this property no longer provided a direct benefit to the city, the City Council decided to market the property for sale. In 1996, the voters authorized the sale of the Watershed Property for \$300,000 to The Watershed Center, Inc., a non-profit corporation, to be used as a center for outdoor education and recreation with the proceeds of the sale to be held in a reserve fund. The income from this fund is to be used for parks and recreation in the City of Vergennes as deemed appropriate by the City Council. Most recently, the City Council has authorized a portion of the income from this fund to maintain and make improvements to the recreation facilities.

Bixby Memorial Free Library

William Gove Bixby (1829-1907), a lifelong resident of Vergennes, gifted the majority of his estate to build and maintain a public library. The doors of the Bixby Memorial Free Library were opened on November 4, 1912 in service to the City of Vergennes and the surrounding communities of Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton and Waltham. The building is listed in the Vergennes Historic District (which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places) as A17. The library is governed by a board of trustees that includes representation from each of the communities served.



Front entrance to Bixby Memorial Free Library

While the Bixby's collection has grown to contain 23,000 volumes, the library is no longer just a building filled with books. As the Bixby begins its second century of service to Vergennes, it is emerging as a community space that enables access to technology and provides a source of digital literacy. The board has also renewed interest in the historic (and museum quality) artifacts collected during the first century of operation. In 2013 a team of local experts began the task of documenting the historically significant collection. Work will continue throughout 2014, and, when completed, will yield a comprehensive inventory of the collection and will enable the Bixby to move forward with public accessibility and display plans.

Today, use of the Bixby Library building is significantly restricted by current standards for fire safety and the inability of the structure to accommodate people with disabilities. The Bixby Board of Trustees has acknowledged the need for a Total Access Project that, when completed, will make spaces available that currently cannot be used. This project is expected to be a capital campaign, targeted to begin within the next three years.

Education

Our community places a high value on education, and has high expectations for school programs and student achievement. This is evidenced by the citizen's support of school budgets and activities, and by a high level of parent involvement in the schools.



The newly renovated Vergennes Union High School

Vergennes Union Elementary School and Vergennes Union High School belong to the Addison Northwest Supervisory Union (ANWSU). Vergennes Union High School (VUHS) was constructed in 1959 and had an academic wing added in the mid-1960s. A major building and renovation project was completed in the spring of 2002, which addressed the recommendations of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Report from 1993.

3. Serving Our Community

The school has a School-To-Work Program in which students work in businesses as part of their school curriculum to better prepare them for career choices after high school.

In 2013, forty-four VUHS students attended the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury. The center offers career training in programs such as human services, sustainable agriculture, forestry and natural resources, automotive technology, design and illustration, diesel power technology, industrial design and fabrication, medical professions, culinary arts, architecture and engineering design, and theatre arts. The Diversified Occupations (DO) program is a special education program provided by Addison Central Supervisory Union at the career center. DO provided services to 16 ANWSU students in 2013.

- “US News and World Report” has VUHS at the 9th best school in Vermont, a National Silver Medalist, and we are ranked 2,034 in the nation. They cite strong proficiencies in reading, math, and college readiness.
- VUHS is a member of the League of Innovative Schools and the New England Secondary School Consortium.
- VUHS is a leader among New England schools in developing Performance-Based Graduation Requirements, and hence individualized student plans.
- VUHS enjoys over 204 students participating in extracurricular athletics and over 220 students participating in music programs, both signifiers of an excellent school.
- 12% of VUHS students take advantage of the Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center learning opportunities and programs.
- VUHS is the sponsoring school of the internationally recognized Walden Program, recently featured in the “NY Times” and the “New Yorker Magazine”.
- VUHS has a 7th-12th grade dropout rate of 1.21% and a 9th-12th grade dropout rate of 1.74%. The national dropout rate in 2011 was 7%.
- VUHS enjoys a 4-year graduation rate of 89.36% and we graduate 97.87% of 6-year students.
- VUHS matches the Vermont Individual Education Plan (IEP) rate of 13%.
- VUHS betters the Vermont EST rate of 12% to 8%. Educational Support Teams (EST) save us from spending more money on special education services.

- The VUHS class of 2013 had an average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score of Critical Reading-528; Math-541; and Writing-492.
- At last reports, of the VUHS Class of 2013: 74% are attending college.

There is a middle school program for grades seven through nine at VUHS. Grades seven and eight are currently located in a separate wing of the high school. The school serves the towns of Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Waltham, and city of Vergennes. Maximum enrollment capacity is 666 students based on state requirements.

Enrollment figures for Vergennes Union High School are shown in the table below.

VUHS Enrollment, 2003 – 2014

Year	Addison	Ferrisburgh	Panton	Vergennes	Waltham	Total
2013-14	112	165	50	167	27	521
2012-13	119	189	42	182	23	555
2011-12	103	200	49	189	25	566
2010-11	121	195	42	193	25	576
2009-10	121	203	39	196	26	585
2008-09	124	210	51	200	30	615
2007-08	113	223	54	197	36	623
2006-07	124	212	57	213	38	644
2005-06	115	208	59	226	50	658
2004-05	110	228	60	236	49	683
2003-04	113	198	49	215	60	635

Source: ANWSU District Office

The Vergennes Elementary School was constructed in 1950. Two additions have been added since that time, the most recent in 1987. In 1993, the school commissioned a study of the short-term and long-range educational curriculum goals and the ability of the existing elementary facility to support those programs. The study identified needed mechanical systems improvements, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements and roof repairs as well as a need for additional space, including several classrooms, and improved facilities for computers, art, music, special education, library, guidance, and administration. In 1997, a bond was

3. Serving Our Community

approved for the mechanical system, ADA improvements, roof repairs, and modification of the existing architecture, and an addition for a music classroom. The additional expansion has not been pursued.

In November 1988, Vergennes, Panton, and Waltham joined together to form the Union Elementary School District No. 44. The school serves all students in grades kindergarten through six. Maximum enrollment capacity is 400 students based on state requirements. Enrollment figures for Vergennes Union Elementary School are shown in the tables below.

VUES Enrollment by Grade, 2003-2014

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2013-14	36	37	41	42	31	39	29	255
2012-13	36	45	41	33	41	31	53	280
2011-12	39	37	32	41	25	56	29	259
2010-11	35	33	39	30	54	30	44	265
2009-10	31	41	28	53	26	41	35	255
2008-09	38	29	57	27	41	39	39	270
2007-08	27	54	26	40	34	38	41	260
2006-07	47	27	40	31	38	38	42	263
2005-06	29	41	38	39	42	38	43	270
2004-05	41	38	40	46	43	40	42	290
2003-04	41	46	52	45	43	46	57	330

Source: ANWSU District Office

VUES Enrollment by Municipality, 2003-2014

Year	Panton	Vergennes	Waltham	Total
2013-14	46	180	27	253
2012-13	50	202	27	279
2011-12	51	184	25	260
2010-11	48	188	25	261
2009-10	50	180	22	252
2008-09	48	195	23	266
2007-08	42	196	22	260
2006-07	53	184	26	263

2005-06	57	188	25	270
2004-05	55	207	28	290
2003-04	60	230	28	318

Source: ANWSU District Office

The Addison Northwest Supervisory Union (ANWSU) operates an Essential Early Education (EEE) preschool program for students with special education needs, ages 3-5. In addition to the EEE program, over the past three years ANWSU has partnered with the Evergreen Preschool and the Mary Johnson Children’s Center for the provision of preschool services to students in their programs. The Mary Johnson Children’s Center, working with a local community group and Housing Vermont, has secured a site for a new preschool. Members of this group are currently working to raise capital for the building and programs. Currently there are six registered home childcare providers and five licensed childcare providers in Vergennes. These partnerships continue to date and the intent is to ensure that these educational services become available to our community.

Our city is also home to Northlands Job Corps Center. The State of Vermont leases approximately sixty-six acres to the United States Department of Labor. Approximately 220 students reside at the center, which serves most of New England. The center offers education for students pursuing their general equivalency diploma and vocational training in the fields of urban forestry, clerical, culinary arts, homebuilder trade, auto mechanic and auto body, welding, and health occupations. Currently 110 full- and part-time staff work at Northlands Job Corps Center.

The Future of Our Community Facilities and Services

Goal

To plan for and finance community facilities and services that maintain and improve the city’s health, safety, welfare, and quality of life for future and current generations, and that support orderly growth and development at a rate and in locations that the city can accommodate.

3. Serving Our Community

Policies

1. Research, prepare, and implement a capital budget and program that will help manage anticipated growth and development pressures by indicating when, how, and at what cost the City expects to expend and/or maintain its facilities and services in the future. Identify and prioritize all of the City's capital improvement requirements and capital funding options for a minimum of five years. Annually budget capital projects consistent with this plan.
2. Make new investments in schools, libraries, recreation and other community facilities and services in a manner that will be responsive to all our City's needs, goals, and desires.
3. Explore opportunities to share community facilities and services with neighboring towns or the private sector, when necessary and appropriate.

CITY HALL AND THE VERGENNES OPERA HOUSE

4. Conduct routine maintenance and make improvements to City Hall, as needed, to preserve our City's investment in this valued piece of history.
5. Continue to support the maintenance, development, and enhancement of our Opera House and promote it as a cultural, performance, and community center that is an integral part of our City's revitalization.

FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION

6. Ensure that the public safety facilities and equipment of the Police and Fire Departments are of the highest caliber, and enable both departments to operate at optimum levels of efficiency and effectiveness to protect the comfort, quiet, repose, health, peace, and safety of Vergennes residents.
7. Conduct a study of the Police and Fire Departments to identify existing and projected needs for inclusion in a capital budget and program.
8. Ensure that Vergennes' land use and development regulations adequately address fire prevention and protection needs through the encouragement of fire ponds, hydrants, and adequate accessibility of roads and driveways.

HEALTH SERVICES

9. Continue active support for the Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS) including allowance for participation by City staff during working hours, if necessary.
10. Monitor staffing and volunteer levels for VARS to identify possible shortages of volunteers in future years.
11. Support the development of senior care facilities and other health care facilities and services in appropriate locations under local regulations and ordinances.

PUBLIC WORKS

12. Make any required improvements to our municipal garage area. In particular, upgrade or replace the salt shed to ensure adequate short- and long-term storage of our City's supplies.
13. Establish and implement a program for routine maintenance of City-owned structures, including a maintenance fund.

WATER SERVICE

14. Maintain and improve a high quality water supply system. Continue to support retention of the capacity of the Vergennes-Panton Water District facilities.
15. Support the Vergennes-Panton Water District to implement a water conservation program that includes metering all consumers, detecting and repairing leaks in the underground distribution pipe network, and installing water conservation devices in residential and commercial buildings.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

16. Work to reduce inflow and infiltration from the wastewater system. Implement a disciplined, long-term assessment program that routinely identifies, records information, and resolves issues that relate to a variety of problems including observed overflows, measured or observed surcharges, reported bypasses, customer backup complaints, and chronic maintenance activities.
17. Develop criteria to be used in assessing requests from adjoining communities for wastewater service. Prior to utility extension outside the city limits to facilitate development in neighboring communities, the Vergennes Development Review Board should review site plans or zoning changes for any proposed development to mitigate any potential negative

3. Serving Our Community

impacts on public services (i.e. fire/rescue/police), schools, traffic, density, landscaping, open space, and visual quality.

STORM DRAINAGE

18. Use site design guidelines to improve treatment of stormwater runoff as outlined in the subdivision review requirements.
19. Modify the extended detention pond at the Vergennes Union High School to a wet pond.
20. Recommend and work with landowners to build a bioretention area to treat runoff from the Country Home Products parking lot.
21. Facilitate the building of a wet pond to treat runoff from the neighborhood bounded by Main Street, Monkton Road and Walker Avenue.
22. Modify the extended detention pond serving the area around Bowman Road, Green Meadow Acres and Booska Court.

SOLID WASTE

23. Continue to participate in the Addison County Solid Waste Management District, as long as this is the most cost-effective solid waste disposal option.
24. Appoint a recycling task force for oversight and improvement of our recycling center.
25. Dispose of solid waste in a safe and economical way with emphasis on recycling and monitoring of new waste disposal technology alternatives.
26. Develop and implement a waste and hazardous chemical reduction program in schools, public offices, and other community facilities. Seek assistance from both the public and private sector, which provide technical and educational support for recycling, composting, hazardous waste and related topics.
27. Support local, regional, and state recycling programs and initiatives, explore programs for composting food and agricultural wastes, and use recycled products when possible.
28. Encourage the development and participation in local and regional food composting programs.

29. Work with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District to inform and educate the public on solid waste issues and how to minimize waste at home, school, work and at play.

PARKS AND RECREATION

30. Maintain, enhance, and expand existing public parks and recreational facilities and activities. Inventory current status, with community input, and create a 10-year plan for improvements and maintenance.
31. Provide a playground or play structure in the downtown area.
32. Maintain and improve access to public parks, trails, playgrounds and other facilities, including completion of the bicycle path around our city. Identify opportunities for connecting existing private and public trail systems within the city to each other and to trail and pathway systems in neighboring communities. New planned unit developments should incorporate and/or continue recreation facilities, including trails, pathways, playgrounds, conservation areas, water access, etc., and remain open to the public.
33. Encourage development of private, low-impact recreational enterprises, and recreation opportunities on private lands.
34. Establish a recreation committee, appointed by and responsible to the City Council, that is officially charged with the development of new recreation activities and facilities as well as to support a recreation coordinator in managing existing activities and facilities.
35. Obtain and increase sustainable funding for a recreation coordinator position.
36. Establish the publication of a Recreation Program Guide for Vergennes. Develop a comprehensive map delineating recreational opportunities throughout the community, which includes trail locations, suitability for types of activity, parks and playgrounds, public access areas and any private commercial recreational enterprises.

BIXBY MEMORIAL FREE LIBRARY

37. Support the development and enhancement of our public library as it strives to deliver the services requested by the community.
38. Engage with the library, where practicable, in the effort to update the historic building to current laws and standards.

3. Serving Our Community

EDUCATION

39. Maintain a quality school system that is essential to our quality of life, and provides our city with a community focus and sense of pride. Continually seek new, innovative, and cost-effective ways to improve the quality and accessibility of the City's schools and education system.
40. Explore opportunities to collaborate with Northlands Job Corps Center over the short and long term.
41. Involve students in projects for community improvements. Solicit support from the business, government and academic communities to enrich educational and other programs. Support school-to-work programs, including training opportunities in City departments and local businesses.
42. Continue educational and support activities by Vergennes Police and Fire Departments as well as VARS.
43. Review new housing development for its potential impact on the school system.
44. Support an open communication process between the school, school board, and the community and identify opportunities to improve the exchange of information.
45. Support policies and ordinances that encourage provision for childcare services. Ensure that these facilities are integrated appropriately into residential neighborhoods, especially with regard to traffic, parking, noise, and other potential impacts.
46. Promote active youth participation in our community and government by encouraging classes to attend meetings. Consider a non-voting student seat on City Council and other City/community government boards for students to actively participate.

3.2 OUR ENERGY

Electricity is provided to Vergennes by Green Mountain Power Corporation (GMP), in part through the operation of its hydro and diesel generating facilities at the Otter Creek Falls. Indeed, hydroelectric facilities have been a part of the Vergennes Falls since 1911. GMP supplements this local generating capacity with hydroelectric, nuclear, wind, solar, coal, and methane sources from outside Vergennes and the State of Vermont.



Hydroelectric facilities at the Vergennes Falls have provided electricity since 1911

Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) operates Vermont's bulk electrical transmission and distribution (T&D) system, and represents Vermont in the six-state New England Power Pool. A 115KV line crossing the northeast corner of Vergennes, including a new substation on Route 22A at the Kayhart Crossing railroad under pass was built in 2009.

Vergennes residents and businesses heat their homes, hot water, and businesses with a variety of fuels including fuel oil, kerosene, liquid propane gas, and trucked natural gas. Recently there has been significant volatility in fuel prices. A rapid and substantial increase in fossil fuel costs would make it more challenging for Vergennes residents to heat their homes and travel to their work. Increasing fuel costs can reduce the profits of Vergennes businesses.

In 2013, the City entered an agreement with Encore Vergennes Solar I, LLC who developed and owns a 149kW solar array located at the wastewater treatment plant. The facility will generate about 200,000 kW per year. It went live on December 31, 2013. For hosting the facility, the City receives 10 percent of the value of the electricity with a current value of 20.7 cents per kW and has the right to purchase the array after seven years.

3. Serving Our Community

In December of 2013 the Vermont Public Service Board approved a Certificate of Public Good to Vermont Gas Systems for a proposed extension of a natural gas pipeline that would serve Vergennes business and residences. Natural gas service currently exists in Chittenden and Franklin Counties. The new pipeline would extend through Vergennes to Middlebury. The pipeline project was endorsed by the Vergennes City Council and supported by Vergennes voters. Vermont Gas began construction of the pipeline in 2014.

Energy conservation can be considered a source of energy. Energy efficiency measures reduce energy costs for residents and businesses, enhance environmental quality, improve security and sustainability, and ultimately enhance economic vitality. Energy efficiency projects can also eliminate the need for new power plants and increased transmission and distribution capacity. For energy efficiency programs to work well, they must include all sectors of our community: residential, commercial, municipal, and schools, as well as transportation.

In recent years small-scale electric generation has become viable in Vergennes. A 100 kW wind turbine was installed on the Northlands Job Corps grounds; and many private land-owners have established net-metered generation sites. Green Mountain Power, an investor-owned electric utility, offers a credit to customers with net-metered photovoltaic (PV) systems. In order to net meter, customers must first apply for and receive a “Net Metering Certificate of Public Good” from the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB). Net metering is generally available to systems up to 500 kilowatts (kW) in capacity.

Vermont electric ratepayers fund Efficiency Vermont, the State’s Energy Efficiency Utility. The City, as well as businesses and residents, should take advantage of the technical and financial assistance available from Efficiency Vermont to reduce the electrical use of their buildings and processes.

Vergennes should be a leader in improving quality of life through reducing energy costs by:

1. Ensuring that new homes and businesses are built as efficiently as possible.
2. Assisting its citizens and businesses to improve their existing properties.

3. Encouraging implementation of renewable energy systems for homes, businesses, and municipal buildings.

2008 City Plan Survey Results		
Question 13. Which of the following development strategies should the City adopt to help reduce energy consumption (select all that apply)?		
	RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE COUNT
Encourage infill and redevelopment of existing buildings/properties	68.8%	108
Extend/build more sidewalks	52.2%	82
Create bike lanes to encourage biking	56.7%	89
Encourage use of bus service and carpooling	62.4%	98
Encourage business owners to implement transportation benefit programs for their employees	35.7%	56
Require new buildings to meet Green Building standards such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)	45.2%	71
Other (please specify)	26.1%	41
answered question		157

The Future of Our Energy

Goal

To encourage the efficient use of energy, including the development and use of renewable energy resources in a manner that protects public health and safety, and minimizes adverse environmental and aesthetic impacts.

Policies

1. Electric transmission lines, utility poles, substations and other major utilities shall be located in a manner that reduces their adverse physical and visual impact and minimizes conflict with present and planned uses of land on which they are to be located.
2. Support the installation of residential-scale wind, solar, geothermal, biomass or other alternative energy generating systems as long as they are located in such a manner that does

3. Serving Our Community

not adversely impact the character of the neighborhood.

3. Encourage infill and redevelopment of existing buildings/properties.
4. Reduce municipal energy expenditures to the extent feasible through energy efficiency and conservation. Consider energy efficiency and energy conservation in new municipal construction projects, equipment purchases and operations. Life cycle costing (LCC) should be used by the City in evaluating energy-related capital expenditures as appropriate. Make use of any number of local or state programs to help improve municipal energy efficiency.
5. Implement guidelines that encourage energy efficient building and site design that help reduce energy requirements for power, lighting, heating, cooling and transportation.
6. Provide contact information for energy efficiency resources to people buying property, or applying for building or remodeling permits.
7. Maintain, improve, support, and plan for the development of pedestrian and recreation paths, sidewalks, park and ride lots, public transit services and/or ridesharing programs that reduce transportation energy costs.
8. Increase public awareness of energy issues through the support of educational programs in local schools and other forums.
9. Explore creation of an energy committee or an energy coordinator to facilitate a Municipal Energy Plan.

4. PROTECTING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

4.1 OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

Even with our relatively high density, Vergennes has maintained a traditional compact New England development pattern. This means that large areas of open space, including meadows, fields, forested lands, small, steep-sided streams, wetlands, and hilltops still exist around the central core of the city, especially to the north and southwest. These open lands, which can be viewed from many vantage points throughout the city, offer scenic beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities that attract many visitors to our city, as well as provide diverse wildlife and plant habitats, which support stable ecosystems.

Although our city's total land area only covers about 1,600 acres of land (compared to the average 19,235 acres of surrounding towns), the quality and quantity of natural resources is abundant, and the character of place they create is a critical element in maintaining our health and economic welfare.

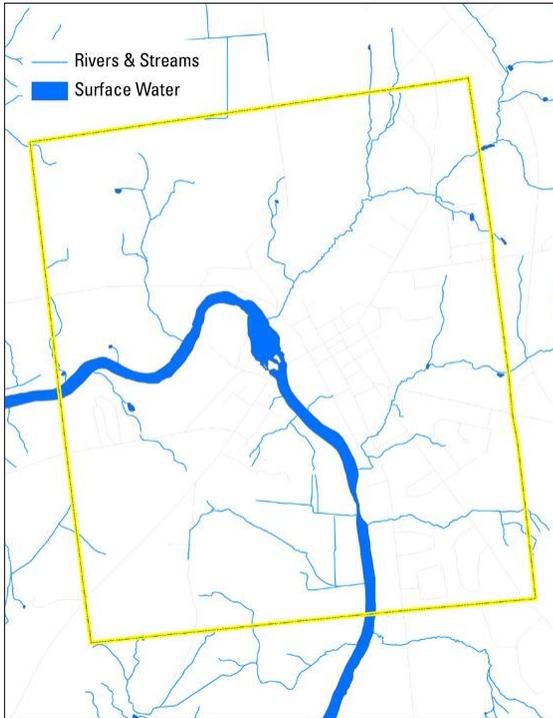
Vergennes' forests, fields, wetlands, streams, riverbanks, and ponds provide critical habitats to a variety of animals, insects and plants. Open grassy meadows offer excellent sites for foraging, nesting, and resting and are valuable habitat for pollinators such as butterflies and bees. Beavers, bobcats, otters, foxes, herons, and waterfowl use the shores and waters of the Otter Creek, as well as the minor tributaries that feed into the river. Several rare and endangered species of mussel are also found in the waters of the Otter Creek basin. From wetland to wildland, these varied resources provide a flourishing and attractive place to live, work and visit.



Our natural resources help maintain our quality of life

4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

The health of our city's natural resources is important, as is their fundamental role in the land use activities they support, the outdoor recreation they provide, and the opportunities for



A **river** or **stream corridor** is a complex and valuable ecosystem, which includes the land, plants, animals, and network of streams within it. A healthy corridor with an abundance of trees and other vegetation slows floodwaters, improves water quality, stores water, provides cover and shade for water-loving animals, helps to stabilize streambanks, and provides the key resources that support biological diversity in the area.

Wildlife habitat describes the complex mixture of food, cover, water, space requirements, and environmental conditions where an animal lives. To occur in a particular location, an animal must find at least one of its habitat requirements met there.

learning about our natural world. Because of our small land area and relatively high density, these resources are more susceptible to development and can be challenging to manage. Therefore, it is especially important for us to be careful stewards of the natural resources in Vergennes.

Rivers and Streams

Perhaps the most significant natural resource in Vergennes is the Otter Creek, which occupies over 4 percent of our city. Stretching about 1.8 miles at an average width of nearly 200 feet through the heart of the city, Otter Creek and its associated wetlands, falls, and floodplain are home to many diverse species. The floodplains, wetlands, and falls act as natural flood control systems. These areas have been mapped and are precluded from development or destruction under local, state, and federal laws.

Immediately below the falls is a large, occasionally flooding basin, known as the Otter Creek basin, which is about 600 feet wide and covers about 8 acres. The basin and falls serve as a major recreational resource for fishing, boating, sightseeing, and tourism. Several rare and endangered species are found in the waters

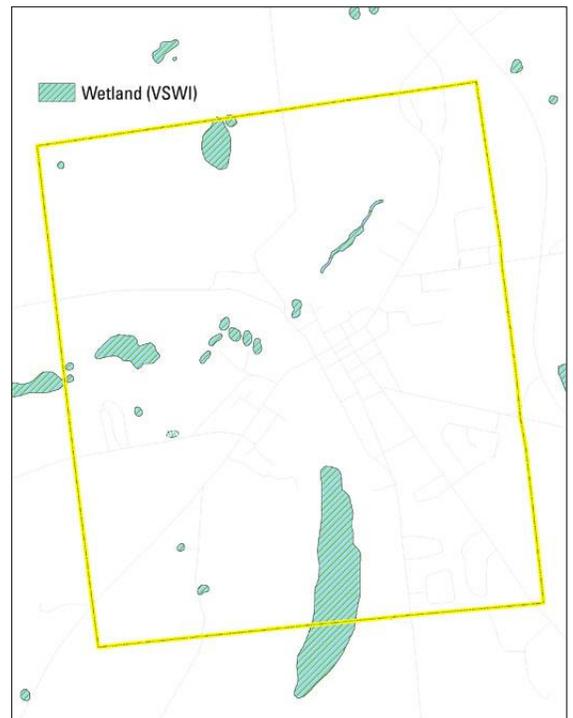
of the basin. Studies by Green Mountain Power Corporation found three rare species of fresh water mussels below the falls. The black sandshell mussel is a threatened mollusk protected under the Vermont Endangered Species Act. The pink heelsplitter and fragile papershell also exist below the falls and are each classified as rare mussel species.

Lake Champlain is located about 7 miles downstream from the city. Resource concerns for the greater Otter Creek watershed and Lake Champlain include animal waste storage and management, nutrient management, pasture management, balancing farm production and wildlife habitat needs and phosphorus, bacteria and sediment entering watercourses. The city's treated wastewater is released in the creek, downstream of the basin.

The stream corridors in Vergennes are perhaps our most significant wildlife habitats. They provide continuous naturally protected pathways along which wildlife species can move in relative security between high quality natural wildlife habitats, not only in Vergennes, but also throughout the region. These corridors work best when sparsely developed. Every new development in the city has the potential to result in an incremental loss or change to wildlife habitats. Sensitive land use planning can lessen or mitigate the impact on our precious wildlife habitats and other critical communities.

Wetlands

Nearly 50% of Vermont's wetlands have been lost or severely impaired from draining, dredging, filling, excavation, pollution and other activities. Destruction or drainage of wetlands prevents surface water storage and reduces their water quality enhancement function, while accelerating the flow of water downstream, which may cause increased flood damages. Wetland filling does the same, as well as destroying vital habitats for native fish and wildlife species and diminishing our



4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

visually rich environments and open space.

A massive wetland complex on the Otter Creek between Rutland and Middlebury helped spare Vergennes from the widespread damage caused when Tropical Storm Irene struck Vermont on August 28, 2011. During Irene, the Otter Creek in Rutland swelled reaching a peak discharge of 15,700 cubic feet of water per second (cfs) and flood waters caused tremendous damage. Thirty miles downstream in Middlebury (the nearest gage to Vergennes) the maximum peak discharge was only 6,180 cfs. Within four days the river flow in Rutland had returned to normal, but water levels were just peaking in the low-lying areas of Vergennes. The 9,000 acres of wetlands along the Otter Creek held Irene's waters, slowly releasing them over time so that Vergennes never faced the damaging peak flood waters seen in so much of Vermont.

Wetlands are defined by the State of Vermont as those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient enough to support significant vegetation or aquatic life that depend on saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. These areas often act as recharge areas, areas for filtering and cleaning water, significant wildlife habitat, and aiding in flood control. In the Vermont landscape, wetlands often occur in association with lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, but they may also be isolated from any obvious connection to surface water.

The Vermont Water Resources Board adopted the **Vermont Wetland Rules** in 1990 to identify and protect Vermont's "significant wetlands." The general locations of most "significant wetlands" are identified on the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI), which is based on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) of 1978 (see map inset for wetland locations).

The Wetland Rules classify wetlands into three categories. The first two classes (Class One and Class Two) are considered "significant" and are protected by the Vermont Wetland Rules.

Class One wetlands are exceptional or irreplaceable and merit the highest level of protection. Class One wetlands must be specifically designated by the Board. A 100-foot buffer zone is designated adjacent to Class One wetlands.

Class Two wetlands are presumed to serve one or more wetland functions at a significant level. The Wetland Rules designate most wetlands on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps and those wetlands contiguous to mapped wetlands as Class Two wetlands. A contiguous wetland is a wetland, which shares a boundary with or touches a mapped wetland. A 50-foot buffer zone is designated adjacent to all Class Two wetlands.

Class Three wetlands have not been mapped on the NWI maps or have been found by the Board to be not significant for providing any wetland functions when last evaluated. Class Three wetlands are not protected under the Wetland Rules. Petitions can be presented to the Board to upgrade a Class Three wetland based on an evaluation of its functions. Class Three wetlands are, however, protected by other federal, state, and local regulations.

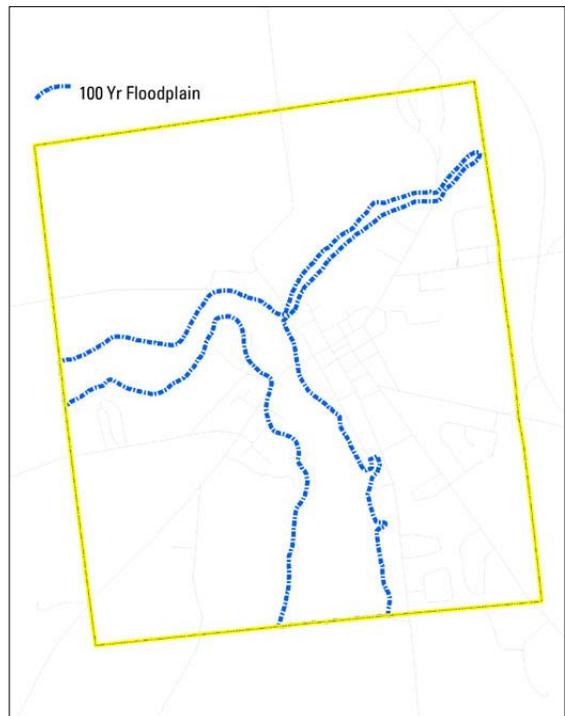
While these ecological functions are beneficial to our health, safety and welfare, wetlands are further invaluable for recreational and educational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, and wildlife observation. For example, the wetlands by the Vergennes Union Elementary School are used as an outdoor educational and research laboratory. Wetlands also contribute significantly to the open space character and overall beauty of the Vergennes landscape.

Therefore, we must protect our wetlands through education, conservation, regulation, and restoration to ensure their preservation for future generations. We should maximize our city's healthy, functioning wetlands by minimizing impacts and by developing management strategies that protect, and where possible, rehabilitate ecosystems at risk.

Floodplains

The Vermont River Management Program (RMP) works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to oversee the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in Vermont. The NFIP is a voluntary program administered at the local level in which participating communities agree to manage floodplain development using building and land-use regulations. In return, residents have the ability to purchase flood insurance, apply for federally insured loans (such as mortgages), and receive flood disaster assistance. The City of Vergennes is currently a participating community in the NFIP.

A **floodplain** is an area next to a river, stream, or creek that may be covered with water following heavy rainstorms, melting snow, ice jams or dam failures. Excess water is held in the floodplain until it can be slowly released into the river system and seep into groundwater aquifers. Floodplains also give time for sediment to settle out of floodwaters, thereby keeping it out of water bodies. Floodplains often support important wildlife habitat and are frequently used as recreation areas.



4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

The NFIP provides maps that specifically show the extent of flood hazard areas that are managed under the program (see map inset above). These Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) (also referred to as the base floodplain or 100-year floodplain) are the land that will be inundated with water during a 100-year storm, or, a storm that has a 1%-chance (1 in 100) of occurring in any given year. It is possible to have this unusual storm two years in a row or even more frequently. Some Vermont towns have had two 100-year floods in the same decade.

For purposes of **Act 250**, "primary agricultural soils" means soil map units with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics that have a potential for growing food, feed, and forage crops, have sufficient moisture and drainage, plant nutrients or responsiveness to fertilizers, few limitations for cultivation or limitations which may be easily overcome and an average slope that does not exceed 15 percent. Present uses may be cropland, pasture, regenerating forests, forestland, or other agricultural or silvicultural uses. However, the soils must be of a size and location, relative to adjoining land uses, so that those soils will be capable, following removal of any identified limitations, of supporting or contributing to an economic or commercial agricultural operation. Unless contradicted by the qualifications stated in this definition, primary agricultural soils shall include important farmland soils map units with a rating of prime, statewide, or local importance as defined by the NRCS. A subdivision or development may not significantly reduce the agricultural potential of such primary agricultural soils.

Participation in NFIP is one important approach to flood hazard mitigation, but NFIP maps are based only on inundation hazards, and fail to consider fluvial erosion, the cause of most flood damage in Vermont. Fluvial erosion is erosion caused by the movement of rivers and streams and can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimension during flood events.

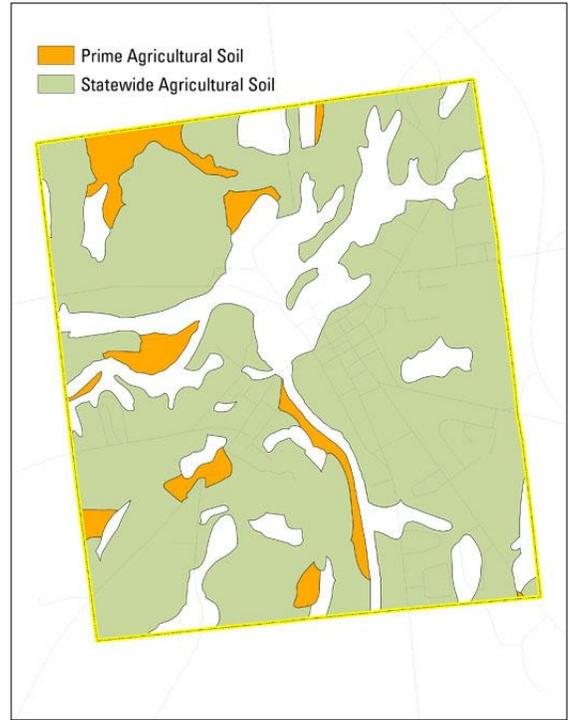
While floods are naturally occurring events that provide several important ecosystem functions, it is important for Vergennes to continue to properly manage development in the floodplain so that safety risks and loss of property due to flooding are minimized.

Agricultural Soils

Agriculture has long been an important element in our physical, cultural and economic make up. Farms supply us with an abundance of fresh, healthy food and contribute to local economies through jobs and by sustaining local businesses such as grocers, equipment dealers, and hardware stores. Agricultural lands contribute enormously to the scenic beauty of the area

and provide opportunities to hike, hunt, fish, snowmobile, birdwatch, and enjoy the land. Farmlands also provide valuable open space and serve as a natural buffer from unplanned growth and development.

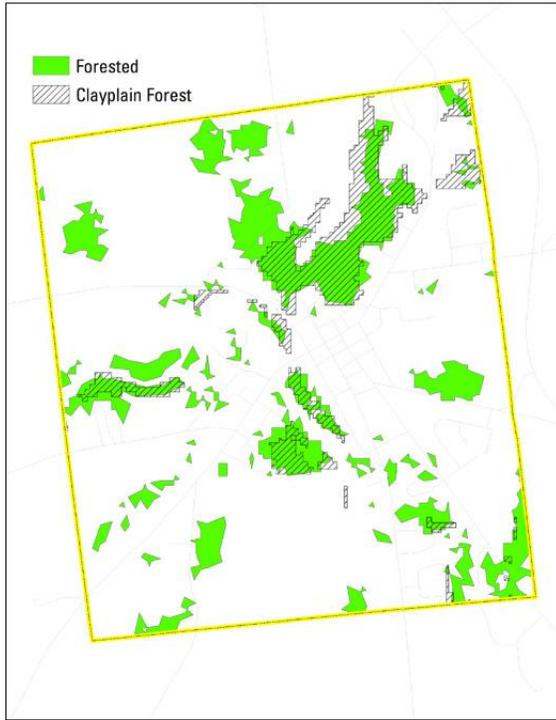
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has mapped and ranked soils in Vergennes. Approximately 77% of the city's non-forested flat lands are classified as prime or statewide soils (see map inset). These two highest categories are considered best suited for agriculture. Many of these productive agricultural soils are located north of Macdonough Drive and along the stream corridors, a fact that is evident in



our existing pattern of land use. Of these valuable soils, 7% are considered “prime” agricultural soils. Prime agricultural farmland, according to the NRCS, is suitable for almost any type of farming operation and is essential for intensive agriculture. Statewide soils, and some of the lesser-ranked soils that have been improved with drainage, are well-suited for grazing and production of hay and forage crops.

Agricultural soils in Vergennes and throughout Vermont are threatened for many reasons, perhaps none more significant than the increase in development. The growing demand for residential housing and commercial building space appears to be driving a corresponding increase in the amount of land being developed to accommodate these needs. Due to gentle slopes and deep, well-drained soils, prime farmland is often the easiest land to develop. Rural character also attracts new residents seeking the idyllic country lifestyle. Unfortunately, the loss of working lands usually occurs little by little over time and is not even noticed at first.

4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage



Forests

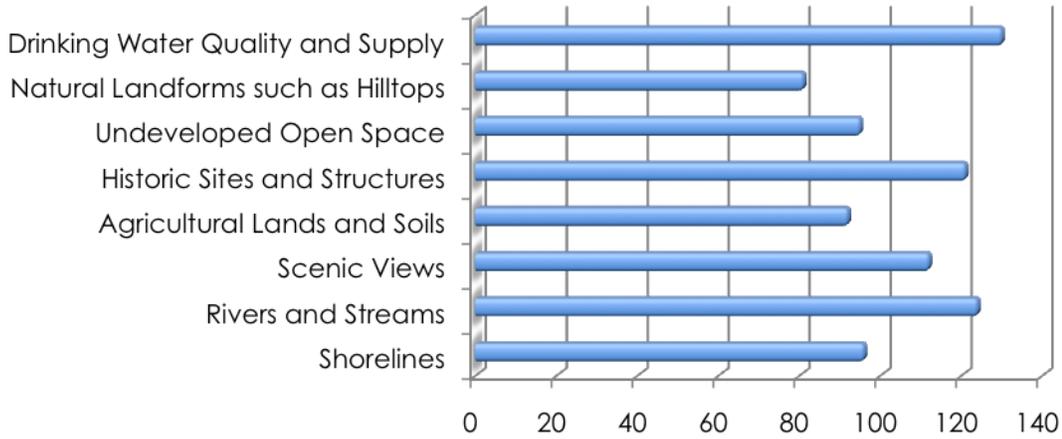
Although our forests are limited in Vergennes (see inset map) they provide many benefits -- from recreation to flood control to wildlife habitat -- and contribute significantly to the character of the city. Of particular interest are the clayplain forests, which are only found in the Champlain Valley and are rare and seriously fragmented due to their value as prime agricultural land. Clayplain forests, characterized by their fertile clay soil, moderate to poor drainage, and moderate climate, are largely undeveloped in Vergennes and are important for their rich diversity of species and ecosystems.

They support a more diverse mixture of trees than other forest types in Vermont, including shagbark hickory, white pine, red and white oak, white ash, and red maple, as well as a variety of shrubs and herbs. Clayplain forests also provide habitat for an abundance of mammals, amphibians, reptiles, birds and insects.

Within the populated areas of the city we also have several small, forested areas and open spaces that provide additional habitat and outdoor opportunities for our residents. The City Green provides a peaceful place in the middle of the city and a place for outdoor festivals and gatherings. Trees such as mature maple, ash, and other hardwoods line many of the City streets and greatly enhance our quality of life by filtering stormwater runoff, stabilizing soils, improving our air quality, reducing building energy consumption, promoting social interaction, and many other benefits vital to the health of our community.

The integrity of our remaining forest patches is under pressure, especially from construction of homes and removal of naturally vegetated corridors. As our population continues to increase, the disruption will likely continue unless we make conscious choices now about how we maintain and protect the diversity of life and ecological functions of our forests.

2008 City Plan Survey
#32. Is preservation or protection of any of the following important to you? Select all that apply.



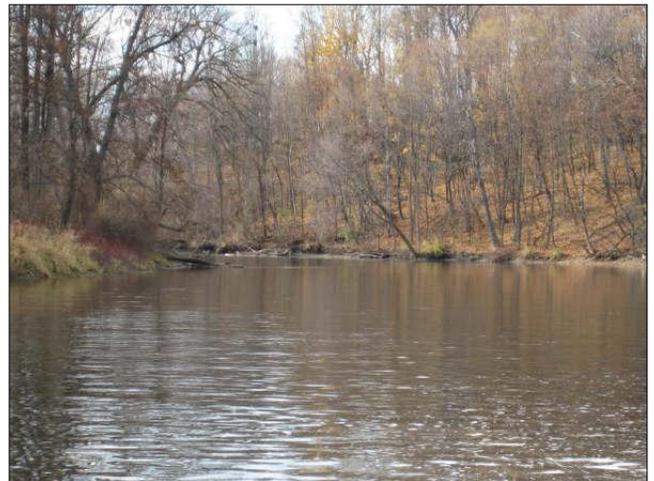
The Future of Our Natural Resources

Goal

To preserve and protect the integrity and quality of our city's natural resources for current and future generations.

Policies

1. Promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land and its suitability for use. Implement a review process for development that is based on the lands capability to support the intended development and protect important resources on the site. Encourage the clustering of residential development, related to the subdivision of existing farmland and forests, to facilitate the preservation of open space and maintenance of productive land.



Water quality was identified as the most important preservation initiative in the 2008 survey

4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

2. Work with local land trusts and other non-profit organizations to encourage voluntary protection of critical habitats, productive agricultural land and other important open spaces. Support stewardship programs and related funding that advances the efforts of landowners who want to be good stewards.
3. Protect surface water and ground water, including wetlands, from pollution and contamination. Require that runoff and erosion be adequately controlled during all stages of development. Evaluate existing stormwater management facilities in Vergennes and identify structural improvements that would enhance water quality through better stormwater collection and treatment.
4. Work with local and state officials, non-profit organizations and citizens to implement a program to monitor and assess water quality in the city, particularly the Otter Creek. Identify specific threats to water resources and develop policies to maintain or restore ecological functions and values where necessary.
5. Update the Urban Forestry Management Plan prepared for the City of Vergennes in November 1998 to help guide the planning, planting, maintenance and removal of trees along streets in the downtown.
6. Encourage the preservation and wise use of prime agricultural soils for active agricultural use. Discourage the fragmentation of land parcels appropriately sized for productive farm use. Support small-scale, organic and other alternative farming activities to make productive use of agricultural soils and open lands.
7. Continue to identify, collect information, and educate residents about the city's natural resources and special places and enact regulations to protect them. Encourage opportunities to raise community awareness and activism through education.

8. Promote the stewardship, protection, and enhancement of our City property, which includes the trees along our streets, our parks and City Green. Seek funding through the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program and other local, state, and national agencies to prepare management plans, conduct tree inventories, perform tree maintenance and tree plantings, develop educational programs or materials, and other projects that improve our quality of life.

9. Protect critical wildlife habitat, including but not limited to rare and/or endangered species habitat, from inappropriate or destructive development and land management activities. Maintain as much contiguous, intact open space and habitat as possible, particularly along our stream corridors, to ensure suitable habitat for a variety of species.

10. Protect woody areas, specifically clayplain forests, from conversion to non-forest land use. Encourage landowners to retain as much existing, undisturbed vegetation as possible on site and/or to plant native trees and shrubs. Work with the Champlain Valley Clayplain Forest Project to conserve, restore, and promote stewardship and awareness of the threatened clayplain forest natural community.

4.2 OUR HISTORIC AND SCENIC RESOURCES

Vergennes is fortunate to have a high proportion of scenic and historic resources relative to its size, including the Otter Creek basin, 226 historic sites and structures, and three historic districts recognized by the State of Vermont Division of Historic Preservation. We recognize the value of these areas and the positive impact they have on our quality of life, tourism, and commercial development. Our City is

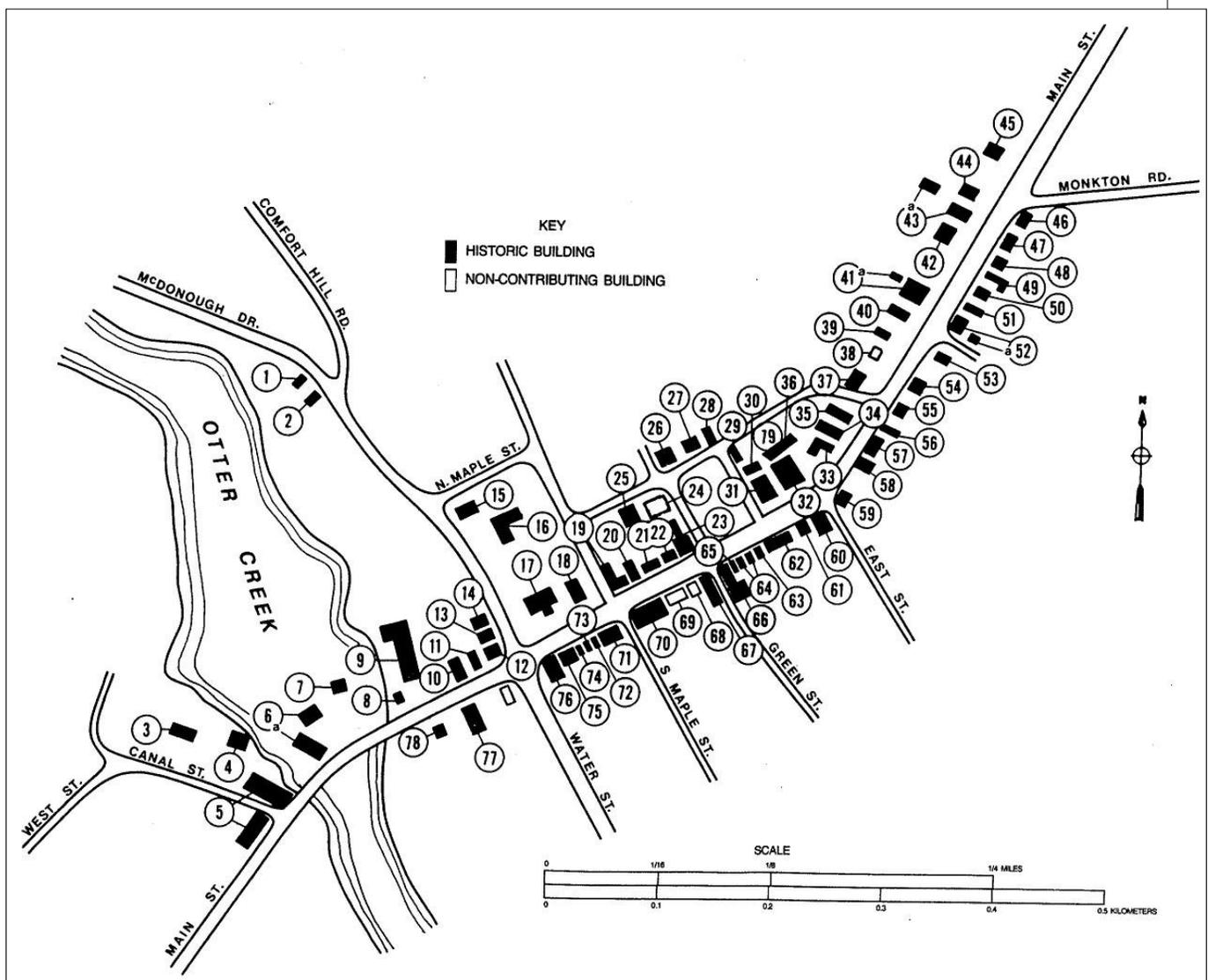


Bixby Library is one of the many historic structures in our downtown

4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

committed to protecting, enhancing, and cultivating appreciation for these resources.

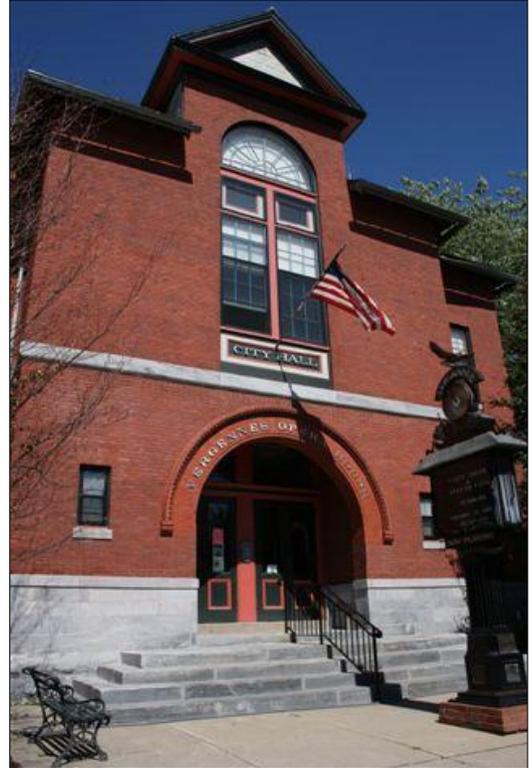
The Residential and West Main Street Historic Districts are listed in the Vermont Register of Historic Places and contain 71 and 32 sites respectively. The Vergennes (Main Street) District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and includes 78 sites from Monkton Road to Canal Street and along Macdonough Drive (see map below). It includes archaeologically sensitive areas of eighteenth and nineteenth century military occupation and fortifications.¹



Vergennes National Historic District Map from *The Historical Architecture of Addison County: Vergennes*

William, Macdonough's shipyard and two military batteries erected during the War of 1812. Archeological remains in this District receive special treatment under regulations described in the land use section of this plan.

The Vergennes Partnership was established in 1999 to support a document entitled “Shaping the Future of Downtown Vergennes.” The Partnership is our City’s downtown revitalization organization. They have positively transformed our downtown with the help of the City and property and business owners. In 2001, Vergennes became a Designated Downtown under the Vermont Downtown Program, making the City eligible for grants toward physical improvements. Businesses that make improvements to historic buildings are eligible for tax credits due to this designation. Historic attractions have been highlighted and downtown buildings reclaimed and restored. The overall vitality has attracted new restaurants, stores, residents, and tourists. The historic Vergennes Opera House (pictured at right) is perhaps the best and most well-known symbol of this significant transformation.



We are proud of Vergennes’ sense of place, which is not only the result of the built environment, but also our scenic resources, economic opportunities, and civic life. Defining and celebrating our sense of place enables our community to retain links to our past, maintain our traditions (including quality of life), and bring economic benefits through increased property values and tourism. It connects people with each other, with the community, and with the surrounding landscape. As part of our 2008 survey, our community has identified several critical scenic and historic resources. These are outlined in the table that follows:

4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

Table 1. Critical Resource Inventory

1. Otter Creek Falls and River (scenic/recreation)	15. Factory Marketplace on Main Street (adaptive reuse of historic building)
2. Vergennes Falls Park on the Otter Creek (scenic/recreation)	16. Macdonough Park on the Otter Creek (recreation)
3. City Green at the center of the downtown (scenic/cultural/historic)	17. Shade Roller Building (historic factory building)
4. Activities on the City Green (seasonal events)	18. Potash Brook and Ravine (natural and scenic resource)
5. Main Street (historic homes and streetscape)	19. Skyline/Cityscape as visual backdrop from Rte 7 (scenic)
6. Hopkins Road (scenic)	20. Downtown Streetscape (historic architecture and development pattern)
7. Water Street (historic streetscape)	21. Views to Comfort Hill (scenic)
8. City Hall/Opera House (historic architecture and performing arts/events space)	22. Views of Falls (scenic)
9. Job Corps Buildings (historic architecture)	23. Main St. Mansion Row (historic buildings/settlement pattern)
10. Stevens House (historic architecture)	24. Federal Historic District (historic buildings/settlement pattern)
11. Churches and Steeples (architectural landmarks)	25. Views to Adirondacks (scenic)
12. Pumphouse and Island (historic architecture and site)	26. River Walk (recreation/scenic)
13. Bixby Library (historic architecture and cultural center)	27. Parades and City Events (cultural life of the City)
14. Water Tower (visual landmark)	28. Strong House (historic architecture)

These critical resources define how people feel about our community and influence whether or not people want to visit, move to, live in or locate their business here. Our sense of place is

integral to the City’s long-term economic development strategies, and reinforces the livability, stability and vitality of the community. Vergennes must maintain this physical and visual character and manage and protect its critical resources in an appropriate manner to continue to attract new residents, new businesses and new visitors to ensure a sustainable future.

“The utility lines on Main Street have been removed, and the sidewalks repaired. The City Green remains a hub of social meeting and recreation. Historic buildings retain their unique architecture and are financially stable.”

~ 2008 City Plan Survey Respondent on how Vergennes would look 25 years from now

The Future of Our Historic and Scenic Resources

Goal

To maintain and preserve our historic resources and protect our special and valued sense of place.

Policies

1. Preserve, protect and manage the historic, scenic, and cultural resources outlined in Table 1 of this section. Ensure that any new development proposed in or adjacent to these identified locations is designed to complement and not detract from those resources. Establish an appropriate mechanism for the protection of these resources (e.g. through the development review process; easements; outright purchase; etc.). Develop and offer incentives for the protection of these resources.
2. Periodically review and update Table 1 to reflect changing land uses and public attitudes. Create a map and/or photographic inventory to provide a comprehensive and accessible catalog of critical resources to local officials, developers, and residents.
3. Revisit the Main Street Revitalization Plan and enhance, expand and revise as necessary or appropriate. Identify funding and other needed resources to accomplish improvements or maintain resource qualities and continue to implement recommended actions.
4. Encourage, promote, and develop walking tours, beautification efforts, summer festivals, theater performances and other events to bring residents and visitors into the downtown and basin areas.
5. Protect existing trees that define our streetscape and sense of place. Develop and promote a tree-planting program to replace existing trees and plant new ones. Seek the support of the Vermont Arbor and Community Forestry Program for management assistance and funding sources.

4. Protecting Our Natural Heritage

6. Provide information and technical assistance to homeowners to maintain, renovate, and restore historic dwellings in keeping with their history, including a list of public and private historic preservation experts who can provide detailed advice on restoration or construction projects.

7. Ensure that sign standards (i.e. number, height, material, lighting and size) are not detrimental to the visual quality of our city.



8. Electrical distribution, transmission facilities, and other utility development and upgrades shall not have an undue adverse impact on the character of the city or on existing views of the critical resources outlined in Table 1. Encourage and support the burial of utilities where feasible and cost effective.

9. Utilize federal, state, and local funding programs for developing and preserving our historic, cultural, and scenic assets.

5. Caring for Our Land

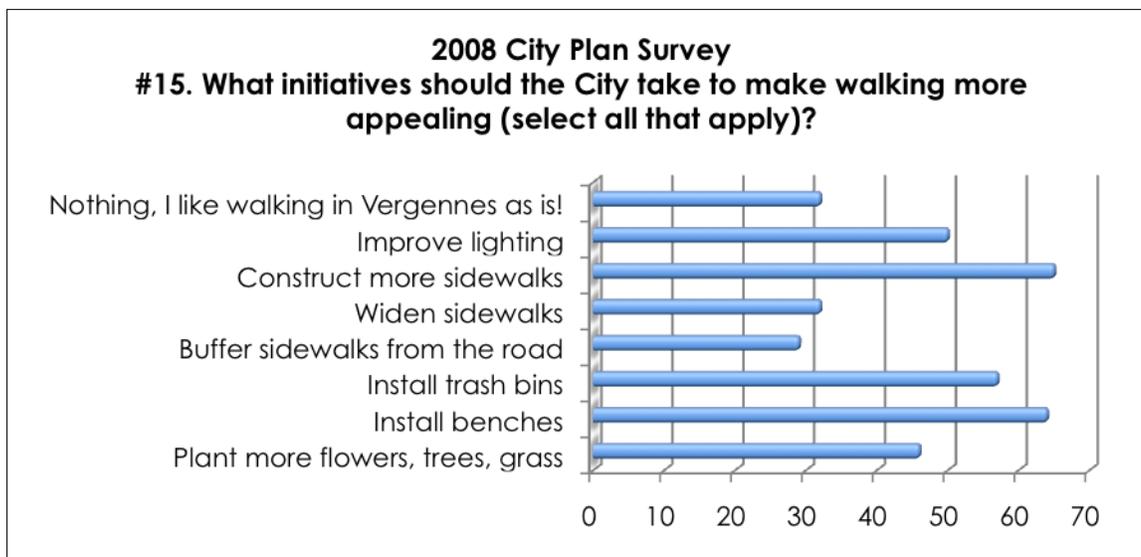
Roads in Vergennes fall into the listed legal categories as follows:

	ROADS	MILES
Class 1	Main Street (Route 22A), West Main Street (Route 22A), New Haven Road, Green Street (Main Street to New Haven Road)	2.850
Class 2	Panton Road, Monkton Road, Green Street (New Haven Road to City line), South Maple Street, Macdonough Drive	3.740
Class 3	All other roads	7.810
Class 4	Undeveloped Roads	0.130
	TOTAL MILES	14.530

The annual State Aid allocation for 2013-2014 was as follows:

Class 1	\$ 31,957.76
Class 2	\$ 15,408.68
Class 3	\$ 12,097.72

An extensive sidewalk system exists in the downtown and throughout much of the city, where historic settlement patterns reflect a pedestrian scale and orientation. Several crosswalks are provided along Main Street and signs are posted for vehicles to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians. The City has an ongoing program of sidewalk replacement and street maintenance,



and City employees do much of this capital improvement and repair work themselves, using subcontractors as needed. Opportunities to enhance the sidewalk system include better

defining and strengthening pedestrian crosswalks, extending sidewalks, enhancing streetscape, and improving pedestrian signage.

In March 2006, a *Multi-Use Path and Planning Feasibility Study* was completed that examined the feasibility of developing a pedestrian and bicycle facility from the Park and Ride lot along U.S. Route 7 to New Haven Road to the Eagles Club where the City sidewalk system ends. The study also looked at the possibility of extending the sidewalk along the eastern side of Main Street to Kennedy Brothers, Champlain Discount Foods, and the train station and Park and Ride lot. There is currently a lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the eastern side of the city leading out to these key destinations.



Route 22A also serves as Main Street through our downtown, where pedestrian activity and safety is a concern

A *Sidewalk and Bridge Modification Feasibility Study* was completed in

August 2007, which identified alternatives to better accommodate pedestrians along Route 22A (Main Street) from Canal Street to Macdonough Drive/Water Street. Currently, there is a five-foot sidewalk on the south side of Route 22A, including a sidewalk on the bridge. However, there is no sidewalk on the north side of the bridge and pedestrians must cross Route 22A on either end to reconnect with pedestrian facilities on the north side of the road. In order for pedestrians to access the Grist Mill and Pumphouse Island, they must cross Route 22A in the middle of the bridge, which is of concern to pedestrians and motorists alike. Due to the Otter Creek basin's recreational activities and planned expansion, it will be increasingly important to address these safety issues and to provide safe and efficient access.

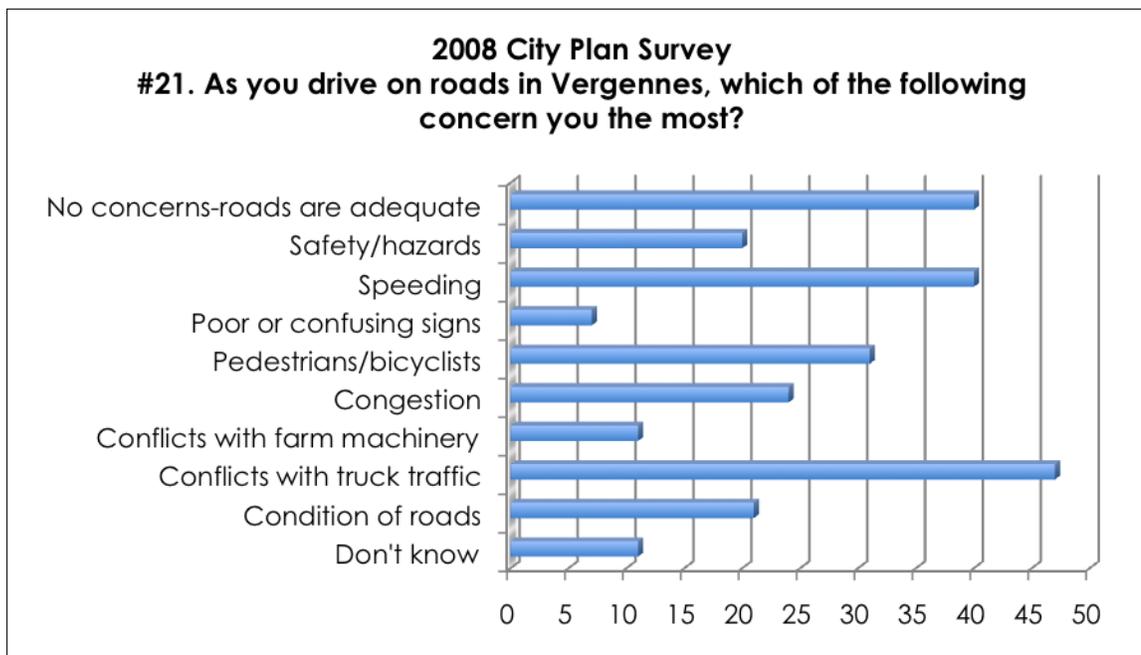
"Construct better walkways from downtown to the falls."
 ~ 2008 City Plan Survey Respondent on how to make walking more appealing

5. Caring for Our Land

In 2012, students enrolled in Middlebury College's Environmental Studies Senior Seminar produced a study titled "Cultivating Community through Sustainable Transportation: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements in Vergennes, VT". The complete study can be found as an appendix to this plan. The study recommends a number of improvements that echo and amplify many of the ideas proposed in the earlier studies mentioned above.

The Vermont Railroad and its freight service also serve Vergennes. The Vergennes/Ferrisburgh Park and Ride, located in Ferrisburgh at Kayhart Crossing, includes a bus stop and plans to create a multi-modal facility with a visitors' center in the relocated and restored historic Vergennes train station, as well as a connection to walking paths, and bikeways.

Addison County Transportation Resources (ACTR) and Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) provide public bus transportation, connecting downtown Vergennes with Middlebury, Bristol and Burlington. Vergennes is also served by Vermont Transit Bus Company and is part of the Greyhound Bus network.



The Future of Our Transportation Network

Goal

To promote a safe, efficient, and cost-effective multi-modal transportation system that provides for the needs of our community and respects the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and multi-use paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

Policies

1. Maintain or improve the current level of service on all roads in Vergennes and give priority to maintenance and rehabilitation of roads that are experiencing increased traffic.
2. Identify and address parking deficiencies. Prepare and implement a downtown parking plan, including the creation and implementation of loading areas that would not create traffic hazards on Main Street, and a requirement of a parking plan for new development.
3. Develop and incorporate a long-term road improvement program that accounts for potential impacts from development. Identify key intersections for improvement.
4. Develop and implement an enhancement plan for the gateways identified in the Land Use section of this plan.
5. Work to support improvements in rail service by state and federal agencies and the private sector in order to:
 - Divert hazardous materials from the downtown area.
 - Support local businesses and industrial lands located on the rail line.
 - Extend passenger rail service to Vergennes as a component of economic revitalization if feasible.

5. Caring for Our Land

What is Access Management?

Access management is the careful planning, design and location of driveways, medians and other street connections to public roadways in order to manage traffic flow and safety, preserve the carrying capacity of the road, and implement coordinated land use and transportation plans.

Access management includes **several techniques** that are designed to increase the capacity of roads, manage congestion, and reduce crashes, which include but not limited to:

- Driveway location, spacing, and design;
- Use of exclusive turning lanes;
- Median treatments, including landscaped medians that prevent movements across a roadway;
- Use of service and frontage roads; and
- Land use policies that limit right-of-way access to highways.

Access management can bring significant **benefits to the community**, such as:

- Postponing or preventing the need for costly highway improvements;
- Improving safety conditions along a roadway;
- Reducing congestion and delays;
- Providing property owners with safe access to the highway;
- Promoting desirable land use patterns; and,
- Making pedestrian and bicycle travel safer.

~Derived from the Federal Highway Administration website:
http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/access_mgmt/index.htm

~See also the [Access Management Guidebook](#) prepared by Elizabeth Humstone and Julie Campoli for the Northwest Regional Planning

6. Provide a range of transportation options, including roads, transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, to accommodate Vergennes' current and anticipated population. Focus on improved pedestrian and bicycle friendly development. Support the development and expansion of the Ferrisburgh Multi-Modal Transportation Facility.
7. Improve and expand the City's system of sidewalks and recreational pedestrian/bike paths, including the provision of signage to facilitate its use. Encourage new development to implement "pedestrian-friendly" designs and to integrate into the City's existing pedestrian network. Evaluate and propose changes to the local regulations and ordinances that will give greater effect to this policy.
8. Work with VTrans to implement traffic calming measures (i.e. bump-outs, textured crosswalks, "green" strips), especially in our downtown, in order to create a safe, pedestrian friendly environment. Identify key areas in the downtown that would benefit from traffic calming measures.
9. Promote use of access management techniques, like shared driveways and parking, and carefully review traffic patterns, access points, and parking areas proposed for new development or redevelopment to ensure coordination between adjacent uses. Restrict the number of curb cuts per parcel to one, or none if alternative access exists

through a secondary road or a shared driveway, where applicable.

10. Participate in Act 250 and other state review processes for projects that would affect the City's road network.

11. Actively seek to fund and implement in a timely manner, through public or private funding, the preferred alternatives and recommendations identified in the *Sidewalk and Bridge Modification Feasibility Study*, as well as the *Multi-Use Path and Planning Feasibility Study*.

5.2 OUR LAND USE

Character of the Area

Since its incorporation in 1788, our city has maintained a distinct and traditional New England development pattern of a centralized downtown, arranged around a common green, and surrounded by compact residential neighborhoods. Another favored aspect of our traditional small city is the open space that exists around the edges and scattered throughout the community. Industry at the falls and lower basin of the Otter Creek was the primary driving force for the establishment and pattern of development in Vergennes, and it has been growing and evolving ever since. Gradually, compact residential development, with some commercial/industrial uses, were built along the major roads leading out of the city. Between these roads were open areas consisting of farms, forested lands, and the Otter Creek with its steeply sloped tributaries.

Since World War II, some of the agricultural fields developed with a more suburban pattern of housing based on the greater use of cars for mobility. Development in these

The principal characteristics of a **traditional New England development pattern** include the following features:

- compactness and tighter form
- higher density
- "downtown" centers with street-edge buildings, mixed-uses, gathering places, public buildings, parks, and other open spaces
- commercial premises meeting everyday needs (grocery, newsagent, drugstore, hardware, etc.)
- residential neighborhoods close to the downtown center, sometimes with house lots abutting commercial premises
- civic open spaces within and rural open space at edges
- pedestrian-friendly but also auto-accessible
- streets scaled for typical uses (rather than being oversized and over-engineered to accommodate "worst-case scenarios")
- incremental growth outward from core

~Excerpt from *Rural by Design: Maintaining Small Town Character*, pg. 4

5. Caring for Our Land

In order to protect our open spaces, promote and enhance our downtown, provide adequate and affordable housing options, and offer more transportation choices, the City promotes the following **Land Use Principles** to encourage well-planned growth:

- Define a mix of land use districts and objectives that accurately reflect the community's diverse character
- Provide standards and incentives to encourage quality development and redevelopment consistent with community character
- Provide for a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Promote and enhance walkable neighborhoods
- Foster a distinctive, attractive community with a strong sense of place
- Preserve the community's natural, cultural and historic resources
- Guide growth that reflects the community's capacity and plans for infrastructure and services
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Administer City plans and regulations in a manner that is fair, predictable and in full compliance with its standards
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

~derived from the *Smart Growth Network*

neighborhoods has been less compact with bigger yards and deeper setbacks from the street. Although slowly suburbanizing, there still remains a substantial amount of open space within our small city.

Our current pattern of development continues to allow easy access and transition between the natural areas, agricultural fields, residential neighborhoods, and the downtown core. From this development pattern, there are areas of the community that have achieved a unique, recognizable character that is different from neighboring areas. These differences may be the result of topography, age and style of housing, built environment, land use patterns, landscaping, street patterns, open space, or streetscapes. By defining the special character of these areas, it offers an expression of our community goals and priorities and helps guide the decision-making of our local, regional and state leaders. The special and unique neighborhoods that have developed over time and help characterize our city are defined in the next section.

Our Land Use Designations

Our city anticipates, and welcomes, well-planned growth and development in the years to come – primarily in the form of infill, adaptive reuse and redevelopment. In an effort to facilitate future growth, and to continue to encourage appropriate densities and land use patterns within our city, we have defined the following districts or land use categories (see Land Use Districts Map):

Agricultural and Rural Residential District (AGR)

The Agricultural and Rural Residential District (AGR) encompasses two considerable areas of undeveloped and agriculturally significant lands that remain open in Vergennes. These areas also provide an attractive and valuable gateway into our community when arriving from the south on Route 22A, or from Ferrisburgh in the north along Comfort Hill and Macdonough Drive.

The largest area of this district covers much of the northwest quadrant of the city and is bordered on the east by Potash Brook, on the north and west sides by the town of Ferrisburgh, and by Otter Creek to the south. These lands are primarily prime agricultural soils that are still hayed. There are some forested lands here too, as well as at least three significant wetlands.



Farms and views along Comfort Hill illustrate the rural development pattern in this district

The other significant area covers much of the southwest quadrant of the city, and is bordered by Otter Creek on one side, Route 22A on another, and by the town of Panton on the third side. The land is characterized by fields that are still cultivated for hay as well as floodplain and wetlands that are situated closer to the river. The soils are considered to be agriculturally significant by the state.

The open lands in the AGR offer natural habitat, scenic beauty, and help to clearly define the transition between the rural countryside and the city. This clear demarcation between rural and city is an important characteristic of the traditional New England style of land use, and contributes greatly to what tourists from all over the world come to see in Vermont.

5. Caring for Our Land

The **purpose** of our Agricultural and Rural Residential (AGR) District is to preserve and maintain the rural character of open lands and to protect and promote viable agriculture, important scenic vistas and landscapes, open spaces, passive recreational values and other natural, cultural and environmental resources. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Uses in this district shall include agricultural with outdoor recreational and agricultural accessory uses permitted as conditional uses.
- One-family residential development shall also be permitted in the AGR, which does not adversely impact our city's natural and scenic resources. Where residential units do occur, clustering of development in combination with the establishment of conservation areas is required as a condition of permit approval in order to preserve open space, agrarian use, and the natural resources present in this district.
- To ensure residential development does not result in fragmentation of critical resources and maintains an overall low-density development pattern in the district, dimensional requirements should be developed in the zoning regulations that specify minimum density in coordination with maximum lot size. For example, if a minimum density of 1 unit/5 acres is established in conjunction with a maximum lot size of 2 acres, then a 25 acre parcel would be permitted 5 units, but those 5 units would need to be situated on no more than 10 acres, whereby leaving the remaining 15 acres as undeveloped open space.
- All development, buildings and structures (including roads and utilities) in the AGR District must be sited in a manner that maximizes or preserves the site's most productive or potentially productive land (e.g. prime agricultural soils), minimizes fragmentation of critical resources (scenic views, farmland, forestland, wetlands, or other open land) and maintains as much contiguous open space as possible (e.g. buildings on different parcels shall locate on the same edge of a field or adjacent to already developed parcels).

Low Density Residential District (LDR)

Two areas bordering the AGR District in the southwest quadrant of the city are classified as a Low Density Residential District to allow for more intensive development.

The **purpose** of designating the Low Density Residential District is to allow for additional clustered residential growth at the edge of the developed core of the city, while preserving the natural and scenic qualities of remaining open lands in Vergennes. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Clustered or planned unit developments (PUD) are required, except in the case of residential use as an adjunct to agricultural use.
- In addition to designated open space, development in this district shall incorporate one or more areas of formal recreational open space, such as a neighborhood green, park, or playground.
- Uses in this district are limited to agricultural and one-family residential uses, with outdoor recreational and agricultural accessory uses permitted as conditional uses.
- The LDR shall only include the two areas of land described above and as identified on the Land Use Districts map. No additional parcels or pieces of land in the city of Vergennes may be added to or classified as a part of the LDR.

Historic Neighborhood District (HN)

The Historic Neighborhood District (HN) contains several older neighborhoods dating from the 1700s through World War II, which are located adjacent to the downtown. These high-density neighborhoods are fully developed and are typically characterized by a number of historic homes, usually with small lots, short setbacks and yard depths, and tree-lined sidewalks. Pedestrian access to the downtown is easy from these neighborhoods, perhaps with the exception of West Main Street residents' access over the Otter Creek Bridge.



Historic homes in this district help tell the story of our City's history

5. Caring for Our Land

Preserving or protecting historic sites and structures was identified as being important by 78.6% of 2008 survey respondents.

The buildings, structures and sites in this district are important in portraying our city's history, architecture, culture and community spirit. Some of the residences immediately adjacent to major streets and to the downtown have experienced pressure to convert to commercial uses or multiple-family residential uses. Maintaining the historic character of these neighborhoods while recognizing current economic realities will be a challenge.

The **purpose** of our Historic Neighborhood District (HN) is to distinguish our city's older neighborhoods and protect their historic value and integrity while permitting future residential development and redevelopment that is compatible with the existing historic character and development patterns of the area. The following policies shall apply to the HN District:

- All new development and redevelopment within the HN district must reflect the historic residential character and development pattern of existing neighborhoods, including density, lot coverage, setbacks, footprints, scale, mass and height.
- Dimensional standards that replicate existing historic development patterns, including higher density, shorter setbacks and yard depths, and increased lot coverage shall be maintained for this district.
- All new development and redevelopment shall uphold and respect the character-defining features and historic integrity of homes in this district including small lots, minimal setbacks, and yard depths, and tree lined sidewalks. Responsible historic preservation practices should be promoted. The demolition of historic structures is strongly discouraged and should be considered only as a last resort if no other feasible option is possible. It is specifically not the intent of this plan to regulate windows, siding, roofs, color, etc.
- The conversion of residential lots to non-residential uses is strongly discouraged in order to retain the historic character of the neighborhoods.
- Low-intensity business activity may be considered at residential scale if it fits within the character of the neighborhood and does not interfere with the quality of residential life in this district.

- The pedestrian-oriented environment shall be maintained and improved. Street trees and sidewalks should be replaced and enhanced when necessary.

On-street parking, shared parking, and public parking should all be maximized and encouraged for this district, where appropriate.

Medium Density Residential District (MDR)

The Medium Density Residential District (MDR) typically contains residential neighborhoods created after World War II, which are predominately characterized by larger, one-family houses on bigger lots with deeper setbacks, looped streets and cul-de-sacs. Most of these neighborhoods are located on major arteries leading into the city or on old farmlands further out from downtown. Some limited future development will be possible in these neighborhoods and should reflect the existing and desirable patterns of size, scale, footprint and massing.

The **purpose** of our Medium Density Residential District (MDR) is to provide suitable residential housing in areas and at densities consistent with the utilities provided, while preserving as many of the significant natural and cultural features as possible. This district may also serve as a transitional area between high intensity and lower intensity uses, or adjacent to districts of higher or lower residential densities and nonresidential uses. The following policies shall apply to the MDR District:



The MDR district is characterized by primarily residential development with larger setbacks and lot sizes

- Density, lot coverage, setbacks, footprints, scale, mass and height are expected to reflect and maintain the development pattern of the neighborhood.

5. Caring for Our Land

- Larger homes shall be designed and sited in a manner that reflects and is sensitive to the scale and massing of the existing or desired neighborhood patterns and to reduce the overall bulk and visual impact of new residences.
- The pedestrian-oriented environment shall be maintained, improved and extended. Street trees and sidewalks should be established where feasible and appropriate.
- Conversion of one-family dwellings to two-family or multiple-family dwellings or commercial uses shall be limited in order to retain the character of the neighborhoods.
- Low-intensity business activity will be allowed at residential scale that fits within the character of the neighborhood and does not interfere with the quality of residential life in this district.
- Parking requirements shall aim to eliminate the need for on-street parking
- Preservation of open space, protection of flood prone areas, protection of wetlands and woodlands, and preservation of other natural features is encouraged.
- New subdivision developments should provide an area of common open space, such as a park or playground.

High Density Residential District (HDR)

The High Density Residential District (HDR) is comprised of areas that are generally undeveloped, close to older sections of the city, can be serviced by public utilities, and generally held in large parcels. However, these vacant lands generally have one or more limitations that require careful site and building design including severe topography, utility locations, as well as areas of significant natural resources.



The vacant lands in this district generally have limitations that require careful siting and design

The **purpose** of our High Density Residential District (HDR) is to allow the continuation and expansion of residential and related uses while permitting higher clustered densities to

accommodate topographical and natural resource constraints. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Existing vegetation, buffers, and woodlands, particularly along roadsides and critical view corridors, shall be retained and careful site planning shall be employed to maintain natural-like setting, and to ensure that new development does not adversely impact scenic resources, hillsides, and shorelines.
- Due to limitations of severe topography in this district, it is expected that development will occur through planned unit development (PUD) guidelines and shall include performance standards regarding light, sun exposure, privacy, provision for recreational open space, noise control, utility and vehicular servicing, egress and other planning and design factors stipulated by the Act.
- Permitted uses in this district are limited to one- and two-family dwellings.
- Multiple-family dwellings and other uses shall be allowed by conditional use and will require site plan review and performance standards to limit impact on environmental resources and to ensure their compatibility with the prevailing character of the neighborhood.
- Parking requirements shall aim to eliminate the need for on-street parking.

Residential/Limited Business District (RLB)

The Residential/Limited Business District (RLB) contains a mix of commercial uses and older historical residences, which extends in two parts along both sides of Main Street from 1) City Hall to Monkton Road, and 2) as a transition from the eastern Main Street edge of the Medium Density Residential District (MDR) to the Northern Gateway District (NG). Large historical residential buildings, many of them



Large historic residences in this district have been converted into professional offices and apartments

5. Caring for Our Land

mansions built in the 1800s, and a tree-lined streetscape, are distinctive features in the RLB. Long, narrow yards behind the buildings on the north side of the street extend to the steep slopes of Potash Brook. Because of the large size of some of these buildings, it has been difficult to maintain occupancy, and some have been converted to offices, professional services, and apartments. It is an area in transition, but is also a vital part of the northern entrance to the city. Maintaining the historical integrity of the buildings and streetscape will be a challenge over the next years. There are also three parcels on Meigs Road included in this district as they fit the character of the Residential/Limited Business District. These parcels would be considered non-conforming uses if they were to be included in the surrounding Industrial District.”

The **purpose** of our Residential/Limited Business District (RLB) is to provide a transition between commercial uses and residential uses, while preserving the historic character of this established residential neighborhood. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Development shall be focused on creating a mix of residential and small business uses that maximize use of the buildings and preserve their historic character.
- Conversion of older homes shall be permitted into the following uses: one-family dwelling, two-family dwelling, home occupation, and enclosed accessory use.
- Other uses may be allowed after issuance of conditional use approval by the Development Review Board providing they maintain historic character of the neighborhood. Appropriate

examples include: multiple-family dwelling, medical services, clinic or nursing home, professional studio, professional office, professional service, office, boarding house, bed and breakfast, and inn.

Central Business District (CBD)

Much of our Central Business District (CBD) is designated on the National Register as a Historic District and has received designation by the State as a Downtown Development District, which entitles us to a number of

“We have a small, vibrant downtown with a mix of retail, restaurant, and professional services. People can walk or bike almost anywhere in town. The neighbors are friendly and look out for one another and feel safe raising their families here. There are beautiful open public spaces at the waterfront for the community to enjoy outdoor activities like canoeing, kayaking, and picnicking.”

~2008 City Plan Survey Respondent on how Vergennes would look 25 years from now

special benefits. Many buildings are multiple storied and were established primarily in the 19th century. Uses consist of a mix of stores and services, restaurants, bars, governmental services, churches, residences, and the Vergennes Opera House. Upper stories, valued for providing efficient and diverse use of our limited downtown land area are used primarily as apartments, studios, and offices. The historic, commercial, and aesthetic character of the downtown remains intact and is a vital component of what attracts both residents and visitors to our city. The maintenance, improvement, and further utilization of these historic buildings, as well as the streetscape and the City Green, are very important to our future and every effort shall be made to preserve them.

The **purpose** of the Central Business District (CBD) is to promote the development and redevelopment of the downtown core and to foster an economically healthy commercial district that is vibrant, walkable, clean, safe, and sustainable. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- Development and redevelopment shall preserve and enhance the unique and historic character of our livable downtown.
- Standards shall be established for all development and redevelopment in the CBD that help maintain the look, feel, and scale of our current downtown. It is specifically not the intent of this plan to regulate windows, siding, roofs, color, etc.
- Small lot sizes, high-density development, and minimal setbacks are required for development and redevelopment.
- Building heights shall be maintained similar to those seen historically on any given lot. For undeveloped lots, no building shall be less than two stories. Parking requirements for commercial uses in existing and proposed high bulk buildings shall be considered for waiver. For multiple-family buildings and where parking



The CBD has historically been the commercial center of the community

5. Caring for Our Land

requirements are not waived on commercial structures, ownership of private accessory lots, within a reasonable distance of the primary lot, may be considered for parking.

- Textured crosswalks with bump-outs where pedestrians cross are encouraged.
- Residential uses are prohibited at the ground level, except where no portion of the residential use is at the front of the building and visible from the street. Residential apartments in combination with professional or artistic businesses as a conditional use shall be encouraged, above ground-floor commercial uses.
- There should be a variety of uses in this district that provide our residents with a mix of retail, commercial and professional services to meet every-day needs. Examples of appropriate uses includes: retail store, retail service, personal service, professional service, office, financial institution, club, indoor recreation, public assembly, restaurant, bar, hotel, public and semi-public uses, and enclosed storage as an accessory use.

Commercial District (COM)

There are three separate areas of our city outside of downtown that are not appropriate for industry, but have served commercial need in Vergennes. These commercial areas lie on major streets and junctures: (1) Monkton Road and Main Street, (2) along New Haven Road, just south of Green Street, and (3) at the termination of Armory Lane, which includes the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh shopping complex. Their uses require vehicular loading and carefully designed parking and street access. The businesses provide vital services that help to keep our city a destination point for northern Addison County residents.

The **purpose** of our Commercial District (COM) is to provide for low intensity retail, service, business, office, and entertainment uses which complement, enhance, and support residential and other vital uses and services. The following polices shall apply to this district:



Businesses in this district serve a necessary purpose in the City, like the Merchants Bank seen here

- Development and redevelopment shall not create an undue burden with adjacent residential areas.
- Ensure that site requirements and amenities, including vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation and parking, landscaping, sensitive areas protection, lighting, public areas, utilities, and other necessary and desirable elements are integral parts of all commercial projects.
- Unless authorized by the Development Review Board, all business, servicing, storage or processing shall be conducted within a completely enclosed building except where the nature of the activity makes it impossible, for example, off-street loading, automobile parking for customers while on the premises, and the sale of automobile fuel at service stations.
- Performance standards shall be applied for the general health, safety and welfare of the area and any effect on the amenity of adjacent or nearby residential area. This means that uses, processes, or equipment employed shall be limited to those which are not objectionable by reasons of odor, dust, bright lights, smoke, noise or vibrations.
- All commercial uses in this district require conditional use review.

Northern Gateway District (NG)

The Northern Gateway District (NG) is located at the north end of Main Street encompassing the Kennedy Brothers Marketplace from the railroad tracks, extending south to the Vergennes Animal Hospital. It includes a combination of professional offices, retail, and service uses, some residences, and the new police station.

Development of individual parcels in the Marketplace area has been relatively disconnected from each other and the downtown, especially in regard to road access, pedestrian connection to the Park and Ride and the positioning of the electric power substation. This district is the “gateway” into our city from the north.



The NGD is a “gateway” into the City and includes a mix of land uses that welcome residents and visitors

5. Caring for Our Land

The **purpose** of our Northern Gateway District (NG) is to provide a compatible mix of commercial and residential uses that welcome our residents and visitors to our city. The district should allow for the establishment of residential and low intensity retail, service, business, office, and entertainment uses which complement, enhance, and support residential uses and our downtown. Because it serves as the northern gateway into the city, development and redevelopment should be compatible with the distinct qualities and historic integrity of the settlement the traveler is about to enter. The following policies shall apply to this district:

- A mix of land uses shall be developed in the Northern Gateway District that conveys a positive image of the city to residents and visitors. Appropriate uses would include multi-level buildings that contain specialty retail stores, restaurants, galleries and studios, offices, craft shops, personal service, instructional service, lumber yards, building supply, motor vehicle sales, and similar uses.
- Flexible, performance-based zoning standards shall be maintained that allow mixed-use development in which residential uses are integrated with commercial, employment, and civic uses.
- No project or parcel shall be used entirely for residential purposes.
- Residential uses are prohibited at the ground level. Residential apartments in combination with professional or artistic businesses as a conditional use shall be encouraged above ground-floor commercial uses.
- Buildings should be designed for aesthetic appeal, pedestrian comfort, and compatibility with other land uses.
- Businesses that are proposed for existing buildings, infill locations, or as stand-alone structures must employ an architectural design that either reflects the local setting or can be demonstrated to fit in a contextual, harmonious manner with the distinct qualities and historic integrity of the City.
- Designs should produce a desirable relationship between individual buildings, the circulation systems and adjacent residential areas.
- Access points shall be clearly delineated and limited.
- Textured crosswalks with bump-outs where pedestrians cross are encouraged.

- Shared access and parking shall be promoted, with internal road connectivity within the site(s).
- Internal parking lot organization should promote efficiency, safe access and aesthetic design options that include walkways within parking lots.
- The development of visual and physical, functional and aesthetic enhancements that link, unify, welcome, and define this area as a gateway should be considered.
- Ensure that site requirements and amenities, including vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation and parking, landscaping, sensitive areas protection, lighting, public areas, utilities, and other necessary and desirable elements are integral parts of all commercial projects.
- Uses, processes, or equipment employed shall be limited to those, which are not objectionable by reasons of odor, dust, bright lights, smoke, noise or vibrations.

Industrial District (IND)

The Industrial (IND) District is located on Panton Road on the west side of the city and a small portion north of the railroad tracks in the northeast corner of the city. It comprises areas with, or adjacent to existing manufacturing on the edge of, or separated from, the densely settled areas. Existing uses include light industry, manufacturing and services. Lots are generally large in this district to allow for bigger structures, parking, storage, and buffering from adjacent uses. The area on Panton Road offers excellent business growth opportunities for our city.

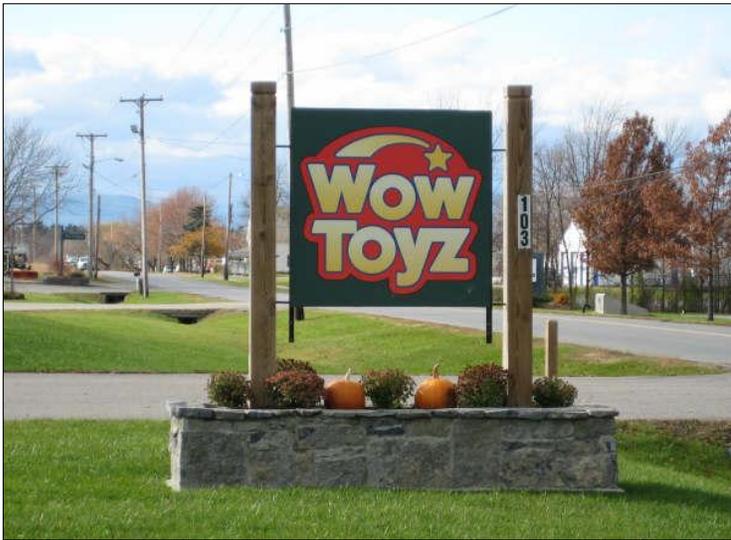
The **purpose** of our Industrial (IND) District is to support and encourage a wide range of light industrial and commercial enterprises that strengthen the economic vitality of our city while maintaining the rural character of the

LIGHT INDUSTRY: A use providing for the manufacturing predominately from previously prepared materials of finished products or parts, including research and development activities, processing, fabrication, assembly, treatment, packaging, incidental storage, sales and distribution of such products or components, but excludes basic industrial processing. Light industry activities are capable of operation in such a manner as to control the external effects of the manufacturing process, such as smoke, noise, soot, dirt, vibration, odor, etc. Finished or semi-finished products may be temporarily stored outdoors pending shipment. Examples of light industry include textile work and clothing manufacture, food processing, plastics manufacture, electronics and computer hardware manufacture, precision instrument manufacture, gemstone cutting or craft work.

5. Caring for Our Land

surrounding area and protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods from adverse impacts associated with incompatible uses. The following policies shall apply to the IND District:

- Light industrial uses help maintain and promote the economic vitality of our city and are expected to continue in this district.
- Developments shall be comparable to existing uses in the Industrial district and in keeping with Vergennes' small-city character.



One of the industrial enterprises that helps to strengthen our City's economic vitality

- No industrial use shall be permitted that is engaged in the storage or manufacturing of products or processes that are harmful to the environment or pose significant risks to our residents, such as: explosives, radioactive materials, petroleum refining, steel and iron manufacturing, rock quarrying, cement production, or paper and pulp manufacturing.
- Industrial uses engaged in the storage or manufacture of products or processes including large quantities of poisons, herbicides, pesticides or hazardous materials shall undergo a comprehensive safety and environmental impact review.
- All uses require conditional use review and approval to ensure there are no undue adverse impacts on municipal services and infrastructure, surrounding residential properties, and the character of the area.
- Review of waste water loading in terms of volume, peak and pollution shall be made part of performance standard regulations.
- Development shall be visually contained and environmental impacts minimized.

- Standards or guidelines should be developed for this district that help maintain and promote existing development patterns and uses such as guidelines for appropriate truck traffic, noise levels and hours of operation.

Public District (PUB)

Nearly twenty-five percent of our city is publicly owned. There are approximately sixty-six acres leased to the U.S. Department of Labor for Northlands Job Corps Center of the over two hundred acres owned by the State of Vermont. Vergennes owns a number of parcels for

recreation purposes, along with parcels for City Hall, the public works garage, police department and wastewater treatment plant. There is an approximate five-acre parcel owned by the Vergennes-Panton Water District in the southeast corner of the city where the concrete storage tank is located. The Vergennes Union Elementary School and the Vergennes Union High School own more than fifty acres between Monkton Road and East Street. Since the land area and capital investment in the PUB District are large, changes in use have the potential of high impact on our city. The



The City owns a number of parcels such as this one, which houses the public works

purpose of the Public District (PUB) is to provide for

the zoning and common classification of most publicly owned land within Vergennes, such as City and State facilities and offices, parks, schools and school facilities. The following policies shall apply to the PUB District:

- Any property or structure shall be for public use.
- Uses in this district shall provide direct benefits to the citizens of Vergennes, including education, municipal services, public recreation, community centers and community gardens.



The City installed a 149kW solar array on public land – see chapter 3.2 for details

5. Caring for Our Land



- Uses are subject to conditional use and development site plan review, minimum lot size and parking regulations.

Otter Creek Basin District (OCB)

The Otter Creek Basin District (OCB) occupies approximately 36 acres at the junction of Route 22A and Otter Creek.

Perhaps the most scenic area of our city, the

basin boasts one of the most beautiful falls in the state. The Otter Creek dramatically drops 37 feet at the falls, which is the last impediment to direct access to Lake Champlain. The waterpower and lake access provided by the Otter Creek influenced the economic growth of Vergennes throughout the nineteenth century. Many of the existing and past buildings were built to harness the industrial and commercial potential of the falls.

Traditionally, this area has been divided into the Upper and Lower Basin. The Upper Basin consists of the falls, the Otter Creek Bridge, Settlers' Park, and several historic buildings. Beginning in 1992, the City in collaboration with Green Mountain Power Corporation, restored the exterior of the historic Vergennes Pumphouse located in the middle of the falls, as well as rehabilitating the grounds of the surrounding area.

The Grist Mill on the falls has been restored and converted into housing and offices and there are plans to restore and convert the Shade Roller buildings on the west shore into residential units. On the east shore there is a mix of commercial and residential uses. The L. F. Benton Company building, originally the window sash factory, has seen recent renovations with two residences built on the back side and the front side used for professional service space. Settlers' Park to the southeast is used primarily as a boat launch and parking.



Currently, the Lower Basin includes a hydroelectric plant and the Green Mountain Power Corporation substation and transmission lines along the northwest shore. North of the substation are the wastewater treatment plant, public works facilities, and Vergennes Falls Park. The northeast shore has a privately owned natural area adjacent to the falls. The owner allows public access and the City has constructed a trail and footbridge here that will be connected into the rail trail being planned between the Lower Basin and the new Park and Ride lot near Route 7. This trail will connect into the upper basin through the "Gateway" improvement plans. The City now owns or controls by lease all properties from the base of the falls to the municipal docks.



North of this property is Macdonough Park. The City has reconstructed the municipal dock with the addition of floating docks, and improved electrical service, picnic sites, and potable water supply. The dock is used extensively by boaters and residents during the summer and is an important asset for the future of the city.

The **purpose** of our Otter Creek Basin District (OCB) is to encourage environmentally sensitive mixed-use development with a particular emphasis on adaptive re-use of existing historic structures and retention and expansion of recreational opportunities. This shall be accomplished by the following policies:

- The Lower Basin area is to remain open.
- Lands currently in public ownership shall remain open for public use and access.
- Development and redevelopment shall be sensitive to the unique



The improved municipal dock with floating docks, electrical service, picnic sites and potable water

5. Caring for Our Land

environmental qualities of the area and shall not detract from or create an undue adverse impact on the area. This includes impacts to historic structures and context, natural resource values, aesthetic and visual quality, and public enjoyment.

- The natural beauty of the Upper and Lower Basin shall be preserved and enhanced for public enjoyment.
- The architecture and archaeological heritage of the historic buildings in the basin shall be preserved, restored, and enhanced in order to encourage appreciation by city residents and support for cultural tourism.
- Continue to support the improved identity and prominence of the Otter Creek basin for public and private enjoyment.
- As a result of the Community Visit program held in 2014 and conducted by the Vermont Council on Rural Development, a community-based task force is being formed to explore redevelopment of the Vergennes Falls Basin and to determine the feasibility of opening a Riverwalk.
- As a result of the Community Visit program held in 2014 and conducted by the Vermont Council on Rural Development, a community-based task force is being formed to explore ways to improve transportation and parking throughout the city, including improvements to pedestrian, vehicular and educational linkages between the Upper and Lower Basins, across the Otter Creek Bridge, and between the basin and historic downtown Vergennes, Lake Champlain, and other historic place in Addison County.

Flood Hazard Overlay District (FHO)

The Flood Hazard Overlay District includes all areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as Zone A on the current Flood Insurance Map for the City of Vergennes. Details of the flood-prone area shall be as designated now or at some future date by this agency. It is the policy of this plan to prohibit new habitable or flood restrictive structures in the floodplain district and to prohibit expansions of existing structures in the floodplain. So that flood insurance protection at reasonable cost will be available to owners of improved property in the flood hazard area, it is recommended that the City maintain current flood

hazard bylaws as required by the National Flood Insurance Program. Generally, uses in the FHO should be limited to outdoor recreation, agriculture and public utilities.

The **purpose** of the FHO is to prevent increases in flooding caused by the uncontrolled development of lands in areas of special flood hazard. It is further designed to minimize losses due to floods



The FHOD generally follows the shores of the Otter Creek

by restricting or prohibiting certain uses that are dangerous in times of flood or cause excessive increase in flood heights or velocities. Land classified in an FHO shall also be classified in one or more of the other districts in this section.

Archaeological Overlay District (AO)

This archaeologically sensitive area encompasses eighteenth and nineteenth century historic sites. This district is superimposed over other land use districts.

The **purpose** of the Archaeological Overlay District is to identify Fort William (A), Macdonough's Shipyard (B) and the two, (C) and (D), assumed locations of the batteries erected during the War of 1812 (see the Land Use Districts map for these locations). The Planning Commission drafted and the City Council adopted regulations in 1985 that do not prohibit development within the district but provides for notice to the City Council or the appointed representative of any proposed development. The purpose of the regulations is to encourage the disclosure of archaeological items for the public.

The Future of Our Land

Goal

5. Caring for Our Land

To maintain and enhance our city's historic character, compact settlement pattern, beautiful environment, open spaces and strong sense of community while providing appropriate locations for residential, commercial and light industrial development.

Policies

1. Actively engage our community in the City's land use and planning efforts and regulatory process.
2. Revise and develop our zoning regulations to conform to the visions, goals and policies of this plan. In particular:
 - a. Ensure the zoning regulations to include lot sizes determined by:
 - i. planned use of the site,
 - ii. setback and density characteristics appropriate to the area,
 - iii. ability to meet dimensional standards rather than types of use,
 - iv. sound sewage, water, and air quality considerations, and
 - v. capability to support more than one dwelling on a lot.
 - b. Encourage the restoration and reuse of historic buildings and structures in the Historic Neighborhood and Central Business Districts.
 - c. Encourage development consistent with the traditional New England Development pattern.
 - d. Development in the Historic Neighborhood and Central Business Districts shall maintain the historic look, feel, and scale of these districts. This may include but is not limited to regulations for signs, lighting, architecture, site development.
 - e. Conserve and strengthen residential neighborhoods. Ensure that substantial new residential development incorporates public-gathering places on-site, and physical connections to such places off-site, to help foster a sense of community and neighborliness and unify the area.

3. Continue to protect existing uses against incompatible development and place the burden of proof on the applicant that such uses will not degrade or adversely affect adjoining properties or the character of the area.
4. Evaluate and develop plans and zoning regulation changes that seek to protect the Industrial District (IND) by prohibiting new residential development and other uses that threaten to erode the continued viability of industry within the district, and ensure industrial uses adjacent to residential areas minimize their impacts on the residential character of the area, especially with regard to through traffic, air quality, noise, and especially young children.
5. Promote the preservation of important natural resources and open space, in our city.
6. Strengthen the Otter Creek Basin District (OCB) for public access and recreational use.
7. Require buildings in all districts to have municipal water and sewer for potable purposes. Industrial uses (such as cooling) may be waived.
8. Provide for more efficient, properly sited on-site parking by incorporating shared access and shared parking in site design.
9. Proposals for formula businesses shall be required to undergo a comprehensive community and economic impact review, which includes examination of traffic, scenic and historic resources, tax revenue, city services, employment, the Central Business District, and the character of the city.
10. The Central Business District has historically been the commercial center of the community. Commercial development outside of the Central Business District must be planned and

FORMULA BUSINESS: A retail store, restaurant, hotel or other establishment that stands alone as a principal use or with another use as an accessory use, and which is required by contractual or other arrangements to maintain any one or more of the following standardized features that causes it to be substantially identical to 30 or more other businesses located within the United States, regardless of the ownership of those businesses: name; if food is served, menu, ingredients, uniforms; trademark; logo; symbol; architectural design; signage; color scheme; merchandise, or any other similar standardized features.

5. Caring for Our Land

designed in a manner that complements downtown businesses.

11. In order to protect our fragile resources and to maintain our community character, the (commercial) extraction and processing of earth resources such as topsoil, sand, and gravel is prohibited in all districts.

6. RESPECTING OUR NEIGHBORS

6.1 COMPATIBILITY WITH THE REGION

Vergennes is a regional center for employment, housing, education, social services, industry and commerce for much of the northern half of Addison County and the southern portion of Chittenden County. In general, the policies and strategies of the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan are compatible with those adopted by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission on December 14, 2011. Some elements of the regional database and policy directives have been used in the preparation of the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan. To highlight a few of the Addison County Regional Plan elements, the Vergennes Municipal Development Plan concurs with the importance of maintaining a strong downtown, preserving the natural resources in the Otter Creek Basin, and the historic structures in the city, and supporting inter-modal transportation by road, water and rail. Vergennes is an active member of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and will continue to participate in its deliberations and utilize its staff resources as needed.

Vergennes borders the towns of Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham (see aerial photo on the following page). The Ferrisburgh highway commercial district on the city's east side along Route 7 and its industrial corridor to the north generally concur with this plan for city land use. As so in Panton, residential densities along the southern and western borders are generally compatible, each supporting low density residential or agricultural uses. Lastly in Waltham, highway commercial and residential districts adjoining the city's southeast border are compatible with the medium density residential and public districts proposed in this plan. Vergennes is thriving and growing in the midst of a vibrant revival of appreciation for small and connected communities, surrounded by the model landscape that is Addison County. We look forward to what may come.

6. Respecting Our Neighbors



APPENDIX

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Vermont Council on Rural Development - Vergennes Community Visit Report	