



Downtown Barre has been the governmental, civic, and retail heart of the community from its earliest days. Like many downtowns, Barre was the center of commerce for the community but experienced outmigration of retail to suburban locations during the 1970's and 1980's. For many years, the City explored ways to revitalize downtown. In the spring of 2011, Barre's downtown would be forever changed with the spring flood that inundated the core of the community. Shortly thereafter, Barre would begin the multi-million dollar "big dig" that would reconstruct the entire Main Street corridor including utilities buried deep beneath the street.

The Big Dig was completed and has led to significant additional investment in downtown. As a result, the V-DAT team was tasked with several efforts for Barre. First, Barre wanted to better understand its current and future market potential for downtown in light of the significant investments taking place. Second, the Barre Partnership and its partners at the City of Barre and the Barre Area Development Corporation desired a marketing strategy that would carry the community forward. Third, Barre desired a way to "connect the dots" between the many efforts occurring with its planning efforts. Finally, the community wanted to explore ways for the Barre Partnership to be a successful and vibrant partner with key groups throughout the City

About the Project

The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) was selected by the State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program in May 2013 to conduct a community planning and economic development charrette in Wilmington. The V-DAT was comprised of experts in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, historic preservation, economic development, organizational structure, landscape architecture, engineering and community branding.

The V-DAT planning charrette operates on three key tenants: utilizing an asset based approach, addressing the community in a holistic manner, and conducting the exercise in a public forum.

Market Opportunities

Barre has a significant opportunity to reinforce its role as a regional retail destination with a variety of retail uses that can round out the excellent retail and restaurant mix already in place downtown.

The visitor market is a strong opportunity for Barre by connecting major visitor attractions in the region and downtown Barre. Attractions like the Rock of Ages and the Granite Museum coupled with downtown attractions such as the Barre Opera House, the Vermont Historical Society, and the Barre Civic Center can all attract visitors that will, in turn, shop and dine in Barre.

There is a great opportunity for consistent pride building messaging for Downtown to celebrate accomplishments and point to future plans. Downtown Barre is only going to get better as current plans come to fruition and having a clear message will be critical for the Barre Partnership to work with the City of Barre and the Barre Area Development Corporation.

Investors come to a community that has a plan, has demonstrated commitment to that plan through public infrastructure, and stand ready to partner with the private sector to see a project come to fruition. Barre has demonstrated that commitment.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Barre should continue to create connections among the major amenities in the community. There are great plans underway in Barre and "connecting the dots" will be a key goal of the coming years.

Long-Term Potential Infill Opportunities Oriented to Street (TYP) (Creamery to Maple Master Plan)

Significant Parking Resource (Surface Short - Term), Potential Parking Deck (Long-Term)

Depot
Potential West Depot Square

Potential Depot Square Mixed Use

Potential "Central Park"

Metro Way Garden

CVRBP Prospect/Fairview Street Route

Potential "Brooklyn Park"

CVRBP Brooklyn Street Route

Potential Parking Deck (Long-Term)

Auditorium

Potential Drop-Off Court

Strong Streetscape/ Pedestrian Connection to Main Street

Potential Parking Deck (Long-Term)

City Place

Depot Square

"Summer and Pearl" Pocket Park

Organized Parking Courts

Summer Street Housing Development

Potential Long Term Infill Development and Parking Deck. See Figure 3.3.1A and Figure 3.3.1B

City Hall Park (Landscape Enhancements)

Currier Park



Physical Plan

Barre is fortunate to have well written and viable plans already underway. The current Merchants Row Master Plan and the Summer to Main Master Plan clearly illustrate the potential to continue investment in downtown Barre. These plans couple well with efforts to continue the Central Vermont Recreation and Bike Path (CVRBP) through downtown Barre and the Metro Way Community Garden.

As Barre moves ahead, the V-DAT physical plan is designed to do three things. First, it will reinforce the validity of current initiatives underway showing how they work in a broader context. Second, it will "connect the dots" between existing initiatives and plans underway work together to make for a more cohesive, investment friendly, and visitor oriented downtown. Finally, the plans look to the future to show how existing initiatives and plans for the next five years might evolve into even more investment opportunity in the long term. Façade Improvements

Downtown Barre has several opportunities for public and private sector building owners to enhance their facades. From ornate Victorian buildings to more simple 1950's era architecture, Barre has an opportunity to continue to improve the buildings along Main Street and throughout downtown.



The Barre Brand

Barre is an authentic community and functioning City in a state known for small villages and hamlets. Barre has the opportunity to assert its historic role in building the state and the nation while reflecting on the beauty, the arts, and the opportunities in the City and its downtown. This calls for a fresh look at Barre's brand identity. The following brand statement describes Barre:

Years ago, as the blade of a plow cut through the fertile Vermont soil, it was brought to an abrupt halt. Early settlers certainly knew of the granite outcroppings but few knew that beneath the dirt was a treasure that would change this place, our nation, and the world.

Barre granite became the solid foundation on which Vermont was built. Blocks carried to our neighbor created a capitol that inspired others to seek Barre granite for monuments and buildings that span the globe. At the same time the world was coming to Barre as artisans and craftsmen journeyed here to create a mixture of cultures that make our community rich in heritage from many lands. These same people brought creative thinking and innovation to Barre.

From this history, Barre grew as one of Vermont's showplaces. Our architecture, sculpture, and monuments rival those in the most cosmopolitan of cities. We met challenges with a resilience and courage that is born from a people who deal with molding the strongest of stone into the most intricate pieces of art.

Today, we are using the strength of our past to transform our future. Whether it is revitalizing our downtown: the very heart of Barre, serving people less fortunate through innovative training, providing artists a place to create unencumbered by intellectual restrictions, or presenting our remarkable story to those who seek to know this truly unique place.

Downtown Barre has re-emerged, built on a strong foundation, developing through strong partnerships, and looking forward to a strong future.

We are Downtown Barre, strength through vision.



Project Funding and Support
This project was supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery. The plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the State of Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, the Division of Community Planning and Revitalization and the Town of Barre. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of HUD or the State of Vermont. For more information on the Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) program and links to the detailed presentation and report for Barre please visit http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities or call (802) 828-5229.