

Appendix D

Analysis of Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Constraints



Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan

Task 1: Analysis of Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Constraints

December 23, 2015

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Introduction

The City of Vergennes has evolved into a livable, attractive city with a growing economy. The downtown districts provide all the goods and services needed for local residents and employees, as well as high quality destinations that attract Vermonters from throughout the region. Tourism is a growing sector of the economy as Vergennes is increasingly recognized as a “must see” place for travelers. The Otter Creek Basin, the Falls, and downtown Vergennes are all major tourism draws for the City. However, potential economic benefits are not being realized due to lack of connections between these assets. Although the gap between the downtown and Basin has been considered numerous times, an effective and realistic solution has eluded the City, and it is becoming a more critical obstacle to livability and sustained economic growth.

The City of Vergennes Downtown and Basin Master Plan (the Plan) sets forth a vision and direction for realizing the economic and development potential of the Otter Creek Basin and downtown Vergennes. It is a direct outgrowth of the 2014 *Vergennes Community Visit* by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). The Plan has three major objectives:

- Improving the transportation connections between the Basin and downtown
- Developing the Basin’s draw as a recreation destination
- Identifying economic development issues and opportunities through a market analysis

The project is funded by a Strong Communities, Better Connections (SCBC) grant from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD). The goal of the SCBC program is to encourage communities to proactively coordinate land use decisions and transportation investments. Matching funds are provided by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) and the City of Vergennes.

This study involves four tasks:

- Task 1: Analyzing existing conditions, opportunities, and constraints in transportation, the Basin area, economic development, land use, and market potential
- Task 2: Identifying project priorities through public input
- Task 3: Developing an implementation plan
- Task 4: Developing the final master plan

This report summarizes Task 1 and presents:

- Vision
- Background and context
- Public involvement process
- Economic development opportunities
- Issues and recommendations
- Next steps

Plan Vision



A vision statement is an important backdrop to guide the project and ensure that it maintains a consistent course throughout its development. This plan aims to accomplish the following vision for Vergennes:

To realize the economic potential of Vergennes' assets by strengthening the connection between the Downtown and Otter Creek Basin, improving multi-modal opportunities, street design, and recreational opportunities.

Background and Context

The original Basin Plan developed by LandWorks and Otter Creek Engineering spurred a number of initiatives from developing signage, improvements to Falls Park, and a stairway from Main Street to the riverfront park. There is still much to be done and strengthening the connections from the riverfront to the heart of the city and its historic green is important for commerce, tourism and to enhance the quality of life for those who work and reside in the City.

The *Vergennes Community Visit* report recommended the creation of task forces to move projects and initiatives forward. Two of the task forces, the Basin and Riverside Task Force and the Transportation Task Force, have been very active in advancing ideas and concepts, and they have been considered in this master plan as well.

A project Steering Committee has helped to guide the plan throughout its development. The Steering Committee is comprised of a diverse group of City leaders and Task Force members and helps to ensure coordination with others throughout the City.

- William Benton, Mayor
- Mel Hawley, City Manager
- Renny Perry, City Council and Vergennes Partnership
- Shannon Haggett, Planning Commission
- Shanon Atkins, Vergennes Partnership
- Mike Winslow, Basin and Riverside Task Force
- Greg Edwards, Transportation Task Force

A map of the study area is shown in Figure 1. Vergennes has a direct conduit to Lake Champlain via Otter Creek and can therefore tap into the economic potential of boaters. Additionally, the Lake Champlain Bikeway traverses the area and is a key regional bicycle connection. The Weeks School/Northlands Job Corps Master Planning project has been going on at the same time as this Downtown-Basin Master Plan, and every effort to coordinate the two has been made.

Green Mountain Power (GMP) owns the hydroelectric dam at Vergennes Falls and much of the adjacent property, including Settlers Park. The dam at Vergennes Falls has been referred to as the birthplace of GMP. The City leases

the land on the east side of Otter Creek between Potash Brook and the Falls; the City owns the land between Potash Brook and the house on the north side of the docks. Burchfield Management Company owns several buildings in the Basin area including the Grist Mill and Shade Roller factory.

Wifi service is planned to be extended to the Basin area this year. Cross sections of the roadways in the study area are included in Attachment A and show the width of the paved area and sidewalks. The Transportation Task Force is undertaking a sidewalk inventory to assess the condition of Vergennes sidewalks and gaps in the network.

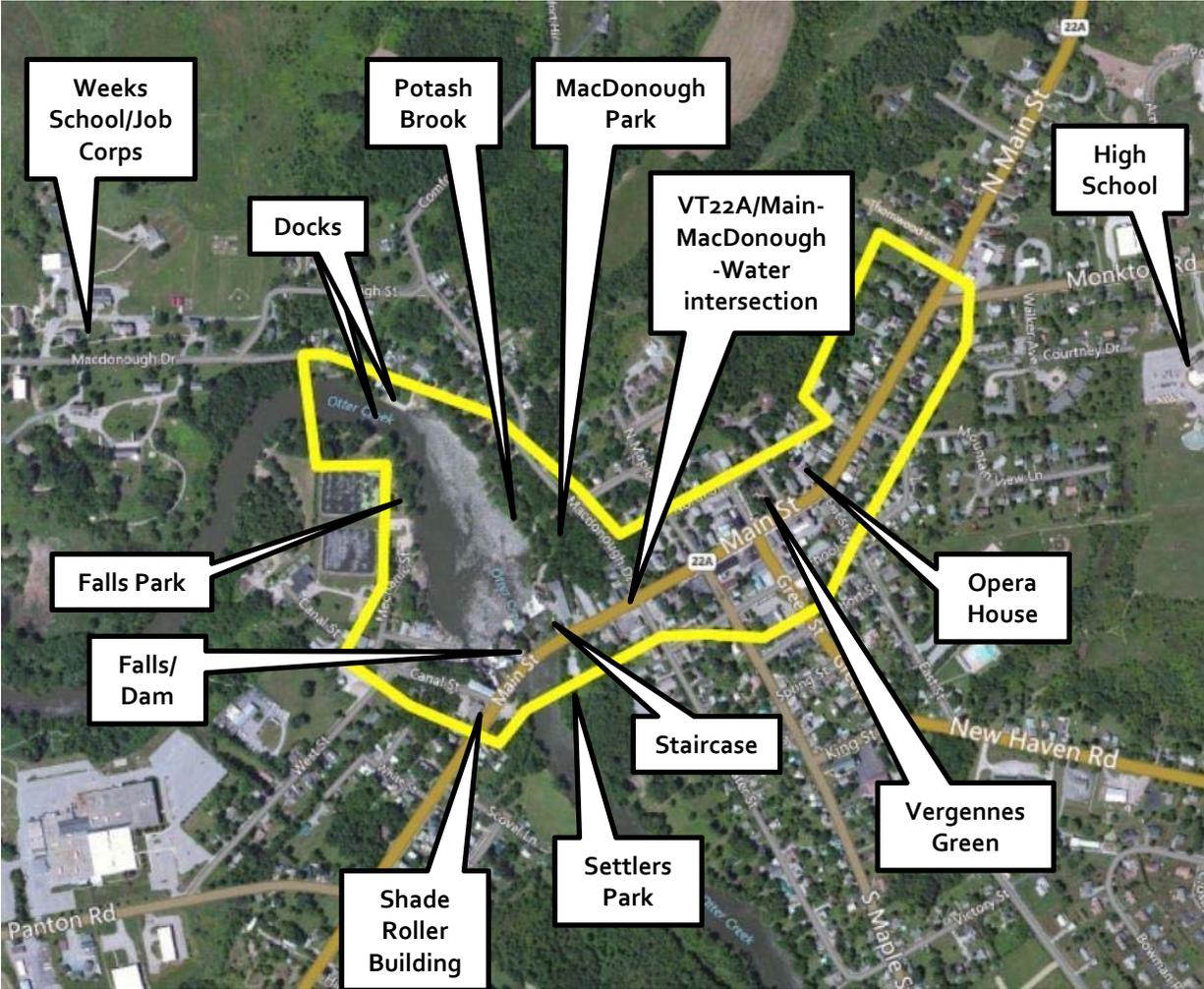


Figure 1: Study area (Base map: Bing)

Previous Plans and Studies

From “Finding Vergennes” to the recent community visit, to the work of the University of Vermont Park Planning and Design class, planning and participation have been the hallmarks of the work undertaken to explore and enhance the Basin and Main Street areas, and the connections thereof.

A substantial amount of planning for this area has already taken place, so the following plans and studies were reviewed to establish the context of the master plan and ensure consistency between recommendations and existing initiatives.

Greater Vergennes Traffic Impact Feasibility Study (2002)

The ACRPC conducted a traffic study in 2002 to assess the traffic issues in Vergennes (primarily focused on truck traffic). The study included a public workshop, which resulted in a desire to remove the truck designation in downtown Vergennes or at a minimum, mitigate the impacts of truck traffic. In the interim, Addison County supports continued study of this area and truck bypass alternatives. The report also recommends working with VTrans to set standards for mitigating truck noise and other impacts, implement traffic calming measures downtown (such as gateway treatments), and target law enforcement to trucks in the area.

VT 22A/South Water Street/MacDonough Drive Intersection Study (2006)

VTrans, ACRPC and the City of Vergennes conducted a study in 2006 to identify improvements to the intersection of VT 22A, South Water Street, and MacDonough Drive. The report recommends installing a traffic signal and curb extensions at the intersection to accommodate safe pedestrian crossings and improved operations for vehicles.

Multi-use Path & Sidewalk Planning and Feasibility Study (2006)

In 2006, the City of Vergennes and the Town of Ferrisburgh conducted a study on the location and feasibility of a multi-use path and sidewalk in the eastern side of Vergennes to connect to a new Park and Ride lot in Ferrisburgh. The preferred alternative for the multi-use path is located east of Route 22 from East Street through the Vergennes Elementary and High School campus, culminating in a loop around Route 22 and Route 7. See Figure 2.

Addison County Regional Plan (2008, 2011)

The 2011 Regional Plan is an update of the previous plan. In 2008, the transportation section was completely revised, and has since had minor updates. According to the plan, transportation is the highest contributor to Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions (57%). An objective of the plan is to reduce GHG emissions from transportation. Providing pedestrian and bicycle options is one way to address this objective. Additionally, the plan includes an objective to encourage bicycle and pedestrian friendly developments in downtowns and villages.

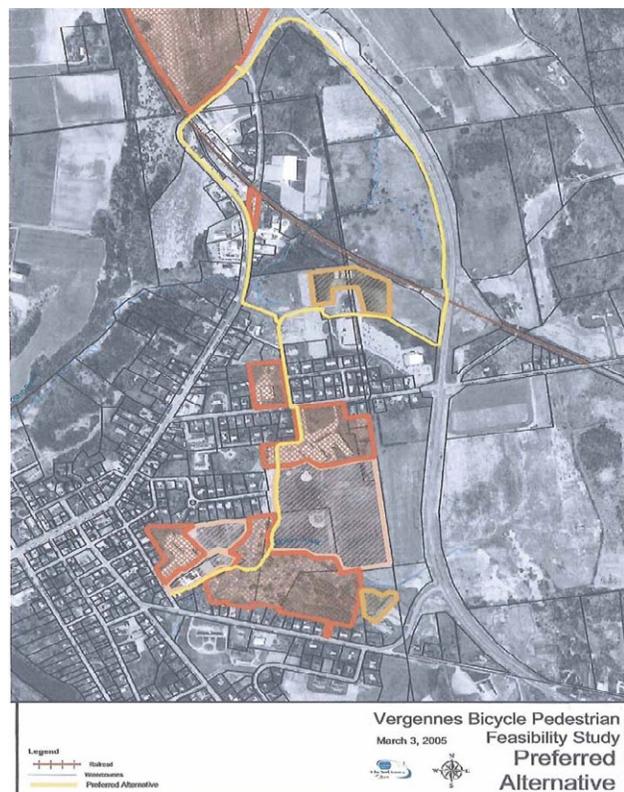


Figure 2: Preferred Alternative for the Vergennes Multi-use Path, Multi-use Path & Sidewalk Planning and Feasibility Study, 2006.

Specifically, the plan highlights the goal to support the county's position as a popular destination for bicyclists and to encourage public transit, walking and bicycling. The following projects in Vergennes are recommended in the plan: 1) Reconstruct VT 22A – South Water Street – MacDonough Drive intersection; 2) Improve facilities in Vergennes and Middlebury; and 3) Update alternatives analysis for VT 22A Bypass in Vergennes.

Vergennes Municipal Development Plan (2009)

The Municipal Development Plan for 2009-2014 includes a transportation plan which calls for improved safe accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians. Specifically, the plan supports implementation of recommendations from the *Sidewalk and Bridge Modification Feasibility Study* and *Multi-Use Path and Planning Study*, and development of the Ferrisburgh Multi-Modal Transportation Facility. The plan also calls to strengthen the Otter Creek Basin District for public access and recreational use.

Vermont Western Corridor Transportation Management Plan (2010)

VTrans and five regional planning commissions (RPCs) developed a multimodal plan for the Vermont Western Corridor (the area around US 7 between Massachusetts and Canada, including some parallel routes) to improve efficiencies and operations along the corridor. The recommended strategies for the corridor include improving bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and conducting streetscape improvements in towns and villages along the corridor. Freight accommodations are a major focus in the report, which also looks at shifting some freight transportation from trucking to rail.

City of Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Guidelines (2012)

The Guidelines establish zoning districts within the City, including the Otter Creek Basin District, the Central Business District, the Public District, and the Residential/Limited Business District, all of which are in the study area. The Guidelines also include sign and streetscape regulations, such as those for the Central Business District: "The streetscape shall include meaningful spaces for pedestrians that draw them in and provide site furnishings, such as benches, tables, bicycle racks and other pedestrian amenities made of durable, weather-resistant and vandal-resistant materials."

Cultivating Community through Sustainable Transportation: Proposed Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements in Vergennes, VT (2012)

In 2012, the Middlebury College Environmental Studies Senior Seminar in partnership with the ACRPC conducted a study to identify solutions to help meet bicycle and pedestrian needs in the City of Vergennes. The report found that limited connectivity between locations in the city was a primary obstacle for walking and biking, in addition to poor infrastructure and high vehicle speeds and volumes. The report recommends improved pedestrian crossings at several intersections, sidewalk expansions, traffic calming measures, bike lanes, and a recreational trail, possibly along an old rail bed.

Vergennes Community Visit Report and Action Plan (2014)

Community Visits are a 4-month process where Vermont Council on Rural Development members and state experts work with community members to prioritize goals and develop implementation strategies for improvements. In this community visit, the city identified three priority projects: 1) Improve Transportation &

Parking; 2) Advance the Vergennes Economy & Expand the Community and Economic Development Capacity of the City; and 3) Redevelop the Vergennes Falls Basin & Open a Riverwalk. A task force was assigned to each of these priority projects.

A Master Plan for the State of Vermont Otter Creek Campus and Lands in Vergennes and Ferrisburgh (Northland Job Corps/Weeks School Master Plan) (2015)

The vision laid out by this plan is for a more sustainable campus with less paving, “green” infrastructure, architectural integrity, with more diverse training programs, vacant buildings occupied, and mixed uses on site in addition to or post-Job Corps. Improved connections to Vergennes through a trail network, better sidewalks and bike routes are a significant aspect of realizing this vision. Eventually the site may include business space and housing opportunities accessed by public transit and with walkability to the downtown.



Figure 3: Vergennes is open for business!

Public Involvement

This plan builds on the outreach and success of VCRD’s Community Visit. Public involvement informed the Issues and Recommendations, and has been achieved so far through several means:

1. Website
2. Intercept surveys
3. Outreach to bicycle tour companies
4. Business owner and developer interviews
5. Walking tours
6. Demonstration projects

Website

A virtual home for the project was developed on Vergennes.org to announce the plan, publicize community events, and provide access to plan documents.

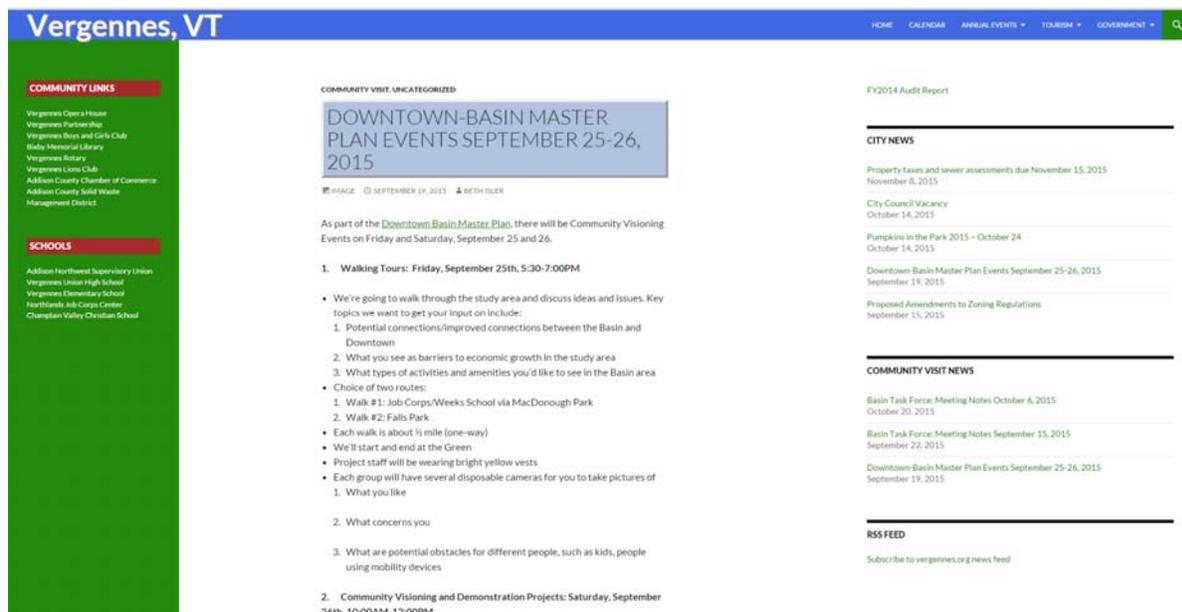


Figure 4: Screenshot of the website

Intercept Surveys

Staff intercepted people in Vergennes on July 31 and August 6 to answer a brief survey to understand people’s reasons for visiting the City. The full results are in Attachment B and summarized below:

25 people were intercepted (some individuals, some in small groups). They were from:

New York Vergennes
Vermont
Canada

WordItOut

What will you do while you're here?

Shopping Dining
Swimming
Walking
Fishing Biking
Boating

WordItOut

What do you like about Vergennes?

Not crowded Basin
Biking Shopping
Opera House
Walkable Falls
Main Street
Restaurants

WordItOut

Is there anything that you think is missing?

Electrical outlets at docks
Pool
Docks Taxi/shuttle
Park Restaurants
Winter activities
Youth activities

WordItOut



sidewalks and on-street parking to access in-town merchants. All of these are important to the economic vitality of our small towns.

- They usually enter/exit Vergennes via MacDonough, Green, and/or Maple. They use 22A to have lunch on the town green.
- MacDonough steep, but Battery Hill to N Maple is even steeper, so MacDonough is the only way in from the north.
- MacDonough/22A intersection has a flashing light, not a traffic signal, and is missing crosswalks.
- Not intuitive that the Basin is nearby.
- Commercial trucks and heavy traffic on VT 22A can make it uncomfortable for bicycling.
- Angled parking dangerous for bicycling.
- Bike lanes would be nice.
- Signage should be considered, specifically wayfinding with Basin as the destination and mileage, for side streets that serve as gateways like MacDonough, Green and Maple.
- Fill in sidewalk gaps and add crosswalks.
- Dedicated path (ideally) or lane(s) for cycle, pedestrian traffic
- Signage directing to benefits/highlights of basin area and other points of interest (graphic/icons that will convey benefit simply and at a glance)
- Obvious parking for bikes at points of interest and in order to access downtown services
- Stop/start requirements while moving uphill are a significant barrier for bicyclists.
- Unpredictable cross traffic (not controlled by a light)
- Narrow or winding path that doesn't allow for variable riding speeds (wide-open is best for visibility and access)

Business owner and developer interviews

Interviews with local business owners are conducted as part of the market assessment, which is described in the Economic Development section below.

Walking Tours

The first community event was held on Friday, September 25th in the form of walking tours. The event was advertised through the website (Figure 4), posters (Figure 5), an article in the *Addison Independent*, and word of mouth spread by the Steering Committee and Transportation and Basin Task Force members. Steering Committee members and the project team (comprised of staff from ACRPC, ACCD, and the consultant team) led the walking tours, facilitated discussions, and recorded participant observations and comments. This input provided the basis for the Issues and Recommendations described later in this report. The routes are shown in Figure 7.

VERGENNES NEEDS YOU!

Vergennes is developing a master plan for the downtown and Basin in response to your ideas during last year's Community Visit.

There will be **"Walk & Talks"** and **demonstration projects** on **September 25th and 26th** (additional info to come). And be on the lookout for workshops, surveys, interviews, and more!

Stay tuned and watch
www.vergennes.org for updates.



Figure 5: Poster advertising the community events

Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan:

WALKING TOURS

Friday, September 25th, 5:30pm - 7:00pm

What are we doing tonight? We're going to walk through the study area and discuss ideas and issues. Key topics we want to get your input on include:

- a. Potential connections/improved connections between the Basin and Downtown
- b. What you see as barriers to economic growth in the study area
- c. What types of activities and amenities you'd like to see in the Basin area

Choice of two routes:

Walk #1:
Job Corps/Weeks School
via MacDonough Park

Walk #2:
Falls Park

Each walk is about ½ mile (one-way). We'll start and end at the Green. Project staff are wearing bright yellow vests.

Each group will have several disposable cameras for you to take pictures of:

- A. What you like
- B. What concerns you
- C. What are potential obstacles for different people, such as kids, people with mobility impairments...

Wrap up:

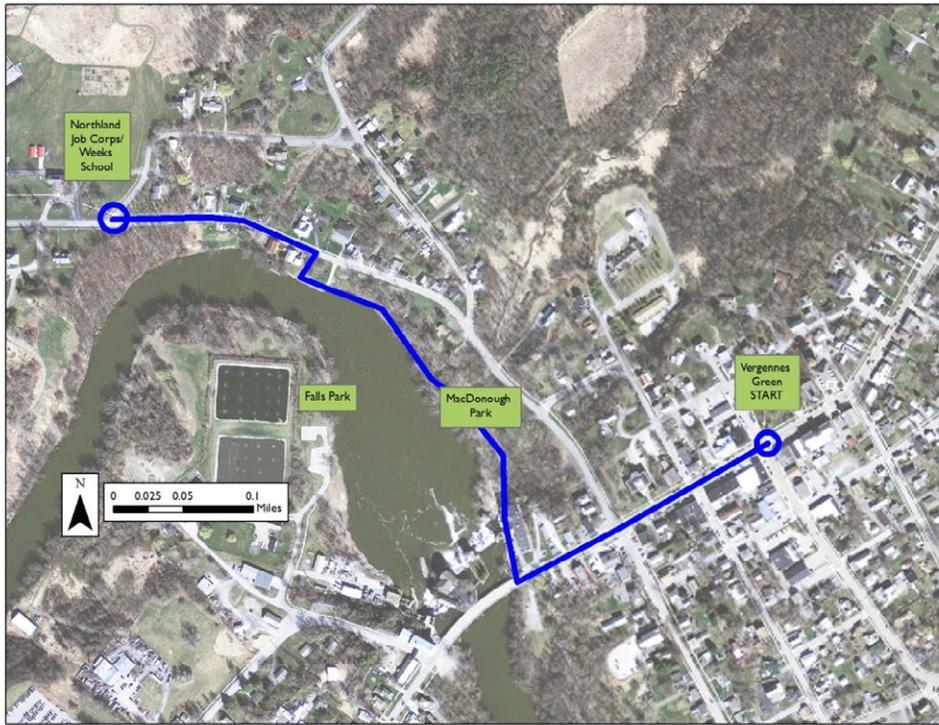
- a. What are your takeaways from the walk?
- b. What did you like? Dislike? What needs improvement?
- c. What is your vision for Vergennes?

Join us tomorrow from 10am - 12pm for the demonstration projects! Interactive kiosks at the docks, traffic calming, bike lanes, crosswalk enhancements, and more!

Stay tuned and watch
www.vergennes.org/downtown-basin-master-plan/
for project updates.

Figure 6: Handout from the walking tours

Walk #1 Job Corps/Weeks School via MacDonough Park



Walk #2 Falls Park

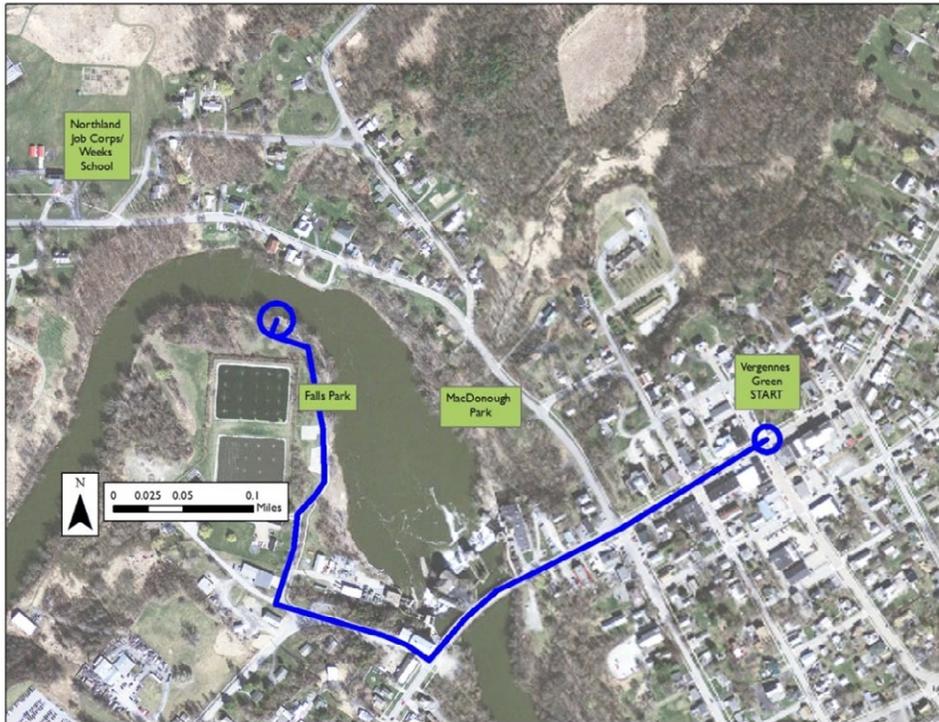


Figure 7: Walking tour routes



Figure 8: Staff record comments and input during one of the walking tours



Figure 9: One of the walking tours stops at the intersection of Main Street and MacDonough Drive to discuss issues and make observations

Demonstration Projects

The second community event was a series of preliminary recommendations demonstrated on Saturday, September 26th. This was advertised with the walking tours through the website, posters, an article in the *Addison Independent*, and word of mouth spread by the Steering Committee and Transportation and Basin Task Force members. Steering Committee members and the project team (comprised of staff from ACRPC, ACCD, and the consultant team) used spray chalk and traffic cones to demonstrate concepts like bike lanes, curb extensions/bulb-outs, gateways, and pedestrian refuge islands. An information kiosk, which has long been recommended, was constructed in Falls Park. An information tent at the Vergennes Green provided project information and allowed observers to share their reactions to the demonstrations with staff and Steering Committee members. Along with input gathered during the walking tours, this feedback provided the basis for the Issues and Recommendations

described later in this report. Figure 10 through Figure 22 show the various elements of the day. The demonstration projects offered “proof of concept” of the feasibility of the preliminary recommendations, for example, that there is enough roadway width to accommodate bicycle lanes, and that curb extensions work.



Figure 10: Before and after the temporary bike lane was marked out during the demonstration project.

Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan:

COMMUNITY VISIONING & DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Saturday, September 26th, 10:00am - 12:00pm

What is today about? We want to get people thinking about what they'd like to see in Vergennes to improve the connection between downtown and the Basin. Sometimes it's hard to visualize how something like a bike lane might work, so we test it out for a day or so to help people understand how it might fit on the street.

There is an interactive pop-up kiosk in Falls Park to solicit people's vision for the Basin area. The purpose of the kiosk is information exchange and presentation of project materials and potential concepts. The aim is to bring downtown to the Basin and vice versa.

What are the projects?

Bike Lanes

Using duct tape and spray chalk to make temporary bike lanes on VT 22A/Main Street, roughly between the Otter Creek bridge and East Street.

Curb Extensions

Using traffic cones and crates to shorten pedestrians' crossing distances and their exposure to cars. For example, at corners like the intersection of Main Street and Green Street.

Pedestrian Refuge Islands

Using traffic cones at crosswalks to calm traffic as it travels through downtown and give people crossing the street a small refuge from traffic.

A huge thanks to Local Motion for their support in making these demonstrations possible!

Stay tuned and watch
www.vergennes.org/downtown-basin-master-plan/
for project updates.

Figure 11: Handout for the demonstration projects

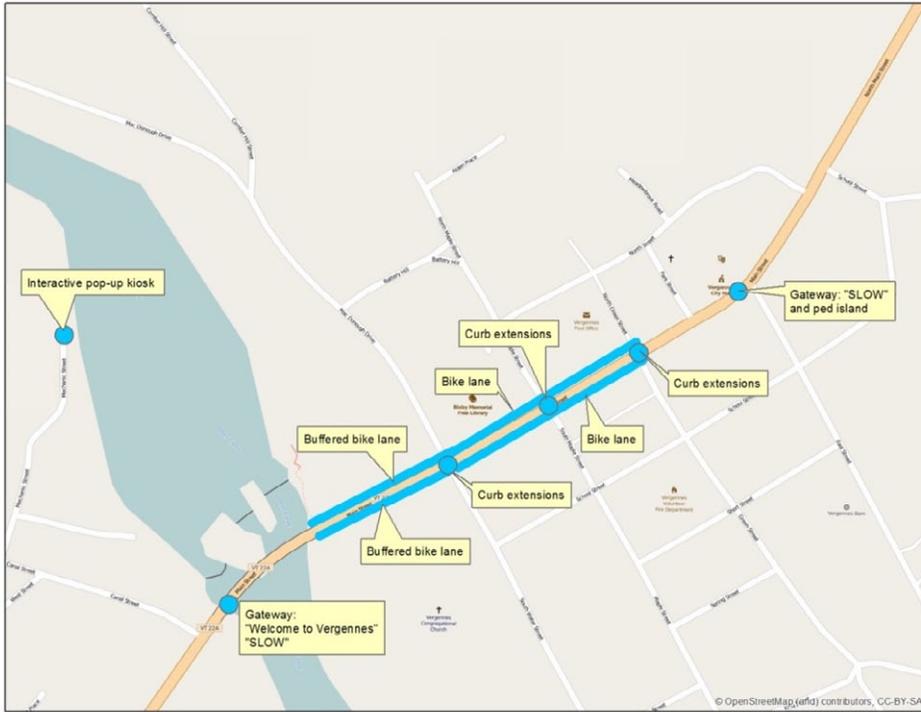


Figure 12: Demonstration projects offered 'proof of concept' for preliminary recommendations (Base map: Google).



Figure 13: LandWorks and volunteers constructed the new kiosk in Falls Park.



Figure 14: LandWorks designed the new information kiosk in Falls Park.



Figure 15: Staff and volunteers use spray chalk to mark out a 5' bike lane while maintaining VTrans' recommended 11' travel lane for an arterial.



Figure 16: A gateway sign on the west side of the bridge was placed to show drivers that they were approaching the village and should adjust speeds accordingly.





Figure 17: A 5' bike lane with a 2' buffer was demonstrated while maintaining 11' width for trucks in the adjacent travel lane.



Figure 18: A bicyclist uses the 5' bike lane while being passed by a vehicle. Both the vehicle and the bicycle have adequate room in their respective lanes.



Figure 19: Traffic cones show how a curb extension would decrease traffic speeds while reducing pedestrian exposure to vehicles.



Figure 20: The hay bale and cone show how a curb extension would work to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and calm traffic.



Figure 21: Cones were used to demonstrate a pedestrian refuge island while maintaining adequate travel lane widths.



Figure 22: An information tent facilitated conversations between residents and project staff and volunteers.

Economic Development, Land Use and Market Analysis

The Background Report for the Market Assessment is included as Attachment C. The major findings of the background research are that:

- There is essentially no availability in the Vergennes rental housing market.
- The most important single industry in the Market Area is Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (10.6 percent of total employment); this is unusual for a Vermont market. Overall, no single category dominates employment.

Change In Employment by Industry: Burlington Metro (2000 – 2014; 2010 – 2014)

	Change 2000-'14		Change 2010-'14	
	Employment	%	Employment	%
Natural Resources & Mining	129	+33.5%	87	+20.4%
Construction	(274)	(4.6%)	863	+17.9%
Manufacturing/Durable	(7,016)	(43.7%)	(1,599)	(15.1%)
Manufacturing/Non-Durable	491	+12.2%	1,155	+34.4%
Trade/Transportation & Utilities	731	+3.4%	631	+2.9%
<i>Wholesale Trade</i>	101	+2.7%	33	+0.9%
<i>Retail Trade</i>	452	+3.1%	25	+0.2%
<i>Transportation</i>	187	+6.8%	548	+22.7%
Information	(881)	(27.4%)	(269)	(10.3%)
Financial Activities	(581)	(11.1%)	(10)	(0.2%)
Professional & Business Services	3,422	+33.4%	2,278	+20.0%
Education & Health Services	4,613	+29.9%	1,430	+7.7%
<i>Education</i>	95	+3.8%	446	+20.6%
<i>HealthCare</i>	4,518	+34.9%	984	+6.0%
Leisure & Hospitality	1,963	+19.5%	1,163	+10.7%
Other Services	(193)	(5.3%)	443	+14.6%
Government	4,457	+27.3%	1,377	+7.1%
Private Sector	2,404	+2.5%	6,172	+6.7%
Public Sector	4,457	+27.3%	1,377	+7.1%
Totals	6,861	+6.1%	7,549	+6.8%

- It is estimated that the Market Area accounts for over \$63 million in total retail sales, only 4.8 percent of the Region's total. With 28 percent of the total, Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers is the Market Area's major retail category. Food & Beverage sales (19.1 percent of total) are also significant.

- Market Area residents generate annual demand for in excess of \$55 million in retail goods, while Region residents generate annual demand for \$1.16 billion in retail goods.
- Travel activity is estimated to have the following impacts in Vergennes:
 - Food & Beverage - \$1.08 million in annual spending;
 - Groceries - \$634,000 in annual spending;
 - Other Retail - \$513,000 in annual spending;
 - Gasoline - \$785,000 in annual spending.
- The analysis indicates that there are positive gaps (Demand exceeds Supply) in the following retail categories that would be appropriate in a downtown area:
 - Home Furnishings – a number of northern New England downtowns have developed clusters of stores in this category in recent years. Higher end merchandise appeals to both area residents and tourists and, particularly if located in combination, can create a destination appeal.
 - Sporting Goods – given Vergennes’ central location with respect to Champlain Valley bike tripping, a store oriented toward bikes could find success in the downtown.
 - Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores – clearly an appropriate use for a downtown area, where there is already an entry in this category;
 - Jewelry/Luggage/Leather & Gifts – clearly appropriate in a downtown area, and potential attractive to both area residents and tourists;
 - Used Merchandise – this category has already gained a foothold and is a growing trend in most retail districts. Again a cluster of stores in this category can become a destination;
 - Food Service & Drinking Places - the primary example of the value of clustering. Vergennes’ existing restaurants have already exerted a draw on the region, with regular clientele from Middlebury to Burlington. Moreover, tourists clearly are attracted to downtowns with a wide variety of eating options.
- Vergennes’ demographic trends are reflective of broader trends throughout the northeast; a significant increase in the 55 to 74 years population and an uptick in the number of younger households (Millennials). In the instance of older households, real estate professionals note that ‘empty nesters’ and single women account for the majority of housing demand;
- While Vermont’s housing market is clearly differentiated from broader U.S. trends, it is apparent that both millennials and empty nesters are showing an increased interest in living in urbanized locations, with a focus on easy access to services, places to eat and public interaction. We note the following:
 - “There is a significant portion of the Baby Boomer generation that is opting to go to the cities, I think this is the beginning of a long-term trend.”
 - That empty nesters whose children have grown up and gone to college or work are downsizing by selling their suburban homes and moving into apartments is old news; the magnitude of this trend is what’s surprising developers.
 - Industry experts said future projects will likely have a unit mix that includes more two-bedroom and three-bedroom units to attract renters ages 55 and older. Additionally, Millennials tend to prefer one-bedroom apartments, whereas Boomers favor multiple-bedroom units, to accommodate a home office and/or visiting children and grandchildren. Though the two cohorts enjoy amenities such as swimming pools, workout rooms, Wi-Fi, and dog parks, Millennials are more likely to want more social attractions, such as TV lounges, bars, and such, according to Zillow.com. The Boomers, conversely, the website said, prefer more-luxurious trappings, such as state-of-the art kitchens, highend bathrooms, and walk-in closets.

**Current/Projected Households by Age Group:
Market Area (2015 – 2020)**

HH Age Group	2015		2020		Change
	<i>HHs</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>HHs</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	
15-24	55	18.4%	50	17.4%	(5)
25-34	190	63.5%	212	73.6%	+22
35-44	299	100.0%	288	100.0%	(11)
45-54	394	131.8%	348	120.8%	(46)
55-64	441	147.5%	448	155.6%	+7
65-74	316	105.7%	385	133.7%	+69
75+	186	62.2%	230	79.9%	+44
Totals	1,881		1,961		+80
HHs Aged >62 Yrs.	634	33.7%	749	38.2%	+115

- Although the numbers are limited, it is apparent that the combination of services, cluster or residences and aesthetic qualities of a downtown located adjacent to the basin has resulted in some higher end residential development in the study area. These rental units have well above average finishes and appointments – and well above ‘market’ rents.
- Finally, the limited pace of new residential development in Vergennes (particularly the downtown area) would suggest that there is pent-up demand, and that good quality housing would find renters – or buyers – sufficient to translate to rapid absorption in the current market.

The Market Assessment will use the findings from this background research as a basis for more targeted assessment and recommendations for study area improvements.

Issues and Recommendations

This section describes the issues that were brought to the team's attention during the community events and recommendations for addressing them. To realize these recommendations, the City should create a long term capital improvement plan for downtown infrastructure and public improvements.

Four dominant themes emerged through the work completed to this point:

- Lack of wayfinding, information and signage
- Maintenance
- Trucks
- MacDonough Drive/South Water Street intersection

To assess issues and develop recommendations, the study area has been organized into four sub-areas:

- Falls Park
- Main Street/VT 22A between Canal Street and MacDonough Drive/South Water Street
- MacDonough Park
- Downtown/Main Street

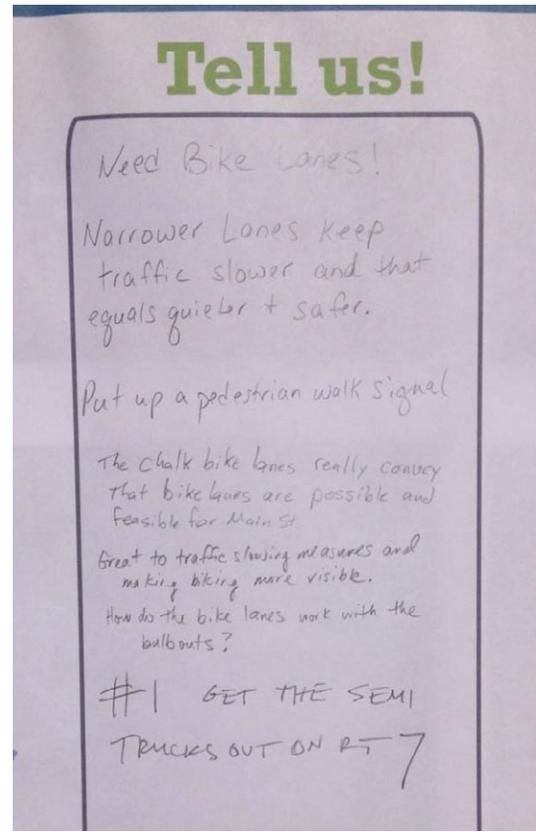


Figure 23: Comments collected on a poster during the community visioning/demonstration project event.

The following pages summarize the issues and recommendations for each of these four areas.

Parking

The Transportation Task Force completed a parking study last year (Attachment D) to understand the downtown parking capacity and how it is being used. The major finding was that there is availability in parking lots a block or two from Main Street, but since few people are aware of this fact, there is a perception that there is not enough parking.

For safety reasons, we strongly recommend a change in on-street parking to accommodate a bike lane on Main Street/VT 22A in downtown Vergennes. The current configuration of head-in angled parking is unsafe for bicyclists when drivers are backing out of their space because of reduced visibility. Back-in angled parking (Figure 24) is recommended to improve safety for bicyclists, make parking easier (especially when leaving the space), and improve overall safety. Back-in angled parking has been successfully implemented on two-way streets throughout the US, such as Binghamton, NY, Pottstown, PA, and Somerville, MA. There is a period of education and adoption involved by users, but after this period the concept is typically embraced by communities.

Falls Park Existing Conditions



Issues

- Approach/Entrance to Falls Park
 - Feels like entering industrial area
 - No signage-not clear what's down there
 - Feel like you're driving into the GMP site
 - Not welcoming (barbed-wire topped chain link fence)
 - Not maintained; overgrown
 - Need a more park-like entrance, less industrial
 - Need landscaping to mask garages, etc.
 - Canoe portage signs are inaccurate
- Falls Park
- Not a "destination" from downtown
 - Low utilization, neglected, not maintained
 - Not a park, it's a parking lot. Too much asphalt.
 - Entrance to the park is a chain across two metal poles.
 - Vegetation is overgrown
 - No lighting
 - Grills are ugly and not maintained
 - Not enough dock space
 - Little for families/kids to do; playground with mounds was never fully built out
 - GMP pays for the Port-o-lets, but the area floods, more permanent facilities are not feasible. Maintenance is also an issue
 - City canoe program is not being used (no system to sign canoes out)
 - No visitor info-no one knows what is around
 - No signage, wayfinding
 - Industrial area around park obscures the actual benefits of park



Falls Park Existing Conditions (continued)



Opportunities

- Seasonal restaurant or beer garden
- Bandstand or stage for outdoor concerts and plays
- Move and expand the Vergennes Farmers Market to the Basin
- Make use of the field downstream (along the path to UTC)
- Make more of 1984 park plan
- Develop things for kids/families to do
- Staff the City-owned canoe program to get it running
- Have events and festivals in the Falls Park parking lot
- Develop historical interpretive displays about GMP and the dam: history of the dam and canal and falls as transportation, now energy with hydro, solar, wind, and recycling
- Consider disk golf, accessible tree house, playground, dog park

Falls Park Recommendations and Implementation

Recommendations	Time-frame	Potential Constraints	Priority	Lead Agency	Potential Partners	Possible Funding Mechanism	Anticipated Maintenance Needs	Next Steps
Remove canoe portage signs	Immediate		To be completed in Task 2					
WAYFINDING Post visitor information, maps, and historical photos/info of the area and of Falls Park in both French and English; make sure info is consistent with info at other Vergennes kiosks	<5 years							
Improve and maintain the trail through the Park and to UTC	<5 years							
Repair lower level of docks where decorative brick has failed	<5 years							
Repair (immediate) and upgrade (short-term) tables and grills	Immediate							
Add rip-rap along new paving to diminish chances of erosion	Immediate							
Implement dock registration program: Replace voluntary donation with something more obligatory. Imply that a harbor master will be patrolling to check on payments. Maybe a ticketing system, like pay the fee, get a receipt to show it was paid.	Immediate							
Install pet waste stations and additional trash cans	Immediate							
Install attractive bollards and gate where path beings adjacent to parking lot with sign indicating: WELCOME TO FALLS PARK	<5 years							
Install web cam so Lake Champlain boaters can estimate dock availability	Immediate							
Construct amenities like bathrooms, maybe showers	5-10 years							
Develop shuttle system between Job Corps, Basin (both sides) and	<5 years							

Falls Park

Recommendations and Implementation (continued)

Recommendations	Time-frame	Potential Constraints	Priority	Lead Agency	Potential Partners	Possible Funding Mechanism	Anticipated Maintenance Needs	Next Steps
Consider lighting	5-10 years							
Develop park-like entrance to counter the industrial feel of the area; work with GMP on this	<5 years							

Main Street/VT 22A between Canal Street and MacDonough Drive/South Water Street

Existing Conditions



Issues

Settlers Park (owned by GMP)

- Gets “shady” sometimes; illicit use
- No lights
- Crosswalk on east side at Settlers’ Park not maintained because vehicle speeds make it unsafe to cross here
- Canoe portage signs are inaccurate
- VT22A Hill
- No sidewalk on north side (one is planned and has been shown to be feasible but it is not yet designed)
- Trucks lose traction on slope in winter
- Bridge
- Vehicle speeds on bridge too fast
- No sidewalk on north side (and therefore no walking access to Pump House Island, etc.)
- Pump House Island
- Can only access by car
- Riverwalk Stairway
- Concrete bases on light poles are out of character
- No wayfinding

Opportunities

- Canal Street and entrance to Falls Park
- Development/opportunity southwest side of bridge across from Canal St/Shade Roller Factory
- Pump House Island
- Reconstruct the ruins
- Pump house would make a great ‘mystery tour/quest stop’, could post cultural/community stories on the side of it
- Bridge
- New lights to match Basin stair lights/black railings etc.



Main Street/VT 22A between Canal Street and MacDonough Drive/South Water Street

Recommendations and Implementation

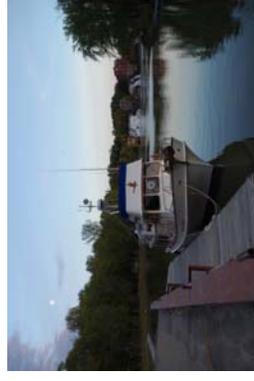
Recommendations	Time-frame	Potential Constraints	Priority	Lead Agency	Potential Partners	Possible Funding Mechanism	Anticipated Maintenance Needs	Next Steps
Construct missing sidewalk on north side of VT 22A/Main Street between MacDonough Drive and bridge	<5 years		To be completed in Task 2			To be completed in Task 3		
Create gateway on west side of bridge; perhaps add pillars with lighting	<5 years							
Clear brush and trees along top of river walk to expose view	Immediate							
WAYFINDING Post visitor information, maps, and historical photos/info of the area and of Falls Park in both French and English; make sure info is consistent with info at other Vergennes kiosks	<5 years							
Work with VTTrans to develop traffic calming on bridge to slow vehicle speeds enough to enable sight distance needed to make the crosswalk at Settlers Park safe	<5 years							
Work with VTTrans to develop bike accommodations on bridge and provide sidewalk on north side	5-10 years							
After implementing speed reduction measures on bridge, repaint crosswalk at Settlers Park, add advance crosswalk warning signs, and install additional crosswalk safety enhancements, like Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs)	<5 years							
Remove canoe portage signs	Immediate							
Install pet waste stations	Immediate							

MacDonough Park Existing Conditions



Issues

- Not a "destination" from downtown
- Low utilization, neglected
- No visitor info-no one knows what is around
- No signage, way finding
- Gaps in docks are a safety issue
- Flag is not lit at the dock area
- Sculpture needs interpretation
- Sewer caps are ugly/utilitarian
- Shoreline erosion issue
- Stormwater issues
- Parking lot on road near heritage park is confusing: which way to park? Parallel or nose in?
- Attention to physical and cultural heritage of the site is needed
- Near bottom of staircase is a drainage channel with rubble
- MacDonough Drive
- Need a better connection to Weeks School
- Sidewalk is too narrow (4') and not maintained
- Often a sheet of ice from run off from steep sides



MacDonough Park Existing Conditions (continued)



- ### Opportunities
- Seasonal restaurant or beer garden.
 - Power wash and paint the raised building.
 - Potential for Green Infrastructure techniques for stormwater management.
 - Old foundations – potential for creative seating etc.
 - Consider disk golf, accessible tree house, playground, dog park.
 - Restaurant, beautiful spot to be appreciated
 - Parallel parking would work on the street (safer and more visible).
 - MacDonough Drive
 - Public transit – work with ACTR for connection to Job Corps with stop at dock.
 - Add trees on east side of MacDonough or raingardens for runoff control.
 - Just to north of homes there could be clearing along MacDonough Drive on the west side to open up views to the Creek and Basin area.



MacDonough Park Existing Conditions (continued)



MacDonough Park

Recommendations and Implementation

Recommendations	Time-frame	Potential Constraints	Priority	Lead Agency	Potential Partners	Possible Funding Mechanism	Anticipated Maintenance Needs	Next Steps
<p>WAYFINDING</p> <p>Post visitor information, maps, and historical photos/info of the area and of Falls Park in both French and English; make sure info is consistent with info at other Vergennes kiosks</p>	<5 years		To be completed in Task 2			To be completed in Task 3		
Develop boardwalk to connect stairway to docks	<5 years							
Add marketing materials at docks to entice boaters to venture to downtown	Immediate							
Work with merchants to offer delivery services to docks	Immediate							
Develop mooring field and expand docks; re-build portions of dock for safer access and longer ramps for high water	<5 years							
Implement dock registration program: Replace voluntary donation with something more obligatory. Imply that a harbor master will be patrolling to check on payments. Maybe a ticketing system, like pay the fee, get a receipt to show it was paid.	Immediate							
Stripe advisory bicycle lanes on MacDonough Drive	Immediate							
Consider lighting the Park	5-10 years							
Develop shuttle system between Job Corps, Basin (both sides) and downtown; approach ACTR	<5 years							
Create small park-like area with picnic tables and grills	<5 years							
Install pet waste stations and trash cans	Immediate							
Add "no littering" signage	Immediate							

Main Street/Downtown

Existing Conditions



Issues

- Head-in diagonal parking is problematic: backing into traffic is very scary, especially because of the traffic signal and the hill
- South side of street is much more commercial than north side. Makes street unbalanced, affects usage and visibility.
- Electric poles and highway style lights are not attractive
- Gardens in curb extensions/bump-outs have not been maintained; need to be weeded.
- Demand exceeds supply for outside seating
- No pedestrian signals at intersections
- Vergennes Green
- Bare spots of grass
- Underutilized because of lack of maintenance and traffic noise

Opportunities

- Expand the utilization of the Opera House. Bring a diverse range of events that will drive night life to the Town Center.



Main Street/Downtown

Existing Conditions : MacDonough-Water Intersection



MacDonough-Water Intersection Issues

- Intersection is chaotic
- Delivery trucks unload on South Water Street
- Parking/access for gas station/market on South Water Street
- Head in parking on east side of South Water Street requires cars to back into traffic
- Trucks can't stop on VT 22/Main Street hill because they lose traction
- Corner radius huge at MacDonough Dr.
- No curb on northwest corner
- Sidewalk ends on north side of Main Street/VT 22A heading down the hill
- Parked cars on Main Street block visibility of cars trying to exit South Water Street
- Most patrons of the store/gas station use parking on east side/South Water Street, not parking lot on west side
- Signal and curb extensions recommended in 2006 study
- Reconstruction recommended in Regional Transportation Plan
- Vehicles speed up to make it up the hill
- Very challenging for pedestrians
- Hard to cross (both walking and driving)
- People go out of their way to avoid this intersection
- Southbound left-turn is extremely difficult

Main Street/ Downtown								
Recommendations and Implementation								
Recommendations	Time-frame	Potential Constraints	Priority	Lead Agency	Potential Partners	Possible Funding Mechanism	Anticipated Maintenance Needs	Next Steps
Work with groundskeeper to improve grass/eliminate bare spots on Vergennes Green	<5 years		To be completed in Task 2			To be completed in Task 3		
WAYFINDING Post visitor information, maps, and historical photos/info of the area and of Falls Park in both French and English; make sure info is consistent with info at other Vergennes kiosks	<5 years							
Add pedestrian signals at Main and Green, and Main and Monkton	Immediate							
Pilot-test back-in angled parking for a year in conjunction with education and awareness campaign OR	Immediate							
Widen sidewalks and convert to parallel parking to accommodate Large demand for outdoor seating	<5 years							
Weed and improve maintenance on Vergennes Green	Immediate							
Add bike lanes on Main Street	Immediate							
Weed curb extensions	Immediate							
Replace highway lights with pedestrian-scale lighting	5-10 years							
Create gateway at intersection with Monkton Road to define downtown	<5 years							
Improve parking management by putting up signs directing people to under-used lots	Immediate							

MacD-Water intersection

Recommendations and Implementation

Recommendations	Time-frame	Potential Constraints	Priority	Lead Agency	Potential Partners	Possible Funding Mechanism	Anticipated Maintenance Needs	Next Steps
As recommended in the 2006 intersection study, signalize	5-10 years		To be completed in Task 2			To be completed in Task 3		
Tighten up corner radii on northeast corner by extending curb	<5 years							
Add curbed island to northwest corner	Immediate							
Repaint crosswalks	Immediate							
Work with gas station/market and Riverside Apartments to improve parking and access issues on South Water Street	5-10 years							
Discuss potential for making South Water Street one-way southbound	5-10 years							

So far in the development of this plan, there has been significant resistance to the idea of shifting the angled parking on the south side of Main Street to back-in angled parking. However, there are a number of significant benefits to be realized by adopting back-in angled parking, and the situation on Main Street/VT 22A, which is currently not safe, would be improved by it. Additional information and sample education materials are provided in Attachment E.

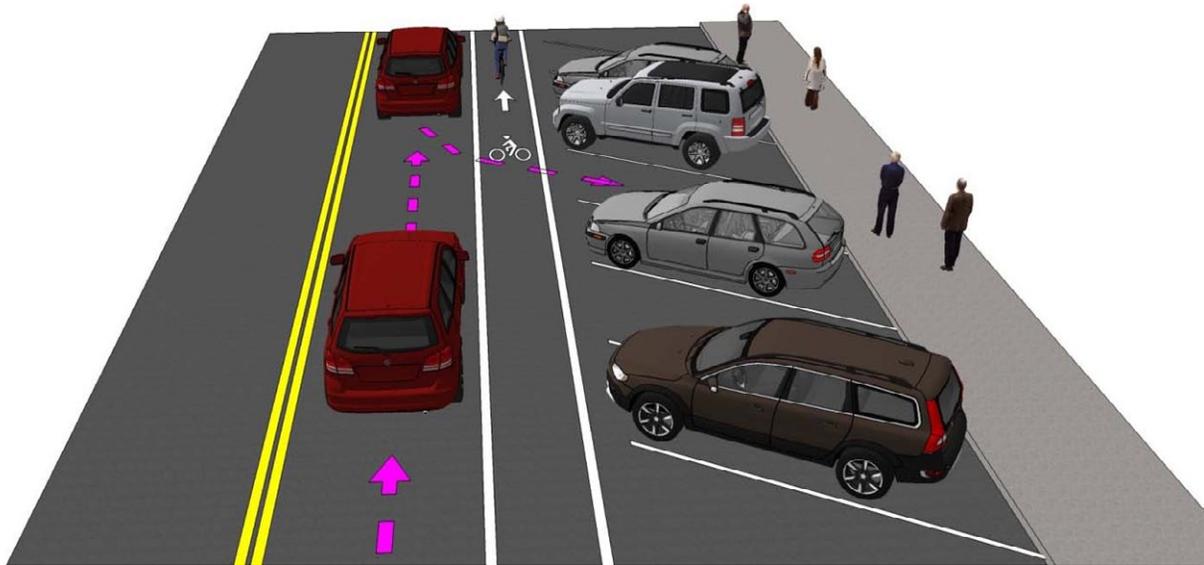


Figure 24: Back-in angled parking improves visibility for drivers, is safer for bicyclists, is easier for loading trunks, and increases safety for children who are directed towards the sidewalk rather than towards the street when they open the car door.



Figure 25: Back-in angled parking on a two-way street with a bike lane in Washington, DC.

If back-in angled parking is a non-starter for the Vergennes community, we recommend going to parallel, which will involve a loss of 25 spaces on the south side of Main Street between South Water Street and East Street (there are currently 53 angled spaces). This change would address ongoing issues stemming from the current configuration as cited by public input, be safer for bicyclists, and allow for a future expansion of the sidewalk width and additional outdoor café-style seating for restaurants.



Bike Trail

A bike trail connecting the Basin to the rail station/park&ride has also been discussed over the years as shown in Figure 26. A bridge structure and stairs would be required for a continuous route, and at some locations an elevated path would be necessary to travel over sensitive areas. The path would connect with the proposed boardwalk in MacDonough Park.

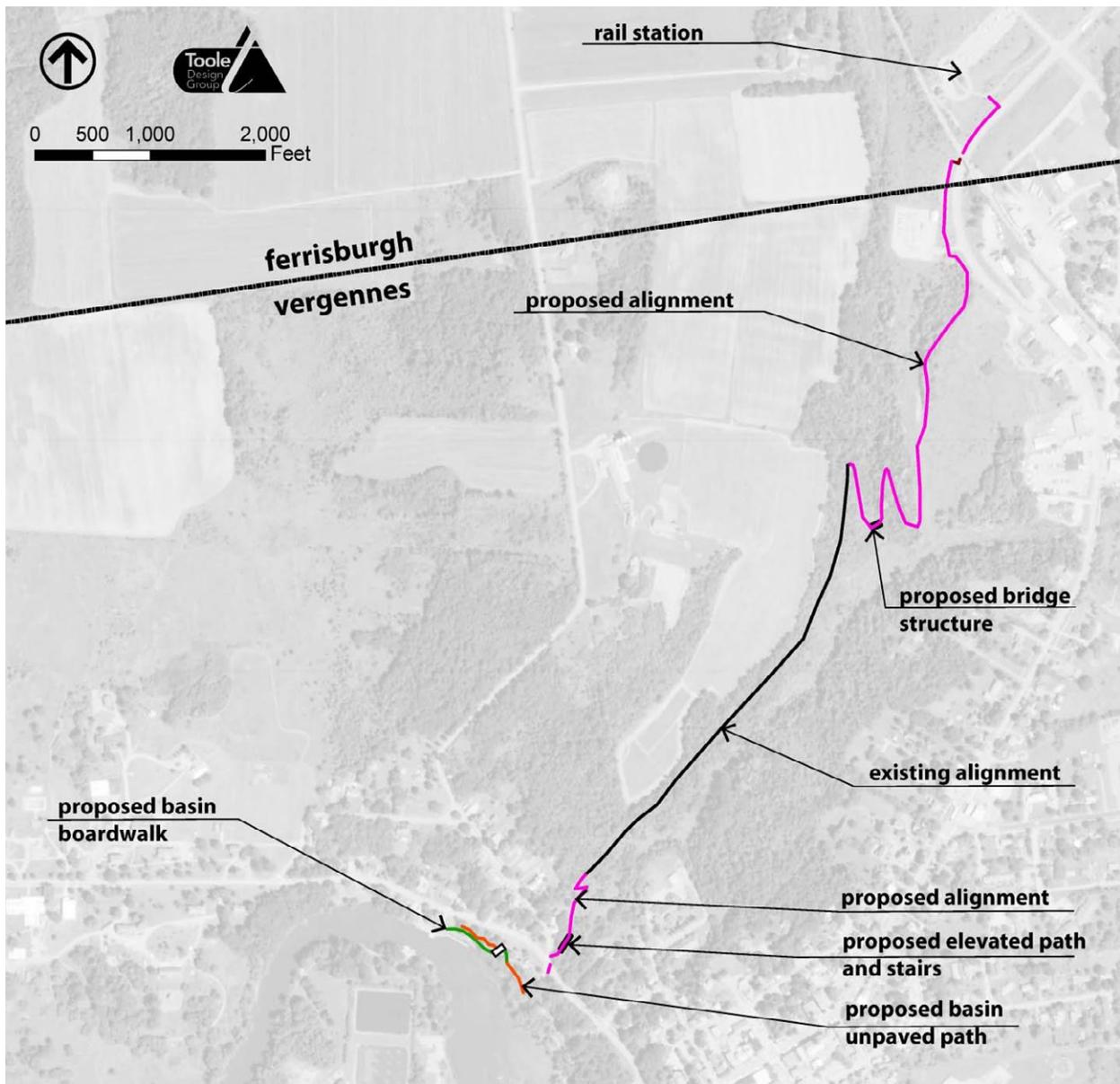


Figure 26: Potential bike trail alignment; concept provided by Timothy Cowan.

Truck Traffic

According to VTrans Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) Data, 10.83% of the vehicles that passed through Vergennes on VT 22A in 2014 were classified as trucks. This large volume of trucks is loud, conflicts with the village setting of Vergennes, and creates problems on the VT 22A hill between Otter Creek and downtown, which exacerbates existing issues at the intersection with MacDonough Drive.

The idea of a bypass to reroute large trucks has long been discussed in Vergennes, but there is concern that such a bypass would detour all traffic- and its economic benefits- from Vergennes. The Addison County Regional Transportation Plan recommended an alternatives analysis for a bypass but it has not yet been initiated. Opportunities for shifting freight from truck to rail is one of the alternatives that such a study could consider.

One concept for rerouting truck traffic involves VT 17, which would be five minutes longer than the current route through downtown Vergennes (Figure 27). While the VT 17 Otter Creek bridge is narrow and constrains truck travel, in the future, the construction of a wider bridge might be feasible for the sake of Vergennes' economic development, safety, and livability.

Until a wider bridge could be built, a one-way traffic pattern (counterclockwise) for trucks could be considered. This could reduce trucks by 50% immediately, reduce the likelihood of trucks passing each other across the narrow bridge, and reduce the volume of trucks going up the hill in Vergennes. A signed truck route that includes updating web-based routing applications and some enforcement by local police would be necessary to implement this concept. Exceptions would be made for trucks access farms and other local businesses via VT22A.

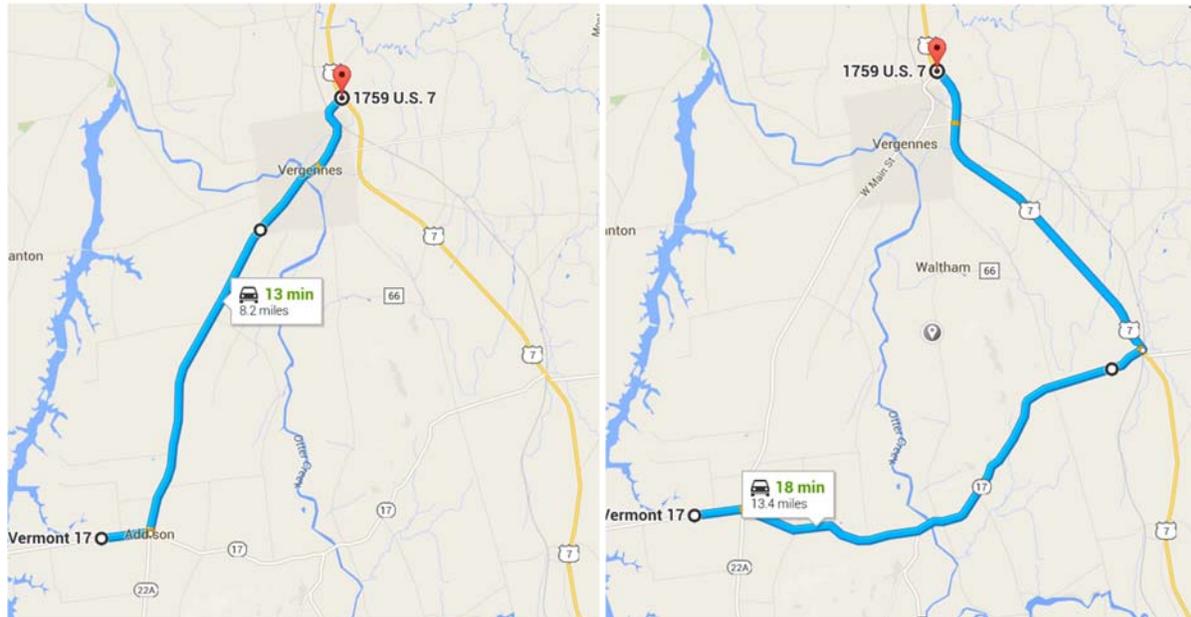


Figure 27: According to Google, the trip from Addison to US 7 north of Vergennes via VT 22A is 13 minutes and via VT 17 is 18 minutes.

Transit

Opportunities for strengthening connectivity via transit should also be considered. Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR) stops in Vergennes on both the Burlington LINK and the Tri-Town Shuttle Bus routes. In downtown Vergennes, the northbound stop is at Main Street-Green Street and the southbound stop is at the Opera House. There is also a stop at the John Graham Shelter on the southeast corner of Main Street and Monkton Road. There may be potential to

Other Potential Opportunities

Additional ideas were considered but will require further discussion before evolving into recommendations:

- Bring back the historic steamboat line
- Accessible tree house
- A Vergennes walking tour should/could be developed for the Basin and beyond
- More activities, like a swimming hole (Figure 28)



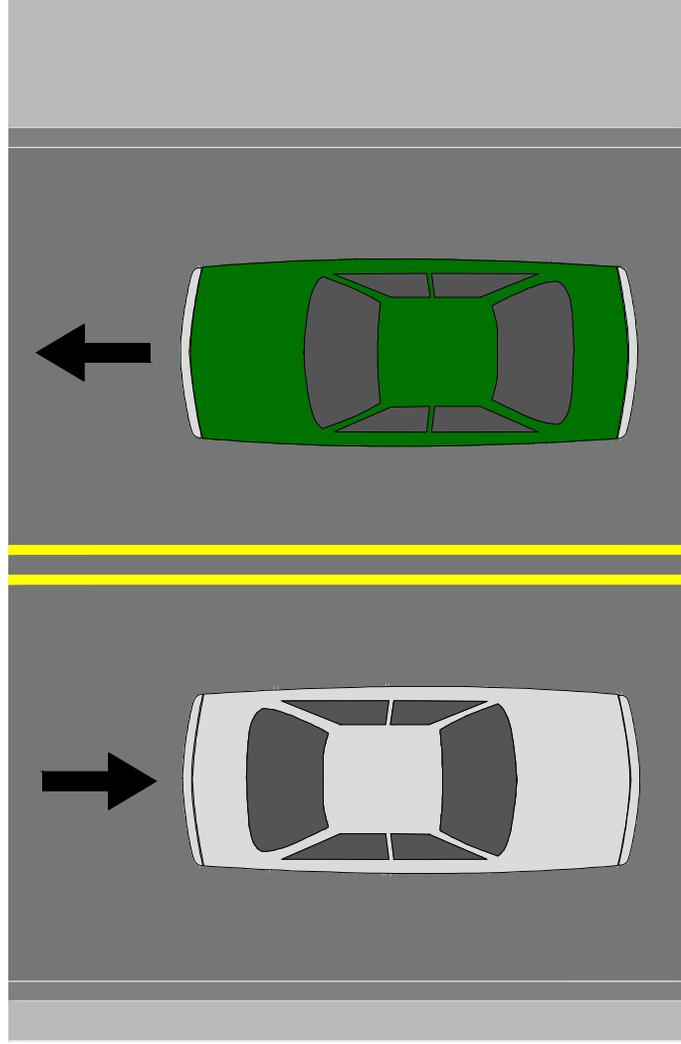
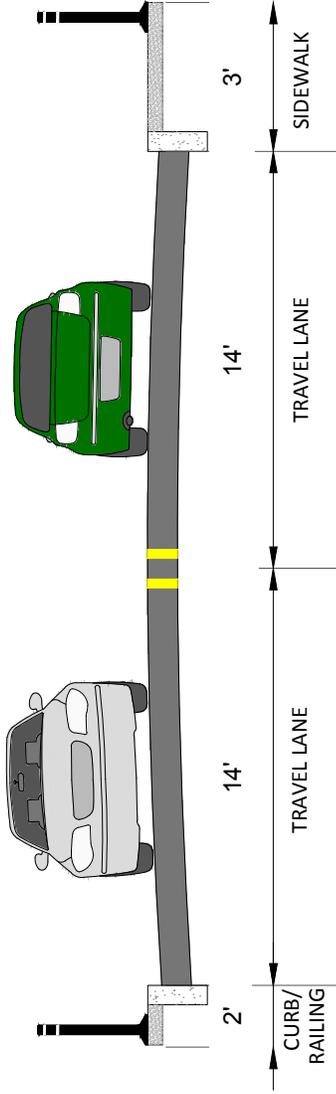
Figure 28: More natural alternative to a swimming pool: an area outlined by river rocks decreases the current and allows sediment to settle for cleaner water in which to swim (Cacapon River, West Virginia, source: <http://www.terrain.org/arterrain/24/gallery.htm>)

- Some see future steps including building a boat house with rest rooms, or even a pavilion on the west shore, and improving a gravel path or a board walk on the east side.
- Consider lighting the parks
- Develop a walking bridge for viewing the falls
- Build a dog park

Next Steps

- This draft memo will be presented at a public meeting to ensure accuracy and to gather input on improvement ideas for input. A draft presentation will be sent to the steering committee for review and comment prior to the public meeting.
- The team will work with the Steering Committee to establish priorities based on the public input. The prioritization criteria will correlate directly to the community vision and will be incorporated into a transparent methodology to rank the recommendations from Task 1. This task will include fast track projects and actions that can be initiated immediately.
- The steps needed to implement the priority projects will be detailed in an implementation plan, to include timeframe, lead agency, potential partners, and possible funding mechanisms. The draft implementation plan will be reviewed with the Steering Committee prior to being finalized.
- All of the documents and deliverables created in the previous tasks will be compiled into a draft master plan. The draft plan will be reviewed with the Steering Committee and then presented at a final public meeting. After the final comments from the Steering Committee and public meeting have been incorporated, the master plan will be finalized.

Attachment A: Cross Sections



NOT TO SCALE

REVISIONS

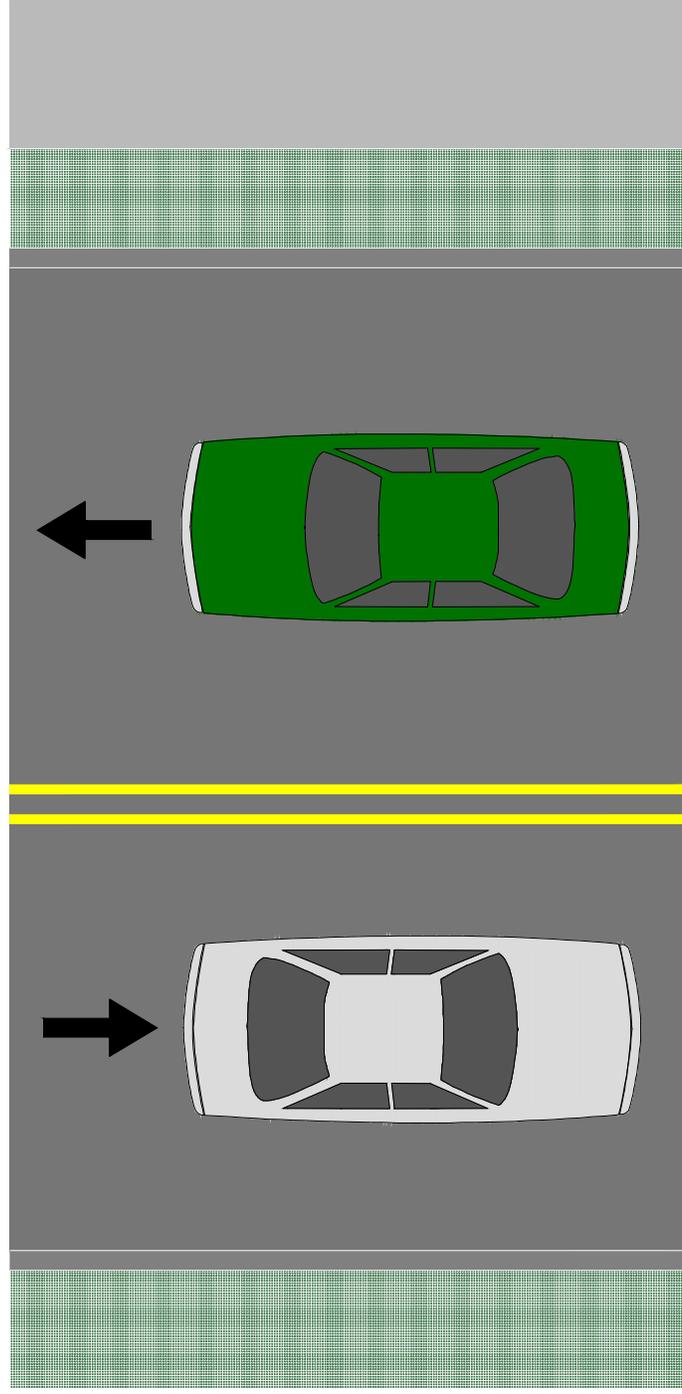
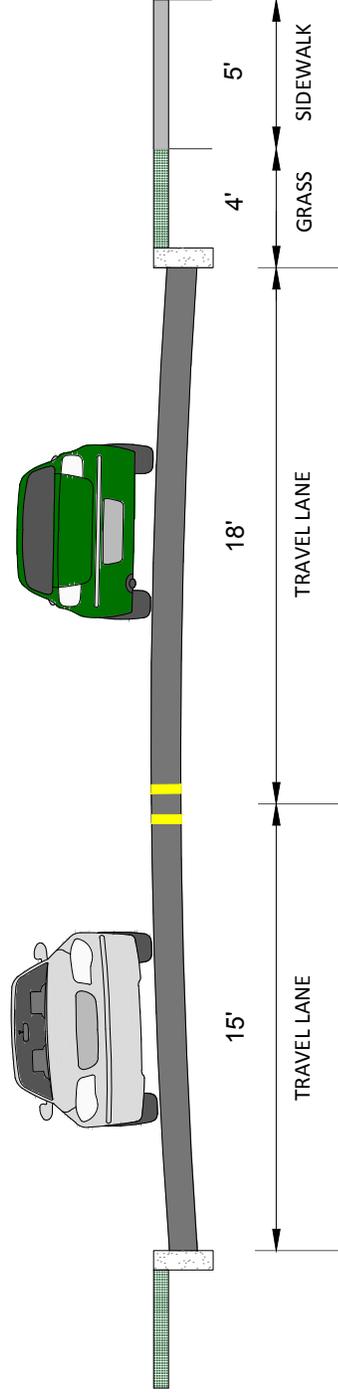
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REV 2	DESIGNED
DRAWN	BROWN
CHECKED	ISLER
DATE	AUGUST 2015

SHEET NAME
EXISTING CONDITIONS
CROSS SECTION

**MAIN STREET
(BRIDGE)
EASTBOUND
TOWN OF VERGENNES**



33 BROOK ST. SUITE 405
ROCHESTER, NH 03099
PHONE: (603) 639-8910 FAX: (603) 639-2820
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NOT TO SCALE

**MAIN STREET
(BETWEEN BRIDGE & S. WATER STREET)
EASTBOUND
TOWN OF VERGENNES**

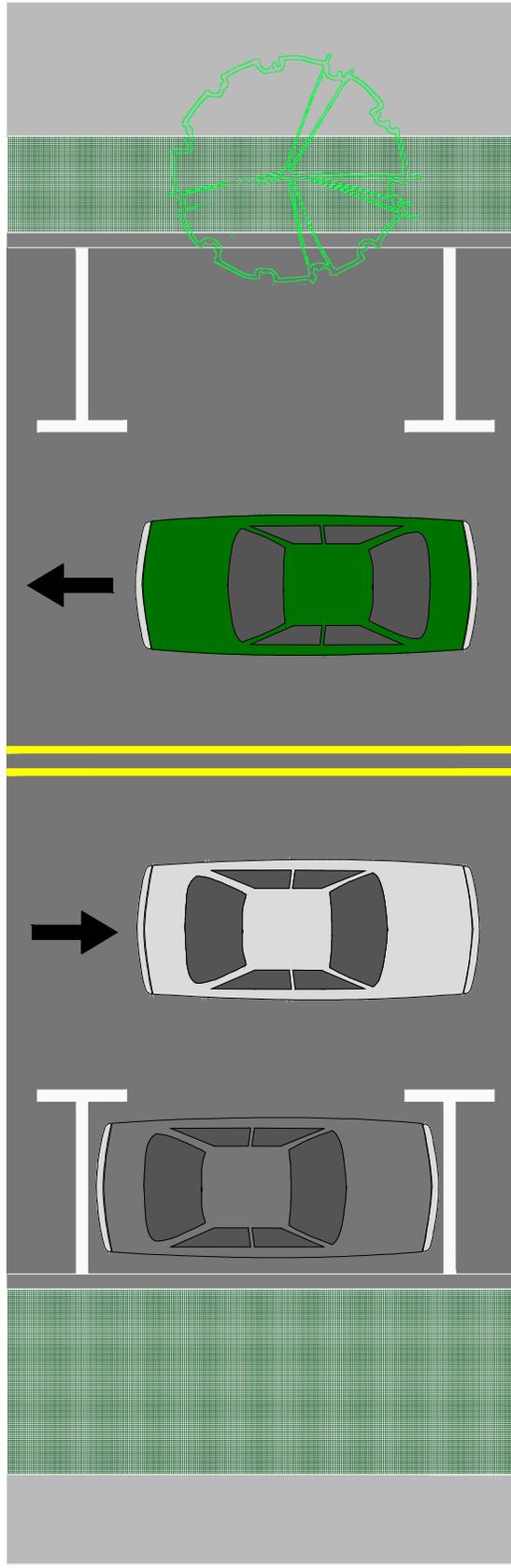
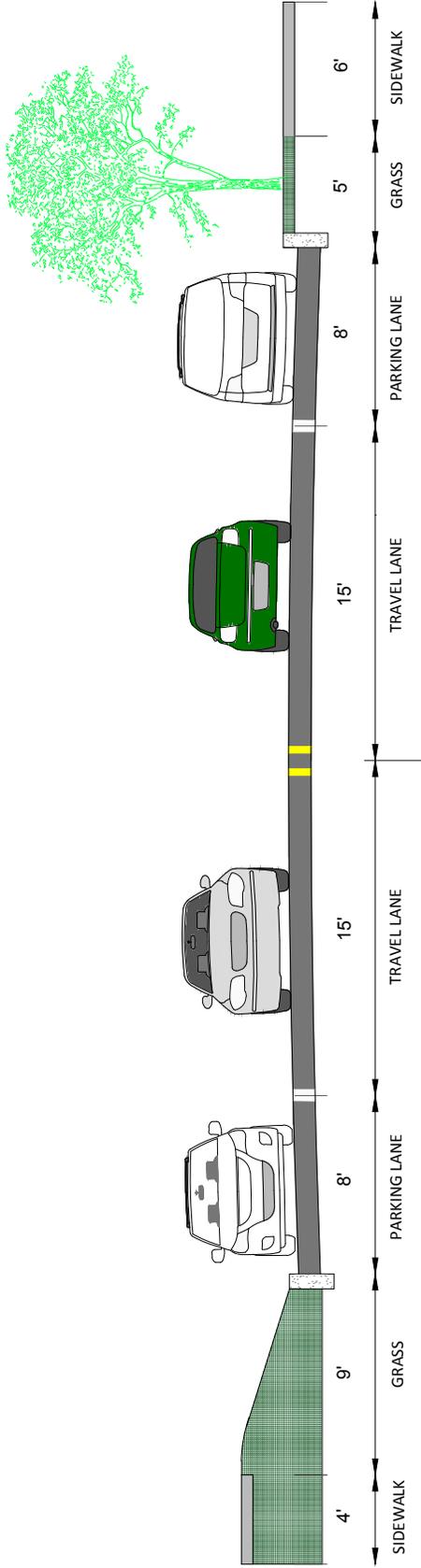
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REVISIONS

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	CHECKED	ISLER	
	DATE		AUGUST 2015



38 BROAD ST. SUITE 405, BOSTON, MA 02109
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NOT TO SCALE

TOOLE DESIGN GROUP
MAIN STREET
(BETWEEN S. WATER STREET & MAPLE STREET)
EASTBOUND
TOWN OF VERGENNES

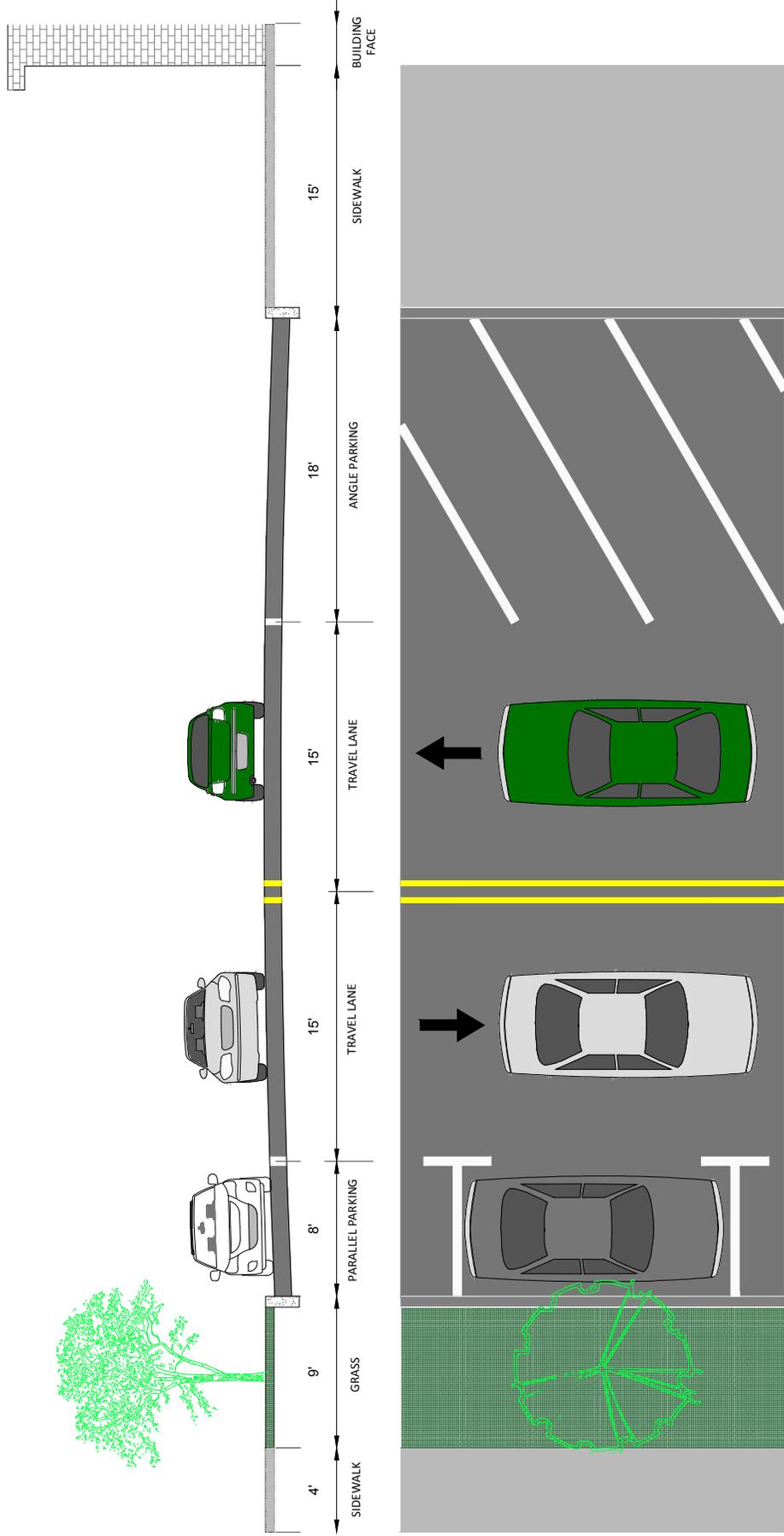
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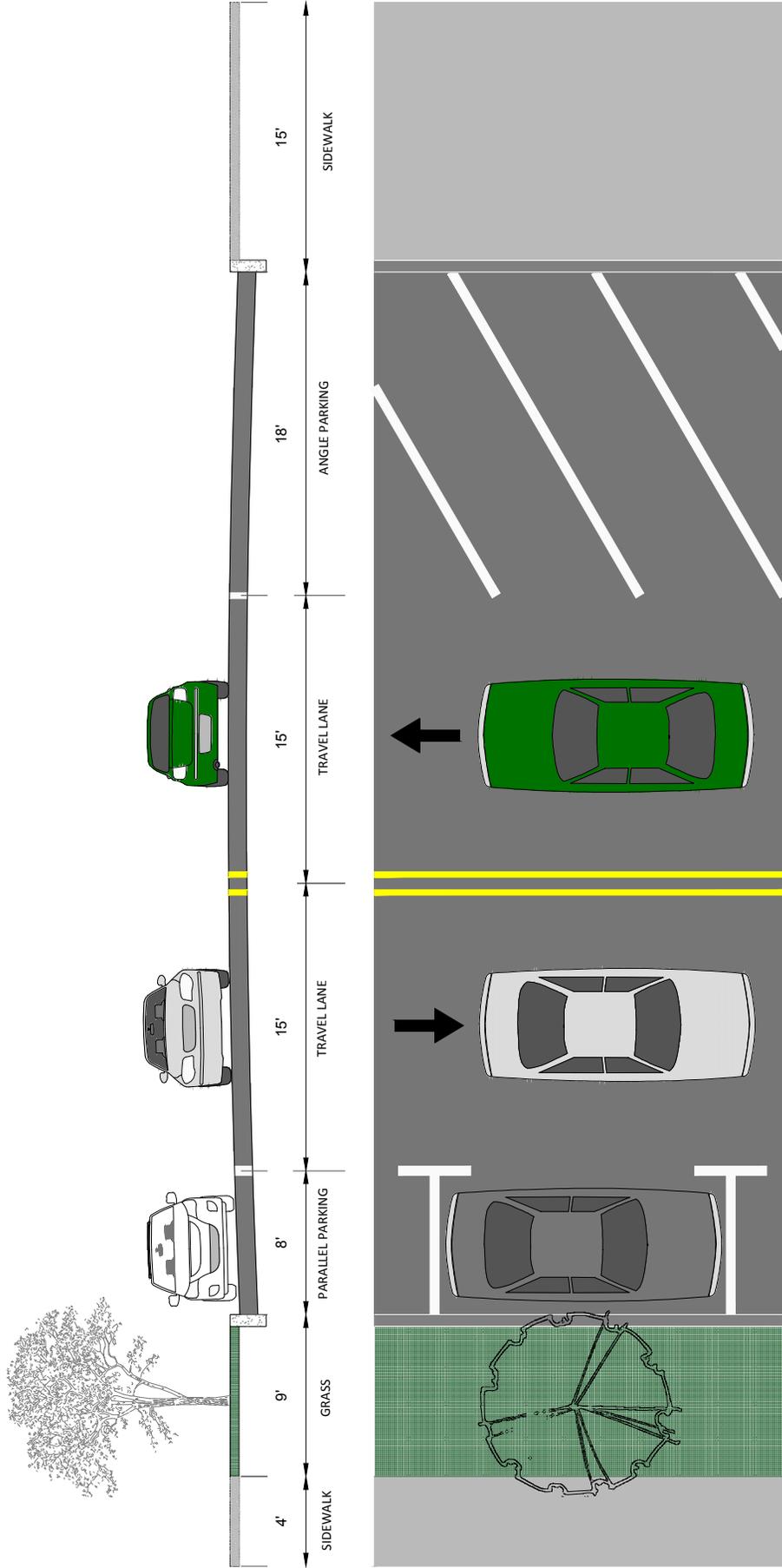
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TOOLE DESIGN GROUP
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(BETWEEN S. MAPLE STREET & PARK STREET)
EASTBOUND
TOWN OF VERGENNES

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	DATE	AUGUST 2015

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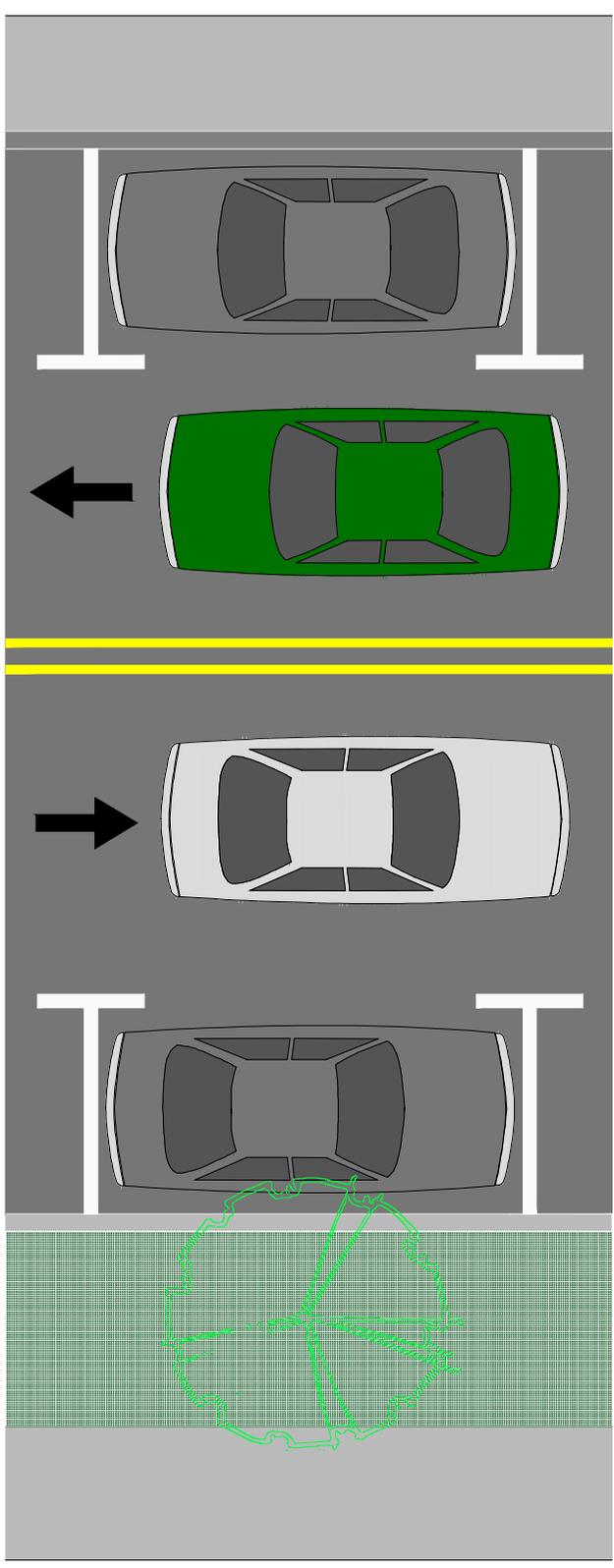
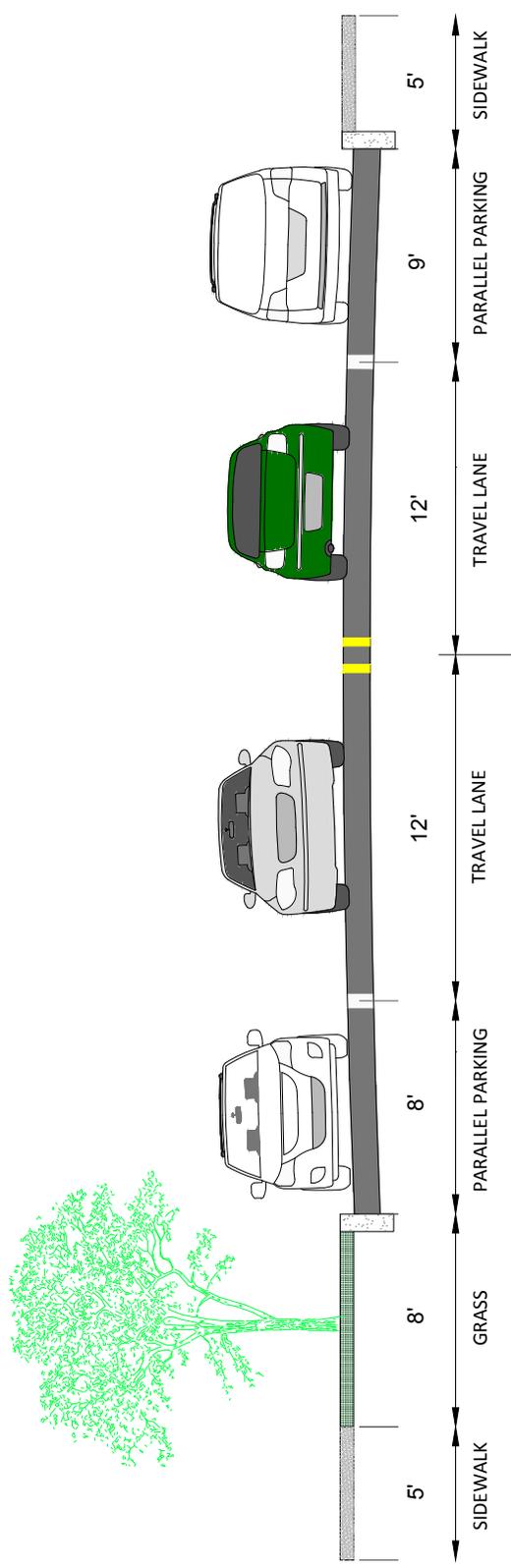
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DESIGNED
DRAWN
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DATE

BROWN
BROWN
ISLER
AUGUST 2015

**MAIN STREET
EXISTING CONDITIONS**
TOWN OF VERGENNES

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NOT TO SCALE

**MAIN STREET
(BETWEEN EAST STREET & NORTH STREET)
EASTBOUND
TOWN OF VERGENNES**

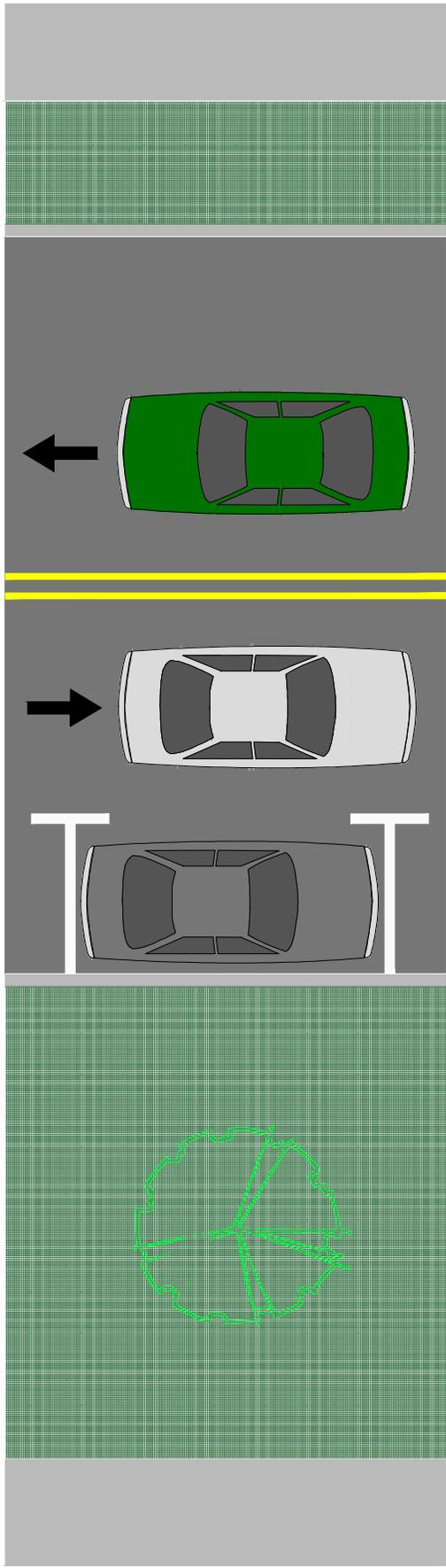
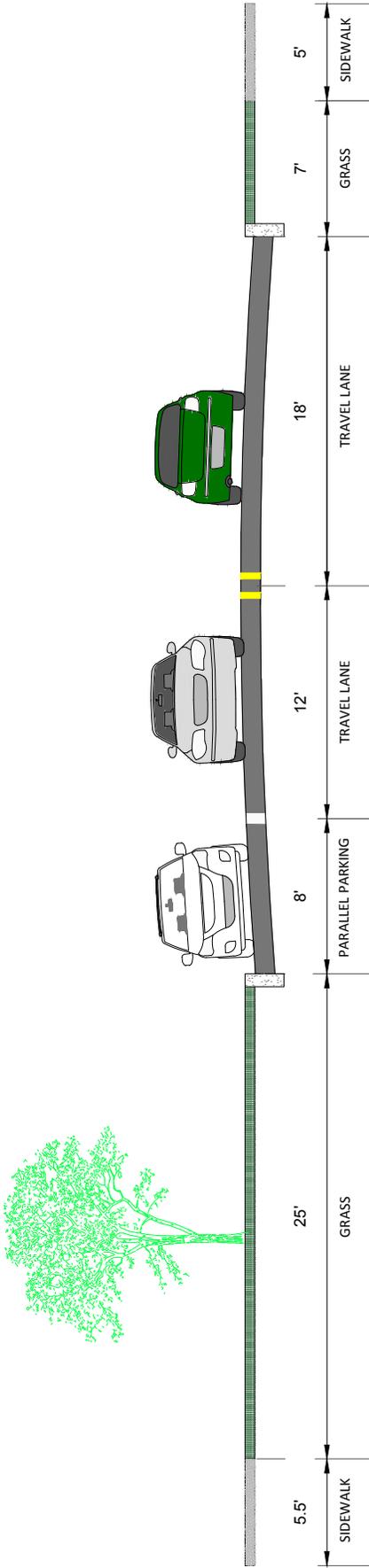
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CROSS SECTION**

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REV. 2
DESIGNED
DRAWN
CHECKED
DATE

BROWN
ISLER
AUGUST 2015



33 BRADDOCK ST. SUITE 406, BOSTON, MA 02109
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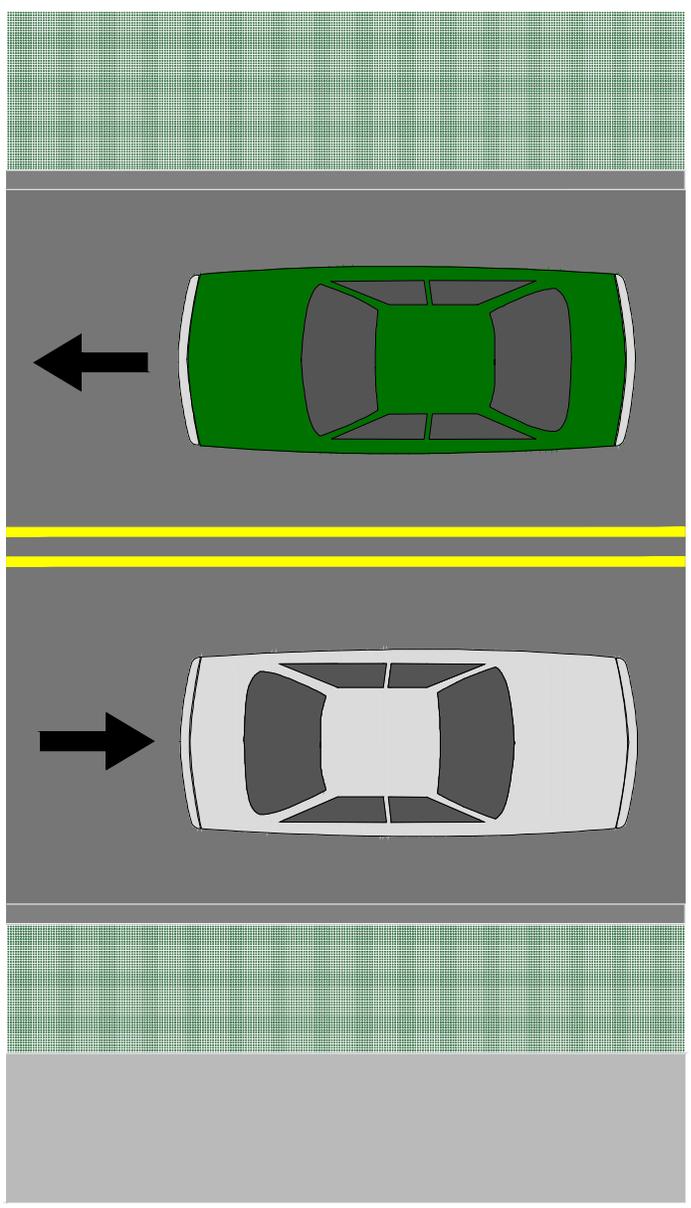
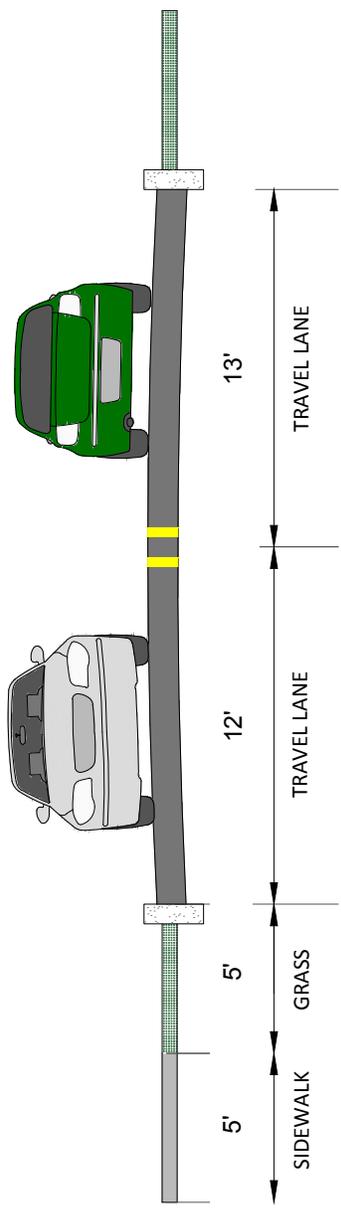
NOT TO SCALE

**MAIN STREET
(BETWEEN SCHOOL STREET & MONKTON ROAD)
EASTBOUND
TOWN OF VERGENNES**

SHEETNAME
EXISTING CONDITIONS
CROSS SECTION

REVISIONS
REV. 1 DESIGNED BROWN
REV. 2 DRAWN BROWN
CHECKED ISLER
DATE AUGUST 2015

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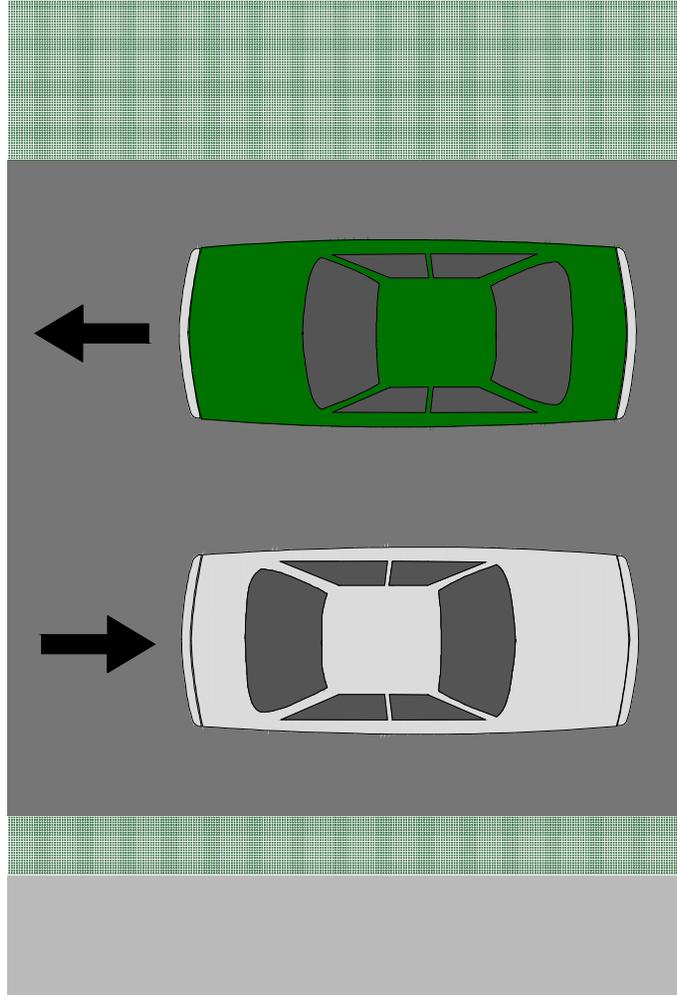
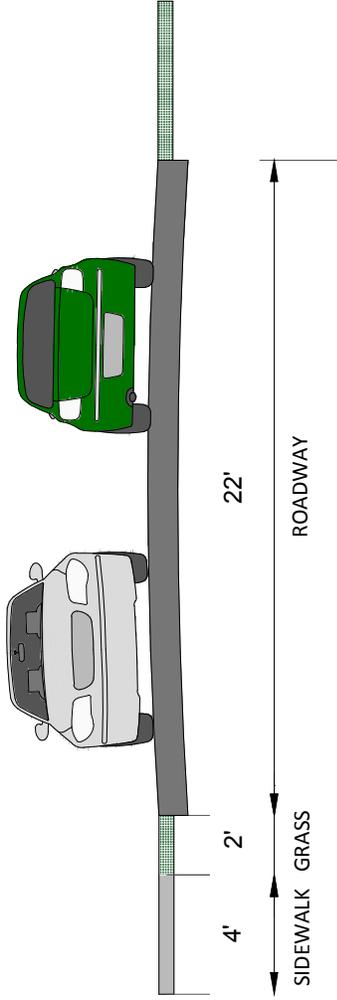
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MACDONOUGH DRIVE
(BETWEEN MAIN STREET & BATTERY HILL)
SOUTHBOUND
 TOWN OF VERGENNES

REVISIONS		DESIGNED	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE
REV. 1	BROWN	BROWN	ISLER		AUGUST 2015
REV. 2					

SHEET NAME
 EXISTING CONDITIONS
 CROSS SECTION



NOT TO SCALE

MACDONOUGH DRIVE
(BETWEEN COMFORT HILL STREET & HIGH STREET)
SOUTHBOUND
 TOWN OF VERGENNES

SHEET NAME
 EXISTING CONDITIONS
 CROSS SECTION

REVISIONS
 REV. 1 DESIGNED BROWN
 REV. 2 DRAWN BROWN
 CHECKED ISLER
 DATE AUGUST 2015

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Attachment B: Intercept Survey Results

Staff intercepted people in Vergennes on July 31 and August 6 to answer a brief survey to understand people's reasons for visiting the City. The results of the interviews are below:

- 25 people were intercepted (some individuals, some in small groups)
 - 7 were residents of Vergennes
 - 18 were visitors
 - 6 were from other places in VT
 - 3 were from NY
 - 9 were from Canada
- What will you do while you're here?
 - Kayaking/boating (10 responses)
 - Walking/hiking (7)
 - Dining (6)
 - Shopping (4)
 - Biking (4)
 - Fishing (3)
 - Swimming (3)
 - Visit the food market (2)
 - Reading at the library (1)
 - Basin Harbor (1)
- What do you like about Vergennes?
 - The Falls/The Basin (5)
 - Not crowded/Less hectic (3)
 - Restaurants (3)
 - Walkable (3)
 - Nice, clean community (2)
 - It's a small city with everything you want (1)
 - Shopping (1)
 - Hiking and biking (1)
 - Easy spot for kids (1)
 - Main Street redesign, Opera House, architecture (1)
- Is there anything that you think is missing?
 - Youth activities like a skate park, playground, basketball court, organized rec sports leagues (4)
 - More docks (3)
 - More electrical outlets at docks (with adaptors to convert Canadian power cords) (2)
 - More restaurants/really good restaurants (2)
 - Swimming pool (2)
 - Ice skating, winter activities (2)
 - Showers (1)
 - More trees to prevent shoreline erosion (1)

- Another grocery store (1)
- A larger safer park (1)
- Fireworks (1)
- Better, more options to recycle (1)
- Taxi service/shuttle to get groceries to dock (1)
- Other comments/suggestions
 - Safety issue: truck traffic, especially at the 4 way intersection.
 - Safety issue: BF Goodrich traffic and pedestrians.
 - Safer place for the park
 - Kids are bored which is why there are drug issues.
 - Nowhere for kids
 - More information on water/water depth; boaters not sure if water is deep enough for keel; maybe have information at entrance of river to indicate water level
 - More information on how to get here and what there is to do/notable sites for visitors; looked at map at docks but that wasn't enough info
 - Water does not look inviting to swim in, would love access to a pool

