

# **CITY OF BARRE 2005 MUNICIPAL PLAN**

**Adopted by Council: October 18, 2005**

Planning and Zoning Department  
City of Barre  
6 North Main Street  
Barre, VT 05641

802-476-0245

## **History:**

The following public hearings were held regarding this plan:

- Planning Commission Public Hearing: 8/10/05
- Council Hearings: September 20, 2005 and October 18, 2005

This Municipal Plan replaces the previous Municipal Plan adopted February 12, 2003, in its entirety.

## **Acknowledgements:**

*Partial funding for this project was provided from the Municipal Planning Grant Program administered by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs.*

*Additional funding to complete the Downtown Market Study was provided through a Vermont Community Development Program grant, a Vermont Community Foundation grant and a donation from Edgewood Development, Inc.*

*Sponsorship of Public Forums was partially provided by:*

- *Times-Argus*
- *Northfield Savings Bank*
- *Sean and Nora's Restaurant*
- *Community National Bank*
- *Fecteau Residential Homes*

*The City of Barre would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that participated in development of this plan including:*

- *Barre City Planning Commission*
- *Vermont Forum on Sprawl*
- *Vacant Land Study Planning Commission Subcommittee members*
- *Housing Study Planning Commission subcommittee members*
- *Child Care Planning Commission subcommittee members*
- *Market Study committee members*
- *Barre Housing Authority*
- *Barre Partnership*
- *Barre Area Development*
- *Central Vermont Land Trust*
- *The many individuals, businesses, and organizations who participated in the public forums and hearings*

# CITY OF BARRE

## 2005 MUNICIPAL PLAN

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **Municipal Plan Definition and Purpose**

The municipal plan is both a thorough research document of the community's present condition and a guide for accomplishing community aspirations and intentions through public investments, land use regulations and other implementation programs. The plan is based upon surveys of existing conditions and probable future trends in the municipality, the region, and the state. Based on these surveys and trends, the plan identifies strategies for development and preservation of resources.

Factors considered include:

- The capability of the land to support the uses
- The availability of community facilities and services necessary to accommodate the uses
- The need to prevent overcrowding of land and buildings
- The interrelationship and compatibility of proposed land uses with existing ones
- The need to ameliorate undesirable conditions
- Consistency with other policies of the community and region.

The principal purpose of the municipal plan is to be a guide for the achievement of short-term and long-term community goals. To do that, the plan attempts to:

- Define the community's vision for its future
- State and promote community values in its goals, objectives and programs
- Establish a process for orderly growth and development
- Balance competing interests and demands
- Provide for coordination and coherence in the pattern of development
- Provide for a balance between natural and built environment
- Reflect regional conditions and consider regional impacts
- Be consistent with statewide goals and policies
- Address both current and long-term needs
- Give specific guidance while retaining enough flexibility to be useful when faced with unforeseen circumstances

The Planning Commission is responsible for preparing the plan, distributing the plan, holding public hearings on the plan, and submitting it to the Council for consideration. Council is required to hold at least two additional hearings before adoption.

The Barre City Plan has been prepared with close attention to the requirements of Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated which requires municipal plans to include the following elements:

- A statement of objectives, policies and programs
- A land use plan
- A transportation plan
- A utility and facility plan
- A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources
- An educational facilities plan
- A recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan
- A statement indicating how the plan relates to the development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, the area and the region

- An energy plan
- A housing element which includes a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs

### **History of Barre City Planning Process**

Barre City has had a history of municipal plan development. The following are the municipal plan activities to date:

- 1963 — First municipal plan was prepared as a joint City and Town project. It included a land use plan, community facilities plan and a traffic plan.
- 1971 — A less comprehensive study and plan was completed.
- 1980 — A new plan was adopted addressing future land use, transportation and parking, and community facilities.
- 1985 — A new plan was prepared and adopted and then readopted in 1990
- 1992 — A comprehensive new plan was developed, adopted and formed the basis for the current plan
- 1994 — An economic development plan was developed.
- 1997 — The plan was readopted with amendments and the 1994 economic plan was included as addendum to the plan
- 2003 — The 1997 plan was readopted with the addition of 2000 census data.

Zoning and subdivision regulations have been the primary means to implement land use recommendations in municipal plans. Barre City also has a long history of land use regulations. Some of the major highlights include:

- 1950 — First zoning ordinance for the City of Barre was adopted creating three zoning districts: Residential, Commercial and Industrial.
- 1968 — First revision created a Light Industry Zone.
- 1974 — A complete overhaul of the ordinance was completed forming the basis for the current zoning districts.
- 1985 — Flood Hazard Area regulations adopted.
- 1986 — Subdivision Regulations adopted.
- 1996 — The Development Review Board was created.
- 2000 — Design Review Districts were created.
- 2003 — Total re-write of Zoning Ordinance for clarification of regulations and uses.

### **Current Municipal Plan Process**

In September 2003, the Planning Commission started the process of creating this municipal plan. The Planning Commission formed study committees to address the topics of child care, housing, vacant and redevelopable land parcels, and marketing the downtown.

Study committee tasks included some or all of the following:

- Conducting a preliminary analysis to get a sense of issues and directions.
- Gathering and compiling statistical data and information regarding study topics.
- Inventorying existing and proposed facilities.
- Conducting surveys for additional data.
- Interviewing key individuals involved in study topic.
- Using the city's Geographic Information System to provide for a spatial analysis of data.
- Analyzing data and information.
- Preparing a presentation of findings and recommendations.

- Conducting public forums on study topics
- Presenting their findings and/or written draft to the Planning Commission

The downtown market study was a separate study with a summary included as part of this plan. The complete plan is adopted by reference and is included in the appendix. The downtown market study was a joint project of the City of Barre and the Barre Partnership, the designated downtown organization.

A series of informal public forums were held to review the downtown revitalization, child care, housing, and land use issues. These forums provided a means to review the Planning Commission's initial findings and recommendations with the public.

### **Plan Format**

This plan first includes a community profile. This community profile has been developed to provide an overall view of the past and current trends. The community profile will provide the reader with an overall understanding of the community.

Following the community profile are chapters relating to the individual elements of the plan. Each section also includes:

- Data that relates to specific elements
- An analysis of available data and issues relating to elements
- A statement of goals and directions
- Specific strategies



## **Barre City Community Profile**

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This community profile has been developed to provide an overall view of the past and current trends in Barre City. It also provides data that is not specific to just one element of the plan. The community profile will provide the reader with an overall understanding of the community. Unless otherwise indicated, the statistical data has been obtained from the United States Census. Additional data and analysis of trends pertinent to individual plan elements are found within those sections of this plan.

### **History of Barre<sup>1</sup>**

On November 6, 1780, 19,900 acres of land which was west of the New Hampshire Grants and east of New York was chartered to William Williams and 60 others and given the name of Wildersburgh. This chartered land encompassed the area known as the City of Barre and the Town of Barre. In 1788 John Goldsbury and Samuel Rogers brought their families here and began to settle the area. They were eventually joined by other people from New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

In 1793, the name of the community was changed to Barre. There is some debate about whether this occurred by auctioning off the right to the highest bidder or by means of a fist fight.

After the initial process of settling the community, the basic manufacturing enterprises of the day (saw mill, grist mill and bartering of food) were established. Barre started to develop in a different manner than the surrounding communities after the granite industry was established soon after the War of 1812. The development of this industry and other factors led to some population growth up until 1830. However, this growth leveled off for some fifty years thereafter. There were 2,012 residents in 1830 and just 2,060 in 1880.

The arrival of the railroad in Barre helped the granite industry become a major industry. The fame of this vast deposit of granite, which some geologists say is 4 miles long, 2 miles wide and 10 miles deep, soon spread to Europe and Canada. Large numbers of people migrated to Barre from Italy, Scotland, Spain, Scandinavia, Greece, Lebanon, Canada and a number of other countries. The population increased from 2,060 in 1880, to 6,790 in 1890, to 10,000 in 1894.

Over time, a major portion of the population came to reside in the lower valley portion of the Town which included different villages. For reasons best known to the people of the time, just under four square miles of the more populated area of the town was carved out in 1895, and the City of Barre was created by the action of the voters and the charter which was granted by the state legislature. The City of Barre has continued to exist as a separate governmental entity from the Town to this date.

### **Land Use**

#### ***Natural Features***

Barre City is the site of the junction of two valleys, carrying the Stevens and Jail Branches of the Winooski River. The valley floor is at approximately 600 feet above sea level and ranges from one-half to one mile in width. Rising above the valley floor are flat-topped, gently rolling to steep hills approximately 400 feet above the valley floor.

The Stevens Branch runs through the downtown area, portions of which have been channeled. Much of the downtown area is located within the 100-year FEMA flood plain with flood levels of less than one foot to over six feet.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Extracted from "Barre in Retrospect" 1876-1976 published by the Friends of the Aldrich Public Library, 1975.

### ***Land Use Patterns***

Barre City covers 4.02 square miles and 3,232 land parcels were included on the 2004 grand list. Land use changes have not been significant in recent decades. Only 18.5 acres of land have been converted from undeveloped and non-forested or forested land to developed land from 1970 to 1990<sup>2</sup>. Table 1 shows a breakout of assessment classification of uses:

| <b>Class</b>                         | <b>Acres</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Single Family Unit                   | 645          | 29.7%          |
| Mobile Homes Unit                    | 15           | 0.7%           |
| Two Family Unit                      | 81           | 3.7%           |
| Three Family Unit                    | 30           | 1.4%           |
| Four Family Unit                     | 16           | 0.7%           |
| Five or More Units                   | 47           | 2.2%           |
| General Commercial                   | 45           | 2.1%           |
| General Office                       | 7            | 0.3%           |
| Industrial                           | 124          | 5.7%           |
| Utilities                            | 19           | 0.9%           |
| Hotel/Motel                          | 17           | 0.8%           |
| Nursing care                         | 29           | 1.3%           |
| Mixed Use                            | 16           | 0.7%           |
| Farm                                 | 123          | 5.7%           |
| Exempt - Other                       | 34           | 1.6%           |
| Exempt - Local (includes cemeteries) | 325          | 15.0%          |
| Exempt - School                      | 33           | 1.5%           |
| Vacant - Residential                 | 474          | 21.8%          |
| Vacant - Industrial                  | 80           | 3.7%           |
| Vacant - Commercial                  | 10           | 0.5%           |

As shown above, approximately 38% of the land area is used for some type of residential use and approximately 12% is used for commercial and/or industrial uses. Approximately 18% is exempt property (most owned by Barre City) and approximately 31% is vacant and/or farm use. The local exempt property is 33% in cemetery use and another 35% is comprised of Rotary Park, Farwell Street recreation area, the bike path, and the cow pasture. (See the Appendix for mapping regarding the current zoning and vacant lands.)

There were 28 areas identified by the Planning Commission over two acres in size that have either no development or very limited development. These include larger individually owned parcels or smaller separately owned undeveloped parcels that are contiguous. Nine individually owned parcels, all over 10 acres in size, comprise 551 acres of vacant or farm land. Within these nine parcels 60% is on two parcels covering 141 acres. One parcel is 190 acres. (See the Land Use Section for additional details on a study of these vacant areas including likely develop.)

### ***Residential Land Use Lot Sizes***

2004 Assessment Department data was used to analyze current residential land uses within the two residential zones. Table 2 shows the percent of lots by size for single family uses.

<sup>2</sup> Source: UVM Center for Rural/Vermont Center for Geographic Information

<sup>3</sup> Source: Compilation of assessment data as of 4/1/04

| <b>Lot Size (sq. ft)</b>        | <b>R-10 District</b> | <b>PR District</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Over 10,000                     | 85%                  | 55%                |
| 7,500 to 9,999                  | 9%                   | 12%                |
| 5,000 to 7,499 of size required | 4%                   | 16%                |
| Under 5,000                     | 2%                   | 16%                |

As noted, most single family homes in the R-10 district are over 10,000 square feet which is the required minimum lot size for that district. The single family PR lot sizes are significantly different than the R-10 district. Approximately 32% of the homes are on lots less than 7,500 square feet compared to only 6% of the R-10 homes. Only 55% of the PR homes meet the current required 10,000 square foot lot size requirement. (See the Housing Section for additional discussion and analysis on lot size requirements and analysis. See also the land use mapping in the Appendix for maps of lot conformance.)

In the PR district, 36% of the developed residential lots are multi-family uses. Approximately 80% of the two-family dwellings are on lots under 5,200 square feet. Approximately 80% of the parcels with three or more units have lots sizes of 1,500 square feet or more per unit. This is considerably different than the requirements in the PR District. (See the Housing Section for additional discussion and analysis on lot size requirements and analysis.)

### **Population Characteristics, Changes and Projections**

#### ***Population Size and Estimates***

Barre has experienced an overall population decline of 15% since 1940 as shown in Table 3. However, since 1960 the decline has been gradual. The decline from 1970 to 2000 can be attributed to a decline in household size. Between 1970 and 2000 the household size declined from 2.9 to 2.2 persons per household, or 24%. If the 2000 household size was still 2.9, as in 1970, the population would be over 12,000 persons. The average 2000 household size for Central Vermont and Vermont overall were both 2.4.

In contrast, the Central Vermont area had a 6.2% increase in population from 1990 to 2000 while the state overall population increase for 1990 to 2000 was 8.2%. Barre currently is the tenth largest town or city in the state.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Absolute Change</b> | <b>% Change Over Decade</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1940        | 10,909            | N/A                    | N/A                         |
| 1950        | 10,922            | 13                     | 0.1%                        |
| 1960        | 10,387            | -535                   | -4.9%                       |
| 1970        | 10,209            | -178                   | -1.7%                       |
| 1980        | 9,824             | -385                   | -3.8%                       |
| 1990        | 9,482             | -342                   | -3.5%                       |
| 2000        | 9,291             | -191                   | -2.0%                       |

The Census estimates the July 2003 population as 9,166.

In summary, given the current growth patterns and given that the household size will probably not continue to decline as much as in past decades, the overall population for Barre City will remain stable

or only slightly decline. Only major changes in development trends would substantially change this conclusion.

**Age Composition**

Table 4 compares the age composition in 1990 and 2000. As might be expected from general national trends, there was a slight increase in the percent of population between ages 30 to 64 and a slight decrease in the percent of population between ages 19 and 29. However the percentage of persons under 19 years old and the percentage of population over 65 years old changed only slightly. Barre City has a similar percentage of persons under 18 years old and a higher percentage of elderly population than the region and state. Compared to Central Vermont and the Vermont state overall, in 2000, the percentage of persons under 18 years old was 25% and 24%, and the percentage over 65 years old was 13% for both.

|                         | <b>1990</b> | <b>Percent Population</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>Percent Population</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 18 and Under            | 2,319       | 24%                       | 2,138       | 23%                       |
| 19 to 29                | 1,727       | 18%                       | 1,304       | 14%                       |
| 30 to 49                | 2,486       | 26%                       | 2,844       | 30%                       |
| 50 to 64                | 1,198       | 13%                       | 1,355       | 15%                       |
| 65 and Over             | 1,752       | 18%                       | 1,650       | 19%                       |
| <b>Total Population</b> | 9,482       |                           | 9,291       |                           |

**Race Composition**

Overall, Barre City’s population is predominately white. Only 5% of the population listed race as something other than all white. Throughout Vermont, about 3% of the population is non-white.

**Income Characteristics**

Table 5 indicates the income distribution for families and households. By Census definition households include all persons sharing a household unit. A family is a subset of a household and includes only households with two or more related individuals. Fifty-four percent of all households are considered families by the Census.

| <b>Income Range</b>    | <b>Households</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Families</b> | <b>%</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| Less than \$10,000     | 640               | 15%      | 174             | 8%       |
| \$10,000 to \$19,999   | 748               | 18%      | 253             | 11%      |
| \$20,000 to \$29,999   | 699               | 17%      | 345             | 15%      |
| \$30,000 to \$39,000   | 572               | 14%      | 325             | 14%      |
| \$40,000 to \$49,000   | 387               | 9%       | 273             | 12%      |
| \$50,000 to \$59,000   | 404               | 10%      | 316             | 14%      |
| \$60,000 to \$74,999   | 336               | 8%       | 285             | 12%      |
| \$75,000 to \$99,000   | 267               | 6%       | 222             | 10%      |
| \$100,000 to \$124,999 | 97                | 2%       | 73              | 3%       |
| Over \$124,999         | 79                | 2%       | 40              | 2%       |
| Total                  | 4,229             |          | 2,306           |          |
| Median Income          | \$30,393          |          | \$42,660        |          |



In 1999, 72% of the households earned less than \$50,000, although all income classes are present. In comparison, 60% of the Central Vermont households earned less than \$50,000. One-third of the households earned under \$20,000 compared to the Central Vermont region that had 21% of the households earning under \$20,000. Approximately 13% of the Barre City residents live at or below poverty compared to only 8% for the Central Vermont region. 18% of the children live in poverty. In addition, 17% of the population received food stamps in 1998 and 10.5% received public assistance income in 1999.

Likely reasons for the higher percentage of lower income households include:

- Subsidized housing attracting lower income families
- A high percentage (19%) of elderly persons compared to the region (13%)
- A high percentage (3.5%) of persons under supervision of the Department of Corrections who have limited skills and education compared to the state (1.6%)
- A low percentage (17%) of persons over 25 and older with a college degree compared to the region (30%)
- A higher percentage (53%) of rental properties attracting lower income people compared to the region (26%)

As would be expected, due to more two-income households, families have a higher household median income. The average annual wage for 2003 for Washington County is \$31,902<sup>4</sup>. (A local average annual wage is not available.)

### ***Marital Status***

Of the families, 71% are married couples, and 29% are families without a husband or wife present. There were 446 families, or 19% that included children with only one parent present. 87% of the single-parent families were headed up by a female. For comparison, in Central Vermont, 13% of the families included children with only one parent present. Likely reasons for the higher percentage of single-parent families is a higher percentage (53%) of rental properties attracting single-parent families compared to the region (26%.) Table 6 reflects these figures.

| <b>Table 6: Family Status</b>          |       |     |
|--|-------|-----|
| Total Families                         | 2,306 | %   |
| Married-couple Family                  | 1,642 | 71% |
| Breakout Married-couple families:      |       |     |
| With own children under 18 years       | 746   | 32% |
| No children under 18 years             | 896   | 39% |
| Other Family Types                     | 664   | 29% |
| Break Out of Other Family Types:       |       |     |
| Male Householder, no wife present      | 128   | 6%  |
| With own children under 18 years       | 55    | 2%  |
| No own children under 18 years         | 73    | 3%  |
| Female Householder, no husband present | 536   | 23% |
| With own children under 18 years       | 391   | 17% |
| No own children under 18 years         | 145   | 6%  |

<sup>4</sup> Source: Vermont Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

In married families, 80% of the husbands were in the labor force and 63% of the wives were in the labor force. Within other family types, 71% of the household heads were in the labor force. No statistics are available to identify how many families with children under 18 years old had parents in the labor force.

**Education**

As shown in Table 7, 18% of the population over 25 years old did not hold a high school diploma. This is higher than in Central Vermont overall where 12% did not hold a high school diploma. 40% of this population group has had some type of education beyond high school compared to 54% for Central Vermont overall.

| <b>Table 7: Education of Population Over 25 Years Old</b> |              |          |
|---|--------------|----------|
| <b>Population Over 25 Years Old</b>                       | <b>6,477</b> | <b>%</b> |
| No Schooling Completed                                    | 68           | 1.0%     |
| To Grade 4  | 12           | 0.2%     |
| Grades 5 to 8   | 466          | 7.2%     |
| Grades 9 to 12, No diploma                                | 648          | 10.0%    |
| High School Graduate                                      | 2,658        | 41.0%    |
| Some college, no degree                                   | 1,031        | 15.9%    |
| Associate Degree  | 446          | 6.9%     |
| Bachelor's Degree   | 827          | 12.8%    |
| Master's Degree   | 215          | 3.3%     |
| Professional Degree                                       | 69           | 1.1%     |
| Doctorate Degree  | 7            | 0.1%     |

Seventeen percent of the population over 25 years old had a bachelor’s degree or higher. In Central Vermont, 30% of this population group had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Employment**

There is almost an even mix between male and females employed and over 16 years old. Table 8 shows the Census industry groups where persons are employed. Education, health, and social services industry is the largest group employing 22% of the population. The industries of manufacturing, retail, and public administration were the next three dominant categories with each employing between 10-15% of the employed population over 16 years old. The industry employment categories for Barre residents is very similar to those in Central Vermont overall. Within Central Vermont education, health, and social services industry employed 22% of the employed population over 16 years old. In addition, the industries of manufacturing, retail, and public administration also employed between 10-15% of the population.

| <b>Table 8: Employment Status</b>  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
|  |       |       |
| <b>Population 16 Years and Over</b>  | 7,448 |       |
| In Labor Force   | 4,727 | 63.5% |
| Not In Labor Force   | 2,721 | 36.5% |
|  |       |       |
| <b>Employed Population 16 Years and Over</b>   | 4,515 |       |
| Male Employed  | 2,298 | 50.9% |
| Females Employed   | 2,217 | 49.1% |
|  |       |       |
| <b>Areas of Employment for Employed Population 16 and Over</b>                               |       |       |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining Industry                                 | 55    | 1.2%  |
| Construction Industry  | 262   | 5.8%  |
| Manufacturing Industry   | 558   | 12.4% |
| Wholesale Trade Industry   | 175   | 3.9%  |
| Retail Trade Industry  | 618   | 13.7% |
| Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities Industry  | 132   | 2.9%  |
| Information Industry   | 168   | 3.7%  |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, Leasing Industry                                    | 286   | 6.3%  |
| Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services Industry | 232   | 5.1%  |
| Education, Health, and Social Services Industry  | 1,004 | 22.2% |
| Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services Industry                   | 307   | 6.8%  |
| Public Administration Industry   | 507   | 11.2% |
| Other Service Industries   | 211   | 4.7%  |

**Commuting Patterns**

One-third of the workers over 16 years old reported employment within Barre City. Most workers commuted by motor vehicle. About 7% walked or biked to work. More people carpooled rather than used public transit, reflected in Table 9.

| <b>Table 9: General Work and Commuting Patterns</b> |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| <b>Workers 16 Year and Over</b>                     | 4,464 |       |
| Work in Barre City                                  | 1,486 | 33.3% |
| Work at Home  | 165   | 3.7%  |
| Work Outside Barre City                             | 2,978 | 66.7% |
|   |       |       |
| Commute by Motor Vehicle                            | 3,991 | 92.8% |
| Drive Alone   | 3,295 | 76.6% |
| Carpool   | 686   | 16.0% |
| Commute by Public Transportation                    | 30    | 0.7%  |
| Commute by Bicycle, Foot or Other Means             | 278   | 6.5%  |
| Reported Minutes to Work                            |       |       |
| Less than 5   | 248   | 5.9%  |
| 5 to 19   | 2,703 | 63.9% |
| 20 to 39  | 872   | 20.6% |
| 40 to 59  | 323   | 7.6%  |
| 60 to 89  | 84    | 2.0%  |
| Over 90   | 69    | 1.6%  |

Seventy percent of the workers traveled less than 19 minutes to work and another 21% traveled between 20 to 39 minutes. In comparison, Central Vermont workers traveled slightly more with 53% of the working people commuting under 19 minutes and 31% traveling between 20 to 39 minutes. The lower commuting times are likely due to more employment opportunities in the Barre/Montpelier area and reflect one of the benefits of encouraging development within established growth areas.

Table 10 indicates where Barre residents work. As would be expected from the data in Table 9, almost 75% of the residents work either in Barre City or the nearby towns of Montpelier, Berlin or Barre Town. (See Transportation Section for further discussion on transportation and commuting issues.)

| <b>Table 10: Residence to Work Patterns</b> |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| Work In                                     | 4,464 |       |
| Work in Barre City                          | 1,486 | 33.3% |
| Montpelier, Berlin and Barre Town           | 1,841 | 41.2% |
| Other Towns in Washington & Orange County   | 659   | 14.8% |
| Other Locations                             | 478   | 10.7% |

**Housing Characteristics**  
***Housing Change and Projections***

Although the population has slightly declined since 1940, the number of housing units has had small increases of less than 7% during the same time period except for the 1970's. In the 1970's 458 housing units were added. 47% of these units, or 216, were newly built subsidized housing units. Another 120 units can be accounted for by the construction of Highgate Apartments, which in 1991 became subsidized housing. Without considering the subsidized housing and Highgate construction, only 122 units were added in the 1970's. This is a 3.3% increase which is less than previous decades. Without considering subsidized housing units in the 1980's, only 50 units were added between 1980 and 1990, or about approximately 1%.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Total Housing</b> | <b>Absolute Change</b> | <b>% Change Over Decade</b> |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1940        | 3,151                |                        |                             |
| 1950        | 3,392                | 241                    | 7.6%                        |
| 1960        | 3,608                | 216                    | 6.4%                        |
| 1970        | 3,693                | 85                     | 2.4%                        |
| 1980        | 4,151                | 458                    | 12.4%                       |
| 1990        | 4,321                | 170                    | 4.1%                        |
| 2000        | 4,477                | 156                    | 3.6%                        |

| <b>Complex</b>  | <b>Year Built/Converted to Subsidized Housing</b> | <b>Number Units</b> |
|---|---|---------------------|
| Green Acres   | 1,971   | 50                  |
| Washington Apts.  | 1,970   | 51                  |
| Tilden House  | 1,973   | 79                  |
| Jefferson   | 1,976   | 24                  |
| CDW Summer St   | 1,978   | 12                  |
| North Barre Manor   | 1,982   | 120                 |
| Highgate *  | 1,991   | 120                 |
| <b>Total</b>  |   | <b>456</b>          |
| * Highgate was constructed in 1970 but was converted to subsidized housing in 1991. |   |                     |

In addition to the project based subsidized housing, there are another 269 Section 8 housing vouchers. Central Vermont Land Trust has another 52 units receiving some type of subsidy. Approximately 777 units, or 17% of all housing units, received some type of assistance.<sup>5</sup> Project based housing is 10% of all available housing.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Information compiled from multiple data sources by the Planning Commission Housing subcommittee

In summary, given the past trends and given there is not some other major influence, there is no large housing increase projected (See the Housing Section for more discussion and information regarding housing issues.)

**Rental Unit Composition**

Approximately 53% of the housing units are rentals. Despite the significant addition of subsidized housing units between 1970 to 1982, there was a slight decline in the percent of rental housing units.

| Year | Owner Occupied | Renter Occupied | Total Occupied | % Rental |
|------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| 1940 | 1,246          | 1,812           | 3,058          | 59.3%    |
| 1980 | 2,006          | 1,997           | 4,003          | 49.9%    |
| 1990 | 1,967          | 2,081           | 4,048          | 51.4%    |
| 2000 | 1,993          | 2,287           | 4,280          | 53.4%    |

Forty percent of the housing units were detached dwellings. Smaller multiple dwelling buildings of 2 to 9 units make up 45% of the overall housing units and 76% of the attached housing units. Larger multiple dwelling buildings of 10 or more units made up 12% of the housing units and 21% of the attached housing units. Within the larger category, there are 444 subsidized housing units, or about 80% of this category.

| Type                   | Number | %     |
|------------------------|--------|-------|
| Detached Housing Units | 1,801  | 40.2% |
| Attached Housing Units | 2,651  | 59.2% |
| 1 Unit                 | 74     | 1.7%  |
| 2 Units                | 667    | 14.9% |
| 3 or 4 Units           | 679    | 15.2% |
| 5 to 9 Units           | 673    | 15.0% |
| 10 to 19 Units         | 137    | 3.1%  |
| 20 to 49 Units         | 117    | 2.6%  |
| 50 or More Units       | 304    | 6.8%  |
| Mobile Homes           | 25     | 0.6%  |

Over half of Barre City’s housing units were constructed prior to 1939 with the remaining construction occurring mostly from 1940 to 1979 with slightly less being built since 1980. Barre’s housing stock is slightly older than Central Vermont overall where 35% of the housing stock was built before 1939.

| Year          | Number | %     |
|---------------|--------|-------|
| 1980 to 2000  | 471    | 10.5% |
| 1960 to 1979  | 746    | 16.7% |
| 1940 to 1959  | 714    | 15.9% |
| Prior to 1939 | 2,546  | 56.9% |

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Occupied Housing</b> | <b>Household Size</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1970        | 10,209            | 3,523                   | 2.9                   |
| 1980        | 9,824             | 4,003                   | 2.5                   |
| 1990        | 9,482             | 4,048                   | 2.3                   |
| 2000        | 9,211             | 4,220                   | 2.2                   |

The average household size for Barre City in 2000 was 2.2 which is slightly less than the overall state household size of 2.4. This would be expected given the number of rental units.

The drop in housing size can not be attributed to a change in housing composition since the percent of rental units has not changed drastically since 1970. On a national level, the drop in housing size is due to families having fewer children and an increase in households without children due to the overall aging of the population. It is assumed this would be similar for Barre City.

***Housing Price Trends***

Table 17 shows the cost increases in 2004 housing sales based upon an Assessment Department study of residential resales (property sold more than once with a three-year time frame.)<sup>6</sup> The large annual increases are reflective of increases throughout Vermont. In 2003, the median price of a home in Vermont has risen to \$150,000. This is an increase of nearly 54% from 1996 and about 11% from 2002 alone.<sup>7</sup>

| <b>Type</b>                 | <b>Annual Increase in Cost</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Single-family dwellings     | 15.4%                          |
| Two-family dwellings        | 18.02%                         |
| Three-family dwellings      | 25.87%                         |
| Four-family dwellings       | 24.05                          |
| Five or more unit dwellings | 19.45%                         |

<sup>6</sup> Source: Barre City Assessment Department study of 100 single-family residences and multiple family dwellings with a total of 132 living units on 44 parcels.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Between a Rock and Hard Place: Housing and Wages in Vermont, 2004 Update

Table 18 shows the average selling price for various categories.<sup>8</sup> (See the Housing Section for additional housing data and discussion on housing issues.)

| <b>Table 18: Average Sale Price of Housing</b> |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Type</b>                                    | <b>Cost</b> |
| Condominiums                                   |             |
| Resale Units                                   | \$100,400   |
| New Units                                      | \$159,800   |
| Single-family dwellings                        | \$117,200   |
| Two-family dwellings                           | \$106,100   |
| Three-family dwellings                         | \$113,900   |
| Four-family dwellings                          | \$127,300   |

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Barre City Assessment Department study of 100 single-family residences and multiple family dwellings with a total of 132 living units on 44 parcels.



# Land Use

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## Introduction

The Vermont Planning and Development Act, includes the following land use goals:

- Development should maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact villages and urban centers separated by rural countryside.
- Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.
- Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas, or employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.
- Planning should provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.

The Planning Commission conducted two studies to develop this section of the plan. First, a review of existing land use regulations was completed by the Planning Commission in conjunction with the City Planning Department. Second, the Planning Commission and Planning Department, in conjunction with the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, conducted a study of the larger vacant parcels and parcels likely to be redeveloped. In addition, public input was obtained through a public forum on land use.

Some general land use patterns are presented in the community profile section. In addition, a detailed analysis of housing issues and development is included in the housing section. Some additional and more specific land use analysis is presented below. This section of the plan primarily focuses on the goals, issues and strategies relating to land use development and land use ordinances.

## Land Use Goals

The following land use goals are adopted:

- Encourage development of Barre City as a Micropolitan<sup>9</sup> in order to avoid sprawl development in the surrounding rural regions.
- Encourage commercial and mixed-used development within the designated downtown area.
- Allow the existing industrial uses to continue and expand to meet the demands of a changing economy.
- Preserve remaining open space areas where environmental and access issues make development undesirable.
- Increase the overall tax base through managed development.
- Preserve at least portions of city-owned properties as open space for outdoor recreation and enjoyment.
- Ensure new retail development be of a scale and scope suitable for a downtown urban environment.

## Vacant Land Use Study

There were 31 areas identified by the Planning Commission over two acres in size having either no development or very limited development, or were likely to be redeveloped with significantly different uses. These include larger individually-owned parcels or smaller separately-owned undeveloped parcels that are contiguous. Nine individually-owned parcels, all over 10 acres in size, comprise 551 acres of the

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<sup>9</sup> The US Census defines a Micropolitan as a core geographic area containing a substantial population nucleus, together with adjacent communities having a high degree of social and economic integration with that core where the total population is between 10,000 and 50,000.

vacant or farm lands. Within these nine parcels, 60% is on two parcels — one parcel being 141 acres in size and the other parcel being 190 acres in size. (See Appendix for the vacant area study map.)

The Planning Commission formed a land use subcommittee to complete on-site assessments of the 31 identified areas. Technical assistance was provided by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl. The committee included members of the Planning Commission, local residents, and a representative from the Central Vermont Community Land Trust.

The committee completed site visits of most parcels and provided written assessments. In addition, the Planning and Zoning Administrator reviewed potential development issues with the City Engineer. An effort was made to contact land owners of vacant parcels to discuss anticipated future land uses. Some landowners participated in a land use public forum.

This information was compiled and reviewed by the Planning Commission. Individual assessments were prepared and are included in the Appendix.

The following classes of vacant or redevelopable lands were identified:

- **Lands along undeveloped rights-of-way** — these small parcels, generally under multiple ownerships, were created through old city subdivisions. They exist along rights-of-way without any developed streets. Most lots have no direct access to developed streets. Five areas covering 47 acres exist within this class.
- **Large undeveloped tracts of land** — these four parcels, each under individual ownership, are undeveloped and each are at least 70 acres in size.
- **Downtown industrial area** —this area is comprised of the industrial area between the river and the Merchants Row parking and is under multiple ownership.
- **Undeveloped areas on Allen Street** — these two vacant parcels are zoned commercial-industrial with a smaller area zoned residential.
- **Undeveloped residential properties** — this class of land included 16, mostly vacant parcels, each individually owned, which were suitable for single-family and/or multi-family development and varied in size from 3 acres to 48 acres.

The following is a review of recommended changes within each of these areas. More detailed information can be found within the individual assessments in the Appendix.

#### ***Lands along undeveloped rights-of-way***

The main issue regarding these properties is access to road frontage and utilities. Multiple ownerships make development difficult. The parcels furthest from public streets are difficult to develop due to high costs for construction of access and utilities.

Development of lots abutting existing undeveloped rights-of-way is recommended to be allowed on private streets and with connections to private utilities only if a condominium or similar type homeowner association is formed to guarantee adequate maintenance of such facilities. In addition, standards for such private streets are recommended to be included in the local land use regulations.

#### ***Large undeveloped tracts of land***

These areas represent the major parcels of land left in the City having potential for some preservation of open space. The City "cow pasture" property is recommended to stay at least in partial public ownership with development of outdoor recreation activities. Furthermore, it is recommended the city consider limited multi-family development on part of the property to generate revenue and increase available multi-family housing while still preserving portions for open space and outdoor recreation (See the

facilities section for further discussion of recreation.) The proposed limited multi-family development would require rezoning a portion of the property to PR.

The other large parcels are on the western side of the City next to the Berlin town line. Much of the area is steep, has limited access, and limited sewage and water availability. This area is mostly zoned Conservation. Efforts should be made, both through regulatory changes and other means, to encourage cluster residential developments on these parcels. This will result in the land owners being able to develop their properties while still preserving open space areas. In addition, external funding sources should be explored to determine available funds for purchase of conservation easements or outright purchases of these properties.

The exception to this recommendation is the upper portion of the Bisson farm property. This area is recommended to change to R-10 to allow for single family development within the carrying capacity of the available utilities and road network (See Appendix for map of areas to be considered for rezoning.)

### ***Downtown industrial area***

This area was historically the downtown industrial area, but changes in the local economy resulted in some of the buildings being abandoned or converted to commercial uses. A small residential area exists within the center of this area allowing for the potential to redevelop with light industrial uses, commercial and multi-family.

This requires rezoning this area from industrial to a district that allows mixed uses. It is recommended a new mixed-use district be created for this area allowing for existing industrial uses to continue while encouraging new development to be limited light-industrial, commercial and multi-family. This new proposed district would encourage development that compliments the existing abutting downtown area. Several properties along the river currently have industrial uses. It is recommended, initially, these properties remain industrially-zoned. At a later time they may be considered for change to the new mixed-use district when potential mixed-use developments are proposed (See Appendix for map of areas to be considered for rezoning.)

Last, this area has potential for enhancement of the Stevens Branch including a possible walkway and similar amenities. It is recommended a setback from the river be required of new development in order to preserve the riverfront area. Riverfront development is further discussed in the environmental section.

### ***Undeveloped areas on Allen Street***

This area includes two parcels currently undeveloped. Past plans called for industrial development on at least portions of these properties. However, such development has not occurred and may not be desirable given the distance from the downtown, lack of public transit, and disturbance of environmentally sensitive areas within the parcels. A more desirable development would be single family or multi-family, possibly as a cluster development, in order to avoid wet areas and steeper slopes. In 2003, this area was rezoned from a light-industrial zone (which is no longer present in the current zoning ordinance) to industrial-commercial. This rezoning allows for development of residential uses as conditional uses in addition to development for the commercial and industrial uses. No rezoning change is recommended for this area.

### ***Undeveloped residential properties***

The remaining studied parcels included various undeveloped residentially-zoned properties throughout the City. None are recommended for rezoning. PRD developments are encouraged to preserve open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas. Some of these parcels are situated behind properties developed on public streets and have limited accessibility. In the past, proposals have been submitted to the City to allow for shared driveways to access these rear properties. Shared driveways have been

problematic due to issues of shared winter maintenance, parking within the shared easements, and overall coordination. It is recommended land use regulations be modified to not allow creation of any new lots that do not have frontage on a public street and reasonable potential for construction of driveways to the proposed building area. In no case, are shared driveways recommended to be permitted when they are the only possible access to a lot with the exception of those parcels on undeveloped rights-of-way.

### **Review of Existing Land Use Ordinances**

A major rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance was completed and adopted in August, 2003. Since that time certain provisions were found to need further clarification and minor modifications. The Planning Commission completed a review of the existing zoning regulations and found the following areas of clarification and modification were recommended:

- Addition of definition for pole mounted signs
- Clarification and amendments to expiration of and time to complete approved development
- Minor amendments of standards for small parking lots, addition of snow storage provisions and addition of waiver for parking standards
- Modification to allow for waiver of application items not deemed to be applicable
- Clarification of requirements for business signs
- Define the word "street" to mean a class 1, 2 or 3 road
- Addition of provision for one additional small business sign on a property
- Addition of definitions for contracting services and repair shops
- Addition of a definition for a change in use
- Change single-family and two-family dwelling additions and accessory structures in commercial districts to permitted uses instead of conditional uses
- Allow approval of minor home occupations by the Zoning Administrator
- Clarification that accessory structures can be attached to the principal structure
- Exemption of certain minor uses from setback requirements

Proposed draft language and further explanation of the proposed changes is included in the Appendix.

The following reviews are also recommended to be completed:

- Review and modify access standards to not permit lots created without frontage on a public street, require homeowner-type associations for development of lots on undeveloped rights-of-way, and not permit shared driveways as the only means of access to a lot.
- Review and possibly modify the Design District standards for clarity.
- Review and possibly add regulations of adult uses.
- Review and possibly modify PRD provisions for clarity.
- Review and modify the subdivision regulations for clarity and streamlining approval process.
- Review and possibly add regulations regarding various types of waste disposal operations, including landfills. (See environmental section for further discussion.)
- Review and possibly add regulations restricting the size of new retail development.

In 2003, the state laws governing land use regulations were modified affecting certain provisions of the existing land use regulations. The following changes are recommended in the zoning and subdivision ordinances in accordance with the new state laws:

- Modify the language regarding existing small lots to allow development on lots in separate and nonaffiliated ownership if they existed prior to January 5, 1974 and were at least 5,000 square feet in size and 40 feet in width. Contiguous lots that come under common ownership are

recommended to lose the right to be individually developed unless such development occurs on a configuration of lots meeting required district lot sizes.

- Modify the required frontage regulations to require that lots only be developed with frontage on a public street, whereby a public street is defined as a class 1, 2 or 3 road. No new lots are recommended to be permitted without public street frontage and reasonable potential for construction of driveways to the proposed building area.
- Modify the home occupation provision from requiring home occupations to "not change the character" of a neighborhood to "not have an undue effect upon the character of the neighborhood."
- Modify height restrictions for antennas, wind turbines, and roof-top solar collectors to require them to be within the district height regulations.
- Add a provision stating certain uses listed in 24 VSA § 4413 are only regulated in regards to those items listed in 24 VSA § 4413.
- Modify the existing accessory apartment provisions to be in accordance with the required provisions of 24 VSA § 4412(1)e, which allows accessory apartments in any single-family dwelling.
- Modify the group home regulations as amended in 24 VSA § (a)(g) and clarify the separation requirement between homes is to each group home structure, not the property line.
- Correct inaccurate Vermont State statute section references in current zoning ordinance.
- References to old sections of Chapter 117, Title 24, should be updated to the current sections.
- Fences and certain other minor land developments are recommended to be exempt from zoning permits under the provisions of 24 VSA § 4446.
- Modify the time to record plans to 180 days.

### Proposed Implementation Strategies

Based upon a review of the land use analysis and public comments, the following strategies are recommended.

**Table 19: Proposed Land Use Strategies**

| <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Time frame</b> | <b>Involved Parties *</b> | <b>Resources</b> | <b>Key Tasks</b>  |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| Study and develop a new mixed-use zoning district for the downtown industrial area that includes appropriate light industrial uses, commercial uses and residential. | 2005-6            | PC, PZ, BP                | Staff assistance | Develop draft district guidelines<br>Hold public forum with invitations to property owners<br>Finalize guidelines<br>Complete required adoption process |
| Study and develop final recommendation for exact area for Bisson farm rezoning to R-10   | 2005-6            | PC, PZ                    | Staff assistance | Develop boundaries for rezoning<br>Complete required adoption process   |
| Finalize and adopt the proposed zoning clarification amendments  | 2005-6            | PC, PZ                    | Staff assistance | Finalize changes<br>Complete required adoption process  |
| Finalize and adopt the zoning amendments related to Chapter 117, Title 24  | 2005-6            | PC, PZ                    | Staff assistance | Finalize changes<br>Complete required adoption process  |

**Table 19: Proposed Land Use Strategies**

| <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Time frame</b> | <b>Involved Parties *</b>   | <b>Resources</b> | <b>Key Tasks</b>   |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Complete a review and possibly modify or add standards regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access standards</li> <li>• Design District standards</li> <li>• Regulations of adult uses</li> <li>• PRD provisions</li> <li>• Subdivision ordinance</li> <li>• Waste disposal operations</li> </ul> | 2005-6            | <b>PC, PZ, BP</b>           | Staff assistance | Develop new regulations<br>Hold public forum<br>Finalize regulations<br>Complete required adoption process |
| Study and develop recommendations for limited development of cow pasture property  | 2005-6            | <b>PC, PZ, Council, Eng</b> | Staff assistance | Develop schematics<br>Hold public forum<br>Present to Council for consideration                            |
| * <b>Bold indicates lead implementing party</b><br>PC-Planning Commission, PZ-Planning and Zoning Administrator, BP-Barre Partnership  |                   |                             |                  |  |

# Housing

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## Introduction

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes several goals directly related to housing, including:

- Plan development to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside
- Ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters
- Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income.
- New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities
- Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings
- Accessory apartments within or attached to single-family residences, which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons, should be encouraged

The Planning Commission formed a housing subcommittee to address the above housing goals and to develop draft strategies for the Planning Commission's consideration. Membership included representatives from the City Planning Department, City Assessment Department, Barre Housing Authority, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Washington County Mental Health Services, Central Vermont Land Trust, Community National Bank, Chase Surveying, and Fecteau Residential, Inc. Public input was obtained through a public forum.

A presentation of general housing data and trends is presented in the Community Profile Section of this plan. Some additional and more specific housing data and analysis is presented in this section. In addition, this section of the plan focuses on the issues and strategies relating to housing.

## Housing Goals

The following housing goals are adopted:

- Promote programs and strategies that provide assistance with housing purchases for low-moderate income households
- Promote programs and strategies that provide assistance with rental costs for low-moderate income households
- Promote programs and strategies that help control the rising housing costs
- Increase communication between the various housing organizations operating within the city
- Modify lot size regulations to allow in-fill development to occur at levels already present in neighborhood areas
- Promote a user-friendly environment that encourages residential developers to invest and construct within the city
- Continue efforts to improve rental housing quality through a rental inspection program

Encourage new residential development to locate in Barre City as part of an effort to meet the state housing goal, "to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside."

## Housing Turnover Data

In order to better understand why people are buying housing in Barre City, a housing turnover survey was completed. A survey asking demographic questions and some general questions about housing purchase decisions was sent to all residential properties involving valid sales from January 1, 2004 to November 3, 2004 using 2004 Grand List data. A total of 285 surveys were sent out of which 159, or 56%, were returned. (See the Appendix for a completed tabulation of turnover data.) The survey percentage of owner-occupied, rental properties, and owner-occupied rentals correlated closely to the same percentage as the actual survey population. Given the high rate of return and given the close correlation in similar mix of uses, the survey is considered to be valid to draw conclusions. (See the Appendix for a copy of the housing survey.)

The first part of the survey dealt with general information about the new owners. The following are some conclusions:

- 41% of the new owners made improvements, since purchasing their property, indicating that a significant number of new owners bought the properties with the intention of making improvements.
- 36% of the respondents of rental properties were owner-occupied rentals compared to an overall city-wide rate of 44% owner-occupied rental properties.
- Realtors were the top means of searching for properties (used by 44% of the respondents) with the internet, newspaper, and friends being used by 20-27% of the respondents.
- 45% of the owner-occupied respondents previously lived in Barre City, Barre Town or Montpelier, 15% were from other Central Vermont areas, 21% were from elsewhere in Vermont, and 12% were from out-of-state. Although about 8% did not indicate a past location, data reveals that about one-third of the new owners are coming from outside Central Vermont area. Of those outside Central Vermont, 64% are from Vermont.
- About a half of the respondents indicated they considered buying in the surrounding towns of Montpelier, Berlin and/or Barre Town.
- 58% of the respondents commute less than 19 minutes to work. The 2000 Census showed 69% of people commute less than 19 minutes, indicating a slight increase in the distance people are traveling to work. When considering those who previously lived outside of central Vermont, but within the state, only 6% commute less than 19 minutes. It is assumed this increase in commuting time is due to the fact that those previously living further away kept their previous jobs near where they lived before.
- 41% of new owner-occupied households had at least one child living in the household. About 28% of the households had children in the 0 to 5 years old age class. Only 16% of the households had children 6 to 13 years old and 11% of the households had children 14 to 18 years old. There was no available data on children in rental units.
- When asked how long owner-occupant respondents anticipated staying in their new home, there was a mix of responses. About 40% plan on staying less than five years indicating their home is a starter home. Approximately 30% anticipated staying 5 to 10 years and another 30% anticipated a long term stay of over 10 years.
- When considering those with children under five years old, 36% of the owner-occupied respondents anticipated staying less than 5 years, 28% anticipated staying 5 to 10 years and 36% anticipated staying over 10 years in their home. A similar pattern was found with households having children 5 to 13 years old. Overall the distribution of responses to anticipated stay did not seem to vary much regardless if children were present in the household.

The second part of the survey examined how new owners ranked the importance of various items when making a decision to purchase their property. New owners were asked to rank twenty-one items as "little



or no importance," "some importance," "highly important," or "not applicable." Results were tabulated and analyzed for both owner-occupied parcels and rental parcels (including owner-occupied rentals.) (The detailed survey results in the Appendix provide further insight into the ranking priorities.)

A review of the owner-occupied properties reveals the following items as having at least 75% of the respondents ranking the importance as "some importance" or "highly important:"

- Overall quality of property (98%)
- General neighborhood quality (95%)
- Price of property compared to others (93%)
- Level of traffic on street (90%)
- Security of neighborhood (89%)
- Overall regional appeal (79%)
- Availability of housing in area (78%)
- Level of taxes compared to other areas (78%)
- Proximity to work (75%)

Rental property owners had similar rankings:

- Price of property compared to others (94%)
- Overall quality of property (94%)
- General neighborhood quality (92%)
- Level of traffic on street (88%)
- Good rental property investment (88%)
- Security of neighborhood (86%)
- Overall regional appeal (80%)

Shopping convenience, recreation opportunities, quality and availability of local services, desire to live in urbanized area, and proximity to family all received between 50% to 75% rankings for owner-occupied parcels indicating they weighed into the decision process, but not as much as the above issues. The quality of local schools did not rank high overall in considerations. When considering only owner-occupied households with children, 30% of the respondents ranked quality of schools as somewhat important and 42% ranked schools as highly important.

### **Housing Issues**

Upon examination of the housing data, the Housing Subcommittee and the Planning Commission identified the following issues that related to housing in Barre City.

#### ***Affordability and Availability of Purchase of Homes***

As discussed in the Community Profile Section, cost for single-family and two-family housing increased 15% and 18% in 2004 based upon a study completed by the City Assessor. This is a continuation of steady increases in the last few years.

The following is the average sale price of residential properties:

| <b>Type</b>               | <b>Cost</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Condominiums Resale Units | \$100,400   |
| Condominiums New Units    | \$159,800   |
| Single-family dwellings   | \$117,200   |
| Two-family dwellings      | \$106,100   |
| Three-family dwellings    | \$113,900   |
| Four-family dwellings     | \$127,300   |

Normally, a bank loan requirement is that not more than 30% of a household income be spent on housing costs (excluding utilities.) A typical single-family home at a cost of \$120,000, with a 30-year mortgage at 6% interest and with a 5% down payment, requires an annual household income of \$53,570. (See chart below for detailed comparisons of housing costs by type.) In addition, approximately \$8,600 is needed for down payment and closing costs.

The 1999, U.S. Census household income was \$30,393, and the median family income for 1999 was \$42,660. Given an inflationary adjustment of 10.4%, the 2003 median household income would be \$33,553 and the median family income would be \$47,096. The 2002 Vermont Department of Labor annual average wage was \$28,012. It can be concluded that less than half of the families and even more single-person households can not afford to buy a typical house for sale.

Another consideration is the effect of changes in interest rates. A two-percent increase in interest rates requires an additional \$6,050 of income. Given historical trends, it may be safe to assume interest rates will increase, making housing even less affordable.

In comparison, in 2003, the median single-family home cost in Vermont had risen to \$150,000, an increase of nearly 54% from 1996 and about 11% from 2002 alone. A Vermont household needs to earn \$56,090 to afford the median-priced home.<sup>11</sup> Indications are that Barre City offers housing at a more affordable price than Vermont overall. Given that one-third of the new buyers are from outside Central Vermont and given the housing prices are higher in other Vermont areas, it is assumed the housing costs are attracting other Vermonters to move to the city.

Housing becomes more affordable when considering purchasing an owner-occupied rental parcel. A typical two-family home at a cost of \$112,140 with a 30-year mortgage at 6% interest and with 5% down payment, requires an annual household income of \$35,100. A typical four-family home at a cost of \$146,483 with a 30-year mortgage at 6% interest and with 20% down payment, requires an annual household income of \$24,100. However, down payment and closing costs for a four-family dwelling is around \$29,000.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Compilation of assessment data as of 4/1/04

<sup>11</sup> Source: Between a Rock and Hard Place: Housing and Wages in Vermont, 2004.

**Table 21: Comparison of Required Incomes for Various Owner-Occupied Housing Types and Interest Rates<sup>12</sup>**

| <b>Single Family</b>   | <b>Loan Amount</b> | <b>Interest Rate</b> | <b>PITI*</b> | <b>Required income</b> | <b>Assumptions</b>  |
|--|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------|---|
| \$120,000  | \$114,000          | 6.0%                 | \$1,064      | \$42,000               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single family purchase, average taxes of \$3180 per year</li> <li>• Homeowners insurance at \$500 per year</li> <li>• Need \$8600 including closing costs</li> </ul>                   |
| \$120,000  | \$114,000          | 7.0%                 | \$1,139      | \$45,000               |   |
| \$120,000  | \$114,000          | 8.0%                 | \$1,217      | \$48,000               |   |
|  |                    |                      |              |                        |   |
| <b>Two Unit</b>  | <b>Loan Amount</b> | <b>Interest Rate</b> | <b>PITI</b>  | <b>Required income</b> | <b>Assumptions</b>  |
| \$112,140  | \$106,533          | 6.0%                 | \$1,014      | \$35,100               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental income of \$600. Tenant pays utilities.</li> <li>• Required income does not include rental income.</li> <li>• Can do with 5% down (\$9000 including closing costs)</li> </ul>   |
| \$112,140  | \$106,533          | 7.0%                 | \$1,084      | \$37,900               |   |
| \$112,140  | \$106,533          | 8.0%                 | \$1,157      | \$40,900               |   |
|  |                    |                      |              |                        |   |
| <b>Three Unit</b>  | <b>Loan Amount</b> | <b>Interest Rate</b> | <b>PITI</b>  | <b>Required income</b> | <b>Assumptions</b>  |
| \$119,380  | \$95,504           | 6.0%                 | \$879        | \$24,200               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both rentals cost \$600. Tenants pay utilities.</li> <li>• Required income does not include rental income.</li> <li>• Need 20% down (\$27,000 including closing costs)</li> </ul>      |
| \$119,380  | \$95,504           | 7.0%                 | \$942        | \$26,800               |   |
| \$119,380  | \$95,504           | 8.0%                 | \$1,007      | \$29,500               |   |
|  |                    |                      |              |                        |   |
| <b>Four Unit</b>   | <b>Loan Amount</b> | <b>Interest Rate</b> | <b>PITI</b>  | <b>Required income</b> | <b>Assumptions</b>  |
| \$146,483  | \$117,186          | 6.0%                 | \$1,009      | \$24,100               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each rental unit costs \$600. Tenants pay utilities.</li> <li>• Required income does not include rental income.</li> <li>• Need 20% down (\$33,200 including closing costs)</li> </ul> |
| \$146,483  | \$117,186          | 7.0%                 | \$1,086      | \$27,200               |   |
| \$146,483  | \$117,186          | 8.0%                 | \$1,166      | \$30,400               |   |
|  |                    |                      |              |                        |   |
| <p>*PITI: Principal, interest, taxes and insurance</p> <p>Further assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For multi-family units, all sales for each type in years 2004 and 2005 were averaged.</li> <li>• Three and four unit properties will also require an additional 6 months of PITI in homeowner's bank account in order to qualify for conventional financing. That averages an additional \$5300 for three-family homes and an additional \$6100 for four-family homes.</li> <li>• For all property types, it is assumed \$3180 per year is required for taxes and \$500 per year is required for homeowners insurance.</li> <li>• For all multifamily, this was assumed at \$600 per month rent per each non-owner occupied unit.</li> </ul> |                    |                      |              |                        |   |

<sup>12</sup> Source: Prepared for Housing Subcommittee by Lee Youngman, Community National Bank.

Last, affordability is affected by tax rates. Below is the current taxes required to be paid for the average sale units based upon a 2004-2005 Barre City tax rate of \$2.72 for owner-occupied residential property and \$3.1347 for non-residential property.

| <b>Type</b>             | <b>Owner-occupied Rate</b> | <b>Non-Residential Rate</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Condominiums            |                            |                             |
| Resale Units            | \$3,672                    | \$4,232                     |
| New Units               | \$4,345                    | \$5,007                     |
| Single-family dwellings | \$3,187                    | \$3,673                     |
| Two-family dwellings    | \$2,884                    | \$3,324                     |
| Three-family dwellings  | \$3,096                    | \$3,569                     |
| Four-family dwellings   | \$3,462                    | \$3,990                     |

Another way of considering the data is reviewing the actual average residential tax paid. The Vermont Department of Taxes normally uses single-family homes on parcels less than 6 acres in size for this evaluation. In 2003, the average residential tax in Barre City was \$2487. Within Vermont, 116 towns, or 46%, had a higher average residential tax. Within Central Vermont, 12 towns, or 47%, had a higher average residential tax. The neighboring towns of Berlin, Montpelier and Barre Town all had higher average taxes.

The other issue concerning purchasing, is availability. The following is the number of valid residential transfers between January 1, 2003 and December 31, 2004:

| <b>Type</b>                                      | <b>Count</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Condominiums                                     | 35           |
| Single-family dwellings (including mobile homes) | 197          |
| Two-family dwellings                             | 48           |
| Three-family dwellings                           | 25           |
| Four-family dwellings                            | 13           |

A data analysis of the multi-listing sales included, 139 single-family homes sold during 2003 and 2004 (the 58 additional transfers included in assessment data were mobile homes and sales by owner.) The analysis included a review of overall DOM (days on the market.) DOM's in the bottom and top 15% for that year were eliminated in this analysis in order to get an average DOM without including homes that sold very quickly or more slowly due to unusual circumstances.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Compilation of assessment data as of 4/1/04

<sup>14</sup> Source: Compilation of assessment data as of 4/1/04

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Avg. DOM</b> | <b>DOM for bottom 15%</b> | <b>DOM for top 15%</b> | <b>DOM Without Bottom and Top 15%</b> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2003        | 72              | 7 or less                 | 176 or more            | 34                                    |
| 2004        | 56              | 5 or less                 | 107 or more            | 36                                    |

The analysis shows single-family homes are selling quickly and availability has become scarce. This seems to also be confirmed by anecdotal information being provided by local realtors. It is assumed the lack of availability is also helping to drive up pricing.

Another aspect for examination is the availability of programs to assist with the purchase of homes by households with lower to moderate incomes. The Central Vermont Land Trust is the primary provider of such assistance through the NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center. This program is dedicated to expanding homeownership opportunities for people of all income levels in Washington, Orange and Lamoille Counties. The NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center provides pre-purchase credit and budget counseling, guidance on affordable mortgage financial products, home maintenance education, assistance with home rehabilitation planning, and delinquency consultation services. The HomeOwnership Center also administers loan and grant programs for down payment and other assistance for income-eligible recipients. The Homeland Grant Program provides down payment assistance up to \$20,000.00 for homebuyers with low to moderate income levels in exchange for restrictions which ensure permanent affordability of the property. The Revolving Loan Fund can be used to provide down payment assistance or low-interest property rehabilitation loans for borrowers who are similarly income qualified. There currently are 36 homes purchased through this program. The NeighborhoodWorks HomeOwnership Center also offers assistance with homeowners to prevent foreclosures through budgeting assistance and negotiation with lenders.

Other available homeownership financing programs include programs through the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and USDA Rural Development. A lead abatement program is also by the state through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The USDA program provides direct loans to low-income applicants who do not qualify for conventional financing. Financing is available for buying new or existing homes. Applicants must show adequate repayment ability for the loan request. Loan rates are subsidized based upon total household income and may vary by year depending upon household income. The subsidy can be recaptured from a portion of the home appreciation if a sale or refinance occurs within the first five years.

An analysis of the Assessment data also indicates approximately 44% of all rental properties are owner-occupied. This analysis was done by comparing homestead values and total assessment values. (This percentage is very close to a separate analysis done by the Assessment Department where it compared the mailing addresses to the location addresses. Where the two addresses are the same, the rental property is generally owner-occupied.) Table 25 shows the breakdown by type of unit.

**Table 25: Owner-Occupied Rental Properties with 2 to 8 Units<sup>15</sup>**

| <b>Class</b>        | <b>Total<br/>Parcels</b> | <b>Owner-<br/>occupied<br/>Rental*</b> | <b>Percent<br/>Owner-<br/>occupied</b> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Two-Family          | 312                      | 210                                    | 67%                                    |
| Three Units         | 137                      | 45                                     | 33%                                    |
| Four Units          | 65                       | 9                                      | 14%                                    |
| Five to Eight Units | 68                       | 4                                      | 6%                                     |
| Office and Apts     | 17                       | 3                                      | 18%                                    |
| Store and Apts      | 20                       | 2                                      | 10%                                    |
| Totals              | 619                      | 273                                    | 44%                                    |

Assessment records indicate there are 35 mobile homes within the city. No mobile home parks exist in the city and all mobile homes are on separate lots. Mobile home parks are permitted as a conditional use within the PR District. There is a set of standards for mobile home parks requiring "a mobile home shall be on a lot not less than 10,000 square feet in area, exclusive of any roads, walks, and common recreation areas." This requirement is overly restrictive and could be prohibitive to establishing a mobile home park. State law requires that reasonable standards be in place to allow for development of mobile home parks. A review of the mobile home park standard should be completed to make sure that provisions are reasonable.

Finance opportunities for manufactured homes are available through local banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions. A variety of loan programs are available for home land/home transactions including conventional (fixed and adjustable rate), VHFA and other secondary market loans requiring as little as 5% down with competitive rates. Mobile homes (Doublewide & Singlewide) have more restrictions and often times are harder to obtain financing. For land/home transactions there is still a variety of programs available through local banks and other financial institutions but it has become increasingly difficult to obtain financing for a home only transaction. This type of loan tends to require a higher interest rate, higher percentage of down payment and a lesser term than a combined land and home transaction. The secondary market tightened its requirements for mobile homes last year and has caused some lenders to no longer sell singlewides on the secondary market and to require 10% down on doublewides if less than A+ credit level.

Recent sales have also indicated an interest in condominium apartment purchases. Between January 1, 2003 and December 28, 2004, there were 35 condominium sales. Currently there are four condominium developments within the city. Current zoning regulations do not prohibit or restrict condominium ownership.

***Availability of Land for New Construction and Conversions***

Another consideration is the availability of land for new construction including both new plan development and in-fill development. Based upon a land survey of all vacant lands over two acres in size, there currently remains adequate land for new plan development. (See Land Use Section for further discussion.)

However, an examination of required minimum lot size shows current requirements are restricting in-fill development in the PR District. Table 26 shows how existing developed residential use lot sizes

<sup>15</sup> Source: Compilation of assessment data as of 4/1/04

compare to the required lot sizes. In the R-10 district (which permits only single-family housing) 79% of the homes meet or exceed the requirements. However, in the PR District (which permits single-family and multi-family housing), only 46% of the developed residential uses meet the required lot sizes. When considering just the PR multi-family development, only 30% meet the required lot size. When considering just the PR single-family development, 55% meet the required lot size which is only slightly better (See Appendix for maps of lot conformance for R-10 and PR districts.)

| Size of Property Compared to Required Size  | R-10 | PR          |          |          |
|---|------|-------------|----------|----------|
|   | SFR  | SFR and MFR | MFR Only | SFR Only |
| Conforming — Meets or Exceeds Required Size | 79%  | 46%         | 30%      | 55%      |
| 75% to 99% of size required                 | 8%   | 12%         | 12%      | 12%      |
| 50% to 74% of size required                 | 4%   | 17%         | 18%      | 17%      |
| Less than 50% of size required              | 2%   | 25%         | 40%      | 16%      |

The current PR minimum lot size requirements are restricting conversion of single-family homes to apartments and restricting the addition of more units in multi-family dwellings. The Planning Commission set criteria that approximately 80% of the existing uses should be conforming within the PR District. In order to meet that criteria the single-family minimum lot size would need to be approximately 4,800 square feet, the two-family minimum lot size would need to be approximately 5,200 square feet and multi-family dwellings (with three or more units) minimum lot size would need to be 1,500 square feet per unit. The current PR requirements are 10,000 square feet for single-family and two-family, and 8,000 square feet per unit for multi-family with three or more units.

The current requirements are also restricting the development of vacant PR parcels and PR properties with excess acreage. Assessment records show there are 49 vacant PR parcels of which 22 are under 10,000 square feet in size. It is difficult to assess how much additional development could occur on larger developed parcels if the PR minimum lot sizes were changed.

Recent changes in state law now require that zoning bylaws allow, as a permitted use, one accessory dwelling unit that is located within or appurtenant to an owner-occupied single-family dwelling.

Limitations include:

- The accessory unit is an efficiency or one bedroom apartment
- Unit is accessory and clearly subordinate to the single-family dwelling
- Property wastewater capacity exists
- The units do not exceed 30% of the total habitable floor area of the single-family dwelling
- All applicable setback, coverage, and parking requirements specified in the bylaws are met.

No additional lot area can be required for the accessory apartment except to meet the needs for setbacks, coverage and parking. This required change will increase the potential for apartments in larger single-family dwellings. It is recommended that these provisions be enacted as outlined in the state law and the Planning and Zoning Administrator be authorized to approve such changes.

### ***Affordability and Availability for Rentals***

The 2000 Census indicates 48% of all occupied housing units were rentals. The 2000 Census reports the median gross rental, regardless of the number of bedrooms and including utilities, as \$473. The U.S. Department of Housing lists the following as 2004 rents for Washington County (data is not available at the city level):

| <b>Type</b>    | <b>Fair Market Rent</b> | <b>Median Rents (Includes utilities)</b> |
|----------------|-------------------------|--|
| 0 bedroom unit | \$399                   | \$423                                    |
| 1 bedroom unit | \$494                   | \$524                                    |
| 2 bedroom unit | \$666                   | \$707                                    |
| 3 bedroom unit | \$833                   | \$883                                    |
| 4 bedroom unit | \$935                   | \$992                                    |

For Vermont overall, the 2004 Fair Market rent for a two-bedroom unit was \$717, slightly higher than the Washington County's \$666 Fair Market rent for a two-bedroom.

To pay for a two bedroom apartment at Fair Market rent requires \$26,640 in income, or an hourly wage of \$12.80. The annual average 2002 Vermont Department of Labor wage is listed as \$28,012. However, 33% of the households and 19% of the families earned less than \$20,000 in 1999 according to the Census. These income levels make a two bedroom unit unaffordable without some type of subsidy.

With the designated downtown, there are an unknown number of upper story apartments. The condition and status of these units are not documented. A study is underway to inventory the downtown upper story uses and evaluate potential reuse or improvements possible. It is desirable to maintain apartment of at least moderate quality in the upper stories of downtown buildings.

### ***Housing Stock Conditions***

In 2004, the City of Barre Council approved a rental housing inspection program similar in requirements to the HUD Section 8 inspection program. The goal of this program is to establish and maintain a minimum housing quality level. No data is available documenting existing housing conditions although anecdotal evidence from the Building Department indicates there are some rental units in considerable disrepair. A database to track inspections and violations has been developed for the Building Department. An analysis of this data should be completed after a year of the inspections to determine the level of disrepair and to determine any patterns.

As discussed above, almost two-thirds of the two-family units are owner-occupied and one-third of the three-family units are owner-occupied. It is assumed that owner-occupied housing generally tend to lead to better maintained housing. This assumption should be verified once the rental inspection program has been underway. Increasing the level of owner-occupied rentals is considered to be desirable and a means to increasing the overall quality of rental properties.

In addition to financing for purchase, the Central Vermont Community Land Trust operates a revolving loan fund that finances home improvements in the City. Funds can be used to correct health and safety issues, create handicapped accessibility, and make improvements that will conserve energy. Borrowers must have a household income below the county median. Loan maximum is \$15,000 per unit or \$25,000 for a duplex.



The USDA Rural Development also offers low-interest loans and grants to very-low income families and individuals who own a home in need of repair. Last, the Central Vermont Community Action Council also provides energy conservation and weatherization modifications to homes and apartments. These are available at no cost to residents who meet income eligibility guidelines regardless of whether the home is rented or owned.

### **Elderly Housing Needs and Special Population Needs**

The Housing subcommittee also considered the housing needs of special population groups such as the elderly, homeless, and mentally handicapped. Although no empirical data was available, the antidotal information seems to indicate that the local regulations were not restricting development of needed housing. Instead, inadequate funding has resulted in programs not being able to meet the special population needs. Waiting lists exist for subsidized housing opportunities. Funding for these programs are generally provided through state and federal sources and are beyond the control of local government. Proposed federal funding cuts will result in additional people being unable to meet basic housing needs.

Community education was also considered an important element of meeting the special population housing needs. Discrimination and community concerns against mentally handicapped persons, subsidized housing projects, and programs for criminal re-entry housing programs can be lessened through a broad community education programs.

### **Proposed Implementation Strategies**

Based upon a review of data and based upon comments at the housing public forum, the following potential strategies are recommended for consideration.

**Table 28: Proposed Housing Strategies**

| <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b> | <b>Implementing Parties *</b> | <b>Resources/Funding Required</b> | <b>Key Tasks</b>                                  |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Revise PR District minimum lot sizes to more closely correspond to existing residential lot sizes. The following is recommended minimum lot sizes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5,000 square feet for single- and two-family units with conditional uses of 4,000 square feet</li> <li>• 2,000/unit for over units with over 7 units requiring conditional use and specific siting requirements</li> </ul> | 2004-5           | PC, PZA                       | Staff Time                        | Incorporate into other recommended zoning changes |
| Create a program to encourage owner-occupied rental properties by providing financing of additional down payment funds required for rental properties. In addition, provide landlord education to those considering owning owner-occupied rental property.   | 2005-6           | CVLT                          | Staff Time                        | Modify current loan guidelines                    |
| Modify existing \$300,000 revolving loan fund to allow funds be used for   | 2005-6           | CVLT                          | Staff Time                        | Modify current loan guidelines                    |

**Table 28: Proposed Housing Strategies**

|  |        |  |                                      |   |
|--|--------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| conversions of single-family homes to multi-family units or for conversions to include accessory apartments  |        |  |                                      |   |
| Monitor and analyze housing inspection program to determine any patterns regarding rental housing in disrepair   | 2005   | <b>PZA, PC</b>                             | Staff Time                           | Analyze data and report results to PC                       |
| Review mobile home park standards to make sure they are reasonable and consider changing the 10,000 square foot requirement for each mobile home   | 2004-5 | <b>PC, PZA</b>                             | Staff Time                           | Incorporate into other recommended zoning changes           |
| Change single-family housing accessory apartment provisions to correspond to required state law  | 2004-5 | <b>PC, PZA</b>                             | Staff Time                           | Incorporate into other recommended zoning changes           |
| Consider methods to use tax stabilization to increase available housing and to improve housing stock conditions  | 2004-5 | <b>BP, PZA, Council</b>                    | Staff Time                           | Develop a subcommittee to review tax stabilization criteria |
| Inventory downtown building upper stories to establish suitability for conversion to apartments and to establish opportunities to improve existing apartment conditions  | 2004-5 | <b>PZA, PC, BP</b>                         | Staff Time, Planning grant (secured) | Create inventory<br>Hire consultant<br>Complete analysis    |
| Increase communications between housing organizations and the City through formation of a housing task force to discuss housing issues and needs, lobby for needed housing legislation, and maintain a web site with available city housing resources. | 2005-6 | <b>CVLT, BHA, other housing groups, PZ</b> | Staff Time, Planning grant           | Determine lead agency, establish goals and objectives       |
| <b>* Bold indicates lead implementing party</b>  |        |  |                                      |   |

PZA – Planning and Zoning Administrator, PC – Planning Commission , BP – Barre Partnership, CVLT – Central Vermont Land Trust, BHA — Barre Housing Authority

# **Downtown Revitalization**

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## **Introduction**

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes the following economic development-related goals:

- Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas
- Planning should provide for a strong and diverse economy providing satisfying and rewarding job opportunities while maintaining high environmental standards, and expanding economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.

Downtown Barre has long been a commercial center for Central Vermont. In response to disinvestment and growing competition from shopping centers in neighboring communities, merchants and community leaders established a non-profit Main Street revitalization organization in the 1980s. This organization evolved into the Barre Partnership in 1997 and became the designated downtown organization under Vermont's downtown program. Over the past twenty years, business, government and civic leaders have completed many projects and improvements maintaining downtown Barre as an active business and retail center with a growing number of arts and cultural attractions.

To better understand downtown Barre's market position, define its future market directions, and formulate a strategy to retain and expand its customer markets, the Barre Partnership and Barre City retained Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and Mt. Auburn Associates to undertake a market analysis and formulate a marketing strategy for downtown Barre. The study presents the recommended Downtown Marketing Strategy, drawing upon findings from demographic and economic analysis, customer and business surveys and local community input. Formulation of the Downtown Marketing Strategy was based upon:

- An inventory of downtown businesses
- A detailed analysis of secondary demographic and economic data
- A random telephone survey of 469 households in the primary and secondary market areas
- A survey of 39 businesses
- Focus groups conducted with six stakeholder groups: (1) arts, cultural and tourist attractions; (2) bankers and economic development professionals; (3) young adult residents; (4) property owners and real estate professionals; (5) retail and service businesses, and (6) town officials.
- Interviews with major arts, cultural and tourist attractions, government leaders, and economic development organizations
- Two community forums: one held to formulate a downtown vision and select future market directions and a second to review strategies and prioritize action steps.
- Meetings with the Market Study Committee

This section presents the Executive Summary for the report. The 42-page study titled "Downtown Barre Marketing Strategy and Action Plan" completed by Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services dated March 2005 is hereby adopted by reference as part of this municipal plan.

## **Executive Summary of Market Study Report**

To evaluate downtown Barre's market position and create a strategy to retain and expand its customer markets, the Barre Partnership and Barre City hired Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and Mt. Auburn Associates to conduct a market study and formulate a downtown marketing strategy. This report presents the recommended Downtown Marketing Strategy based on demographic and economic analysis, customer and business surveys and community input. The strategy advances shared goals by

targeting key market opportunities, branding key downtown strengths, and applying successful approaches from other communities' experiences. A community-wide commitment to implementation with many organizations assuming new activities is central to the strategy's success. New funding, staff and/or volunteer resources will be needed for some organizations to fully implement these new responsibilities.

### ***Downtown Vision and Market Directions***

A shared vision for downtown Barre emerged from surveys, community forums and focus groups reflecting the following desired long-term qualities:

- A diverse mix of stores and activities that encourage gathering and strolling downtown
- A special pedestrian-oriented environment with less truck traffic, better lighting and crosswalks, more flowers and green space, that is cleaner and more attractive
- Better coordinated downtown marketing, store hours and shopping opportunities
- A center for socializing and entertainment, with many restaurants, events, cultural activities, nightlife and gathering places

Three market directions were selected, based on the market analysis and community input, providing the best basis for strategies to strengthen downtown branding and expand its market:

- **Community and Convenience Shopping Center** to expand downtown's current role as a shopping destination and center for community activities with more varied stores, activities and effective marketing.
- **Historic Downtown** to enhance downtown Barre's appeal to existing customers, young adults, central Vermont residents and tourists by enhancing and showcasing its historic buildings and landmarks and promoting its diverse culture, connections to the Granite industry and key historic events and themes.
- **Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Center** to advance downtown as an arts and entertainment center by expanding and better promoting its arts, cultural and entertainment offerings.

### ***Recommended Strategies and Action Steps***

Five strategies are proposed to expand consumer markets, strengthen downtown Barre's branding, market position and offerings, and increase long-term implementation capacity.

#### ***Strategy One: Build an Attractive and Welcoming Downtown Environment***

Expanding Barre's customer base depends on making downtown a more attractive and welcoming place, where people feel safe and comfortable and want to linger, stroll and shop.

Key recommended action steps to create a more attractive and welcoming downtown include:

- Ensuring the completion of the North Main Street reconstruction with a community wide lobbying effort and an active design review process with Vermont Transportation.
- Installing art and historic exhibits in empty store windows and vacant buildings.
- Developing a partnership between teen residents and businesses to involve youth in downtown activities and reduce public safety concerns about teenagers hanging out.
- Establishing a downtown clean-up and beautification squad that organizes volunteers and hires teens to help maintain a clean and attractive downtown environment.
- Create an attractive gateway at the northern downtown entrance.
- Establish a façade improvement program with design assistance and low-cost loans to motivate property owners to improve their façades and promote high quality designs.
- Install aesthetic lighting of historic buildings, trees, window displays, and business interiors to improve downtown's historic and aesthetic nighttime environment.

- Implement a public safety partnership to address customer perceptions of public safety in the downtown that may deter shopping and dining.
- Commission artists to design signs and streetscape elements.

***Strategy Two: Coordinate and Expand Business Attraction and Retention Activities***

Barre has a strong and diverse business base, but needs to reuse several vacant buildings and expand its retail diversity to appeal to a larger customer base. The recommended action steps for business recruitment include:

- Focus business recruitment on five target businesses: restaurants, cafes, specialty food/grocery stores, arts/crafts/gift retailers and home furnishing stores.
- Designate Barre Area Development as the business recruitment coordinator (BRC) to coordinate strategy implementation, undertake direct marketing; and serve as the contact person and ombudsman for firms. A memorandum of understanding should be prepared to formalize this role.
- Create a recruitment package with effective collateral materials to make the case for locating in downtown Barre and provide useful information on how to start a business. Key materials include a Market Profile on downtown's customer markets; a Community Profile on Barre and Central Vermont as a place to live and do business; a Guide to Starting a Business in Barre; a Downtown Revitalization Brief on the downtown improvement strategy; and an up-to-date listing of downtown space to lease and buy.
- Undertake an initiative to recruit target businesses. A mix of formal and informal approaches are needed to reach existing businesses, new entrepreneurs and people interested in moving to Barre and to successfully recruit businesses.
- Expand efforts to develop vacant and underused buildings. A combination of community pressure, stronger enforcement of city codes, and identifying new owners with an interest in acquiring the property are needed.

***Strategy Three: Expand Downtown Arts and Cultural Activities and Strengthen Their Connection to Regional Tourism Attractions***

Augmenting and more effectively leveraging Barre's solid base of arts and cultural activities to make downtown a more vibrant and attractive destination for area residents and visitors is a key component of the overall downtown marketing strategy. Additional action steps to strengthen the strategic value of its arts and culture activities for downtown include:

- Produce a monthly arts and events calendar to supply a central and high quality source of arts information. The calendar should be widely distributed at arts organizations, government offices, churches, restaurants, retail locations, and the state's Visitor Centers. Copies also could be inserted in central Vermont newspapers. A web-site with the calendar should also be created and linked to the web-sites of other organizations.
- Add events at the Vermont History Center. The Center's current lecture and performance schedule should be expanded to include new events targeted to local residents and visitors. One option is a series of events focusing on the state's history and genealogy.
- Establish joint promotions with key attractions. The City and Barre Partnership should use joint promotions to broaden the marketing of arts and culture activities. Joint promotions can be developed both among arts and cultural organizations and between these organizations and the business community.
- Expand downtown festivals and events. Add a few new programs and events to broaden Barre's existing successful festivals and fill in seasonal gaps. This effort should include reviewing the pay-off from current events and culling ideas from the experiences of other small communities.

- Create a strong Central Vermont regional identity around granite-related attractions by consolidating granite-related attractions and activities into a highly visible and critical mass of destinations and events and integrating them more effectively into the regional tourism promotion infrastructure. This will help Barre and Central Vermont fully capitalize on this first-class cultural asset and its status as a premier destination for granite-related activities.

***Strategy Four: Undertake a Sustained Cooperative Marketing and Promotion Initiative***

With growing competition on several fronts, downtown Barre needs to aggressively market itself as a destination and coordinate advertising to (1) establish a strong and positive brand image for downtown Barre; (2) retain and increase patronage among its core customer base; and (3) attract a greater share of the young adults and visitor markets. The following action steps are recommended to achieve these goals:

- Establish a cooperative downtown advertising campaign to market the overall downtown while advertising individual stores. Sustained regular newspaper and radio advertisements should be included in the campaign.
- Create a downtown map and guide with a comprehensive listing of downtown stores, restaurants and attractions. Additional simple fliers can build recognition for three large clusters: dining and entertainment; clothing and gift stores; and home supply/home improvement. Distribute guides in downtown stores and destinations, the Montpelier and I-89 Visitor Centers, major regional attractions, lodging locations, and major employers.
- Organize a "buy local" campaign to capitalize on strong customer recognition that shopping downtown helps the local economy. This campaign should use a grass roots marketing approach to directly motivate residents to shop at locally owned downtown stores and foster a community ethic for shopping downtown.
- Organize a "Make a Night of It" promotion to expand recognition and patronage of downtown evening offerings and use these dining and entertainment venues to encourage downtown shopping.
- Establish sales promotions linked to major events in which stores hold a special sale around and during the event both to attract more people downtown to the event and to encourage shopping by people who come to the event. Barre Homecoming Days is a first candidate to develop and test this promotional approach.
- Use a common logo and consistent themes and images in key materials and promotions, including the cooperative ads, Barre Partnership materials, downtown event and festival posters to strengthen downtown branding.

***Strategy Five: Expand funding, capacity and community support for the Barre Partnership***

The Barre Partnership has successfully spearheaded downtown revitalization for many years, but new resources are needed to successfully implement the downtown marketing strategy. The following action steps will strengthen the Partnership's capacity and expand community commitment to downtown improvement initiatives:

- Formalize membership and dues. The Partnership's new membership and dues system is an important step to clarify all are welcome to participate in the organization, obtain more predictable annual revenue, and expand its membership and revenue base.
- Recruit community-wide volunteers. The Partnership should launch a community-wide volunteer recruitment campaign. Tools to recruit new volunteers include contacting recent community forum participants, radio public service announcements, news articles, and one-on-one outreach by staff, board and committee members.
- Create a monthly e-newsletter to keep members and supporters informed about the Partnership's activities and upcoming meetings and events.

- Update and regularly review staff and committee work plans. Each committee should update its work plan to reflect new projects and responsibilities under the marketing strategy. The Executive Director's work plan should also be revised and reviewed on a quarterly basis.
- Expand financial support for a full-time staff person and administrative staff. The current part-time staffing is insufficient to implement the marketing strategy. Increased annual city funds and business pledges, perhaps on a 50/50 basis, is a quick way to raise the funding needed to readily put in place full-time staffing for implementation.
- Institute an annual celebration. The Partnership should proceed with its planned annual awards dinner and make the event a fun celebration designed to attract a broad group of volunteers and celebrate their contribution to, and progress in, improving downtown Barre.
- Create new subcommittees for key tasks. Three new committees are recommended to focus on priority projects and facilitate new partnerships: (1) an Arts, Culture and Tourism committee to implement Strategy Three; (2) a Public Safety Committee to work on public safety issues; and (3) a subcommittee of the design committee to focus on advocacy and design review for the North Main Street reconstruction.
- Organize a monthly breakfast meeting for businesses to network and build trust, stay informed and engaged in downtown improvement efforts; and learn about important local and regional resources and issues.
- Focus the Barre Partnership's mission on downtown. Barre City would be better served by having the Barre Partnership focus exclusively on downtown initiatives and establishing a separate economic development committee to direct work on the city's overall economic development agenda.





## **Preservation of Resources and Environment**

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### **Introduction**

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes an environmentally-related goal to provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of aesthetic qualities of the area. Barre City has significant development, but is not "built out." Large undeveloped tracts of land that include environmentally sensitive areas and provide for open green space are important to the community. Clean rivers exist having potential for re-development. Unfortunately, existing and past development has also left the community with some environmentally hazardous sites and blighted areas. (See Appendix for map of environmentally sensitive areas)

### **Environmental Goals**

- The following environmental goals are adopted:
- Balance the desire for compact urban development with the need to preserve certain amounts of open space
- Provide for the adequate and safe disposal of residential waste
- Encourage cluster type housing development on larger tracts of land
- Restore and maintain river frontage and improve river bank stabilization, appearance and public access

### **Larger Undeveloped Tracts of Land**

The Planning Commission completed a study of undeveloped parcels including four parcels that are over 70 acres in size each (See the land use section for a comprehensive review of this study and Appendix for vacant land map.) The City provides for, and encourages, planned residential development to allow for preservation of open spaces. In addition, the current zoning includes over 300 acres of land zoned conservation. Much of this area has steep slopes and is wet, limiting development potential. The primary values of this conservation land is wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. Some of the area has been logged over the years and is a diverse and productive mix of habitat types supporting abundant wildlife, including turkey, deer, bear, bobcat, moose, and many other species of birds. The upper section of this area is farm land with open fields.

As discussed in the land use section, a small percentage of this area is recommended to be rezoned to R-10 residential, however, the majority of the area is not recommended for rezoning. Furthermore, efforts should be made, both through regulatory changes and other means, to encourage cluster residential developments on these parcels. This will result in the land owners ability to develop their properties while still preserving open space areas. In addition, external funding sources should be explored to determine available funds for purchase of conservation easements or outright purchases of these properties.

### **Canales Wetlands**

A two acre parcel of land at the corner of Pleasant Street and Fortney Place was recently purchased by the Capital Area Land Trust, Inc. in order to preserve a significant wetland. Plans call for developing a small wooded park with walking trails. The City supports these efforts and encourages development to occur through volunteer efforts.

### **Williams Lane Brownfield**

A .87 acre parcel at the end of Williams Lane next to the Stevens Branch currently is listed as a brownfield site due to coal tar remaining in the soil. The State currently operates wells to monitor the

movement of the coal tar from the site. The area can not be disturbed to any degree, although indications are the coal tar movement is limited. In addition, there is potential for the parcel by "capping off" the site with an impervious surface, further reducing coal tar movement. No funds currently exist to remove the hazardous materials. It is recommended this site continue to be monitored and the City encourage capping off the site to allow uses compatible with area. It is further recommended that the City continue investigating partnerships with state, federal, or private entities to bring this site to finale.

### **Riverfront Preservation**

The Stevens Branch, which is over 3.5 miles long, runs northwest across the City. The Jail Branch is over 1.5 miles long and joins the Stevens Branch behind 121 South Main Street. Over 145 properties include a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses abutting these two rivers. Much of the land next to the Jail Branch is undeveloped steep slopes, while most land abutting the Stevens Branch is more gentle, with the exception of the area next to Route 62. Due to the terrain, the Stevens Branch has considerably more adjacent development.

Few planning efforts have been made to preserve the riverfront areas and no land use regulations exist to protect these areas except for floodplain management controls. The Friends of the Winooski and similar such organizations have been formed to help educate the public to reduce pollution of the Winooski watershed and promote wildlife habitat, scenic value, and recreational opportunities related to the Winooski. The City endorses these educational efforts.

The City should take a more proactive approach to preserving our river fronts. A study of riverfront vegetative management should be pursued. Furthermore, possible regulations to preserve vegetation and shore lines along the rivers should be considered.

Within the downtown area, the Stevens Branch runs through an industrial area that is anticipated to be redeveloped with new mixed uses over the next decade. This redevelopment presents an opportunity to improve the appearance of the riverfront with public walkways, landscaping, and lighting. Such improvements would allow residents to rediscover this natural resource. Riverfront improvements would require acquisition of public easements over private land and considerable public investments in walkways. External funding should be sought to help cover the costs for design and implementation. Discussions should be held with landowners in this area about such a walkway in order to gain their input and support.

### **Waste Disposal**

Siting of landfills, transfer stations, recycling processing plants and hazardous waste facilities require a difficult balance between meeting a regional need while still protecting the environment, abutting property rights, and available community resources. Within the last five years, there have been efforts to locate a new landfill within the Barre Town/Barre City area.

Currently, the Barre City zoning ordinance allows landfills, landfill collection sites, solid waste incinerators, solid waste, and transfer facilities as conditional uses within the industrial zone. Recycling centers are allowed as permitted or conditional uses within the commercial, commercial-industrial and industrial zones. No standards, beyond the general conditional use review criteria, apply to these waste disposal facilities. State planning laws allow regional solid waste facilities, certified under 10 V.S.A. Chapter 159, to "be regulated only with respect to location, size, height, building bulk, yards, courts, setbacks, density of buildings, off-street parking, loading facilities, traffic, noise, lighting, landscaping, and screening requirements, and only to the extent that regulations do not have the effect of interfering with the intended functional use."

The City of Barre is a member of the Central Vermont Solid waste Management District (CVSWMD.) Barre City utilizes the CVSWMD as the primary regulatory agency controlling the siting of new landfills. In May 2005, CVSWMD proposed amendments to their Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) including new landfill siting criteria. The new criteria would not allow a landfill within Barre City given the available vacant land that is zoned industrial. However, landfill development in the neighboring towns could have a substantial affect on the Barre City road system and city property owners.

An ad hoc committee of the CVSWMD was formed to consider, discuss and return recommendations to the CVSWMD Board. Four public hearings were held to review the proposed siting criteria. The May 2005 draft proposed siting criteria is acceptable to the City. However, the criteria requirements should not be made any less stringent in the future. The final version of the siting criteria, if modified from the May 2005 version, should be reviewed by the Planning Commission for comments.

When reviewing a proposed landfill site, the impact of additional waste disposal vehicles on Barre City arterial roads should be closely evaluated. Route 302, which serves as a major arterial through Barre City runs through the downtown area. This area already suffers from the problems associated with truck traffic in a downtown area. Additional truck traffic resulting from a landfill should not travel through the downtown area on a regular basis. In addition, Route 14 runs mostly through high density residential areas and is not suitable for additional truck traffic.

### Proposed Implementation Strategies

The following potential strategies are recommended for consideration.

| <b>Table 29: Proposed Environmental Strategies</b>  |                   |                                |                             |   |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Strategy</b>   | <b>Time frame</b> | <b>Involved Parties *</b>      | <b>Resources</b>            | <b>Key Tasks</b>  |
| Study and consider possible land use regulation amendments to promote good vegetative management along river fronts   | 2006-7            | <b>PC</b> , PZ, CO             | Staff time, Planning grants | Develop study criteria/RFP<br>Seek funding if needed<br>Conduct study<br>Develop possible regulations |
| Study potential development of walkway along the Stevens Branch   | 2006-7            | <b>PZ</b> , PC, BP, landowners | Staff time, Planning grants | Hold public forum<br>Develop RFP<br>Seek grants<br>Conduct study                                      |
| Review regional solid waste plan (SWIP)   | 2006-7            | <b>PC</b> , PZ, CO, ANR, SW    | Staff time                  | Review SWIP May 2005 draft is modified  |
| <p><b>* Bold indicates lead implementing party</b><br/>           PC-Planning Commission, PZ-Planning and Zoning Administrator, BP-Barre Partnership, CO- Council, ANR-Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, SW-Central Vermont Solid Waste District</p> |                   |                                |                             |   |



## Child Care

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### Introduction

One of the newest planning goals of Vermont Planning and Development Act is "to ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate childcare issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and childcare workforce development." The Planning Commission formed a day care subcommittee which included a Planning Commission member, a representative from Washington County Family Center, and the City Planner, to discuss issues related to childcare and to develop strategies for implementation. Public input was obtained through a public meeting. An invitation to this meeting was mailed to all local providers to discuss the issues. Comments were also requested from the local child care network.

### Child Care Goals

The following child care goals are adopted:

- Ensure local land use regulations do not interfere with the development of new child care facilities when in appropriate locations according to size
- Increase communications between the City, the child care provider network, and Washington County Family Center in order to better understand child care issues and needs
- Assist potential new child care providers with local approvals and direct them to potential funding and development assistance

### Capacity Compared to Demand<sup>16</sup>

The 2000 U.S. Census reported that 53.5% of all Barre City families had related children under 18 years old. Furthermore, 11.3%, or 261 families, had children under 6 years old. Married-couple families and female householders had similar percentages of families with children under 6 years old, or 12.4% and 9.5% respectively. In the married families, 80% of the husbands were in the labor force and 63% of the wives were in the labor force. Within other family types, 71% of the householder heads were in the labor force. Although the Census does not directly address households with children under 6 years old and with parents who work, the above data clearly indicates there are many children with working parents.

The State classifies and regulates child care into licensed child care centers, licensed home care and registered home care. As of November, 2003, the following is a breakdown of local child care service available. It is important to note that, legal exempt child care services (LECC) are not included in this figure along with other unregulated services such as relatives and friends. LECC's are defined to generally include care for not more than two families including that of the provider. Families using LECC's are permitted to use reduced state subsidies for payment of services.

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<sup>16</sup> Data for the information in this section was compiled from Child Care Services Division report (herein referred to as the CCSD Report) published January, 2003 by the State of Vermont Child Care Services Division and the Family Center of Washington County (herein referred to as the Family Center) unless otherwise noted.

|                  | <b>Barre City</b> |                                     | <b>Washington County</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                  | <b>Total</b>      | <b>Capacity</b>                     | <b>Total</b>             |
| Home Day Care    | 31                | 186 (6 wk-5yrs)<br>124 (school age) | 75                       |
| Licensed Centers | 6                 | 97                                  | 34                       |

According to the CCSD report, "child care programs reported that they are generally full or nearly full-to-capacity... When asked did they receive requests for care they could not meet, a sizable portion — from 15% for school-age children to 39% for infants — said "yes". The study only contacted providers and did not reflect actual demand since parents and families were not contacted.

The Family Center has found there is a high demand for child care that can not be met. For the first 9 months in 2003, the Center had the following number of calls:

| <b>Age of Child</b> | <b># Calls</b> | <b>% of Calls</b> |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Pregnant            | 39             | 6.6%              |
| 0-1                 | 149            | 25.2%             |
| 1-2                 | 125            | 21.1              |
| 2-3                 | 59             | 10.0%             |
| 3-5                 | 79             | 13.4              |
| 5-6                 | 49             | 8.3%              |
| 6-12                | 91             | 15.4              |
| Total               | 591            |                   |

Over half of all calls were for child care services for children under 2 years old. The Family Center also reported some providers have asked not to refer any more infants to their programs because they have an existing waiting list. They also reported, in the Washington County area, there is a 1 to 3 year waiting period for infant care. There seems to be a clear need for additional child care services, especially for infant care.

Child care services outside of the city also need to be considered. The 2000 US Census reports 66% of the Barre City working residents work outside of Barre City.

### **Time Spent in Daycare**

According to the CCSD report "about one third of Vermont's children in regulated programs are receiving care for eight to nine hours per day. About 7% are receiving more than 10 hours of care each day." The CCSD report also shows there is a high rate of part-time use of child care. The report indicated this "could be an indication parents are using what is available, and turning to unregulated care to fill in the gaps." Although this data reflects statewide data, it is assumed the data also applies to Barre City.

Most programs, according to the CCSD report, are open nine hours per day. The Family Center staff noted there is only very limited, or no evening or weekend hours for child care. This makes it difficult for parents with job hours outside of the normal weekday hours.

## Cost and Affordability of Child Care

As in Table 33, the average price of child care in Barre City generally appears to be slightly less than county-wide or state-wide. However, prices vary from center to center. In addition, licensed child care is generally more expensive than registered home child care.

| Care Type    | Barre City | Washington County | Statewide |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Infant       | \$108.47   | \$108.07          | \$113.32  |
| Toddler      | \$98.47    | \$102.65          | \$108.03  |
| Preschool    | \$89.44    | \$99.53           | \$105.35  |
| Kindergarten | \$86.15    | \$91.71           | \$96.94   |
| School Age   | \$66.50    | \$83.90           | \$90.74   |

Statewide, one quarter of children in regulated programs are receiving child care subsidies. In Washington County, the percent of children receiving subsidies is approximately 27%, with home child care having a slightly higher percent (29%) versus licensed care (21%.) Subsidies are meant to make child care affordable to families. A conclusion of the CCSD report was "child care subsidy rates are moving further away from market rates."

### Child Care Providers

The profile of the Vermont child care provider was provided by the CCSD report. Although this was a statewide survey, the findings are assumed to be typical for Barre City. The CCSD report profile indicated the following:

- The supply of registered family child care homes is declining, and just over half (52%) intend to continue for five years or more. The number of licensed, not-for-profit centers is increasing.
- The number of accredited centers is increasing. One third of the responding centers are involved in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation process. Sixteen percent of the centers surveyed are accredited by NAEYC, and 15% are conducting self-studies as part of the accreditation process.
- Seventy-one percent of the center respondents have experienced difficulty in hiring child care staff. A lack of qualified candidates was the cause of this difficulty in 50% of cases, while lack of competitive salaries (38%) and benefits (30%) were seen as problematic. It was noted by 37% of the respondents, job applicants had been lost to the public school system.
- Many child care providers do not make a livable income with only 14% having net earnings of over \$20,000 for 2001 and 42% had incomes less than \$10,000 per year.
- The average low and high hourly wages for a head teacher were \$9.32 to \$11.22 with teachers' average earnings ranging from \$8.65 to \$10.33.
- 80% of the registered family child care providers did not have any form of health insurance in 2002.
- Two-thirds of the providers do not have a college degree which is comparable to the level of all adults state-wide although 96% had a high school diploma or GED which is higher than adults statewide.

### Barre City Local Regulations

Barre City Zoning regulations control the location and site operations of child care. The zoning ordinance classifications match the state child care classifications. Registered home child care

operations are a permitted use in all districts and required approval of the Development Review Board as a home occupation. Home occupation regulations relating to child care include:

- Not allowing more than two nonresident employees
- Control of any possible noise and/or traffic.
- Registered home care is listed as a permitted home occupation subject to the requirements of any home occupation.

Licensed home care is allowed as a conditional use in all districts except Industrial-Commercial, Industrial and Conservation. Licensed child care centers are allowed as a conditional use in the Central Business District and Commercial District. Conditional uses are subject to Development Review Board (DRB) approval and allow for the Development Review Board to place conditions on the approval as they relate to certain site operations.

All child care types require a DRB hearing which requires an application fee of \$50 for home child care and \$75 for child care centers. Hearings are held monthly and involve advertisements in the newspaper and notifying abutting property owners of the application. An additional zoning fee of \$30 for home occupations is required after approval by the DRB. Child care centers would pay a zoning fee based upon the proposed costs of construction improvements. Applications for DRB hearings are required approximately three weeks before the hearing.

**Proposed Implementation Strategies**

Based upon a review of data by the child care committee and based upon comments at the child care public forum, the following potential strategies are recommended for consideration:

| <b>Strategy</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b> | <b>Implementing Parties *</b>  | <b>Resources/Funding Required</b> | <b>Key Tasks</b>  |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Create a volunteer day care liaison position appointed by City Council who would keep Council and the Planning Commission apprised of child care issues and legislation | 2005-06          | <b>PC, Council</b>             | Minimal                           | PC makes recommendation with approval by Council  |
| Reduce or remove fees for zoning approvals  | 2005-06          | <b>PC, Council</b>             | Minimal                           | PC makes recommendation with approval by Council  |
| Remove the requirement for DRB approval for home day care   | 2005-06          | <b>PC, Council</b>             | Minimal                           | PC makes recommendation with approval by Council  |
| Work with Central Vermont Community Action Coalition to help disseminate information about revolving loan funds available to help with child care operation             | 2005-06          | <b>Child care liaison, CAC</b> | Minimal                           | Child care liaison would develop system for dissemination of data. Information would be made available at the Zoning Office |



**Table 33: Proposed Child Care Strategies**

|  |         |  |         |   |
|--|---------|--|---------|---|
| startup costs  |         |  |         |   |
| Encourage City Council to adopt resolutions of support for state legislation that enhances the child care opportunities in Vermont | Ongoing | <b>Child care liaison, PC, Council</b> | Minimal | Child care liaison would advise Council on legislation                    |
| Provide links on the city web site to information about starting day care  | 2005    | <b>Child care liaison, webmaster</b>   | Minimal | Child care liaison would provide information to city web master           |
| Provide links on the city web site to information about child care subsidies   | 2005    | <b>Child care liaison, webmaster</b>   | Minimal | Child care liaison would provide information to city web master           |
| Make information available in the Zoning Office about assistance available from the Washington County Family Center                | 2005    | <b>Family Center, PZA</b>              | Minimal | Washington County Family Center would provide information to City Planner |

**\* Bold indicates lead implementing party**

PC-Planning Commission, PZ-Planning and Zoning Administrator, BP-Barre Partnership, CO- Council, ANR-Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, SW-Central Vermont Solid Waste District



## Utilities and Facilities

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### Introduction

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes the following facility-related goals:

- Make public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, reinforcing the general character and planned growth pattern of the area.
- Plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future public needs.
- Ensure public facilities and services include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal.
- Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.

The Planning Commission sought the advice and direction from the City Engineer in developing this section of the plan. The City of Barre maintains public facilities and services that are adequately meeting the needs of the current population. In addition, there are ample opportunities to meet the anticipated future demands of the community through existing facilities or through improvements to existing facilities. (See Appendix for map of public facilities and cultural sites and see Environmental section for discussion of landfill siting.)

### Utility and Facility Goals

The following facility-related goals are adopted:

- Maintain a public water and public sewage system meeting state and federal standards and to provide future development needs of the city and portions of the surrounding communities.
- Provide adequate fire, police and emergency medical services in a cost-effective manner.
- Provide recreational opportunities within the financial constraints of the City and participating organizations.
- Encourage the development of private and non-profit recreation opportunities to supplement existing public recreation opportunities.
- Encourage the surrounding communities to participate in cooperative efforts for joint recreation activities and facility usage.

### Public Utilities<sup>17</sup>

Green Mountain Power (GMP) provides the city with adequate electric services with minimal disruption. In recent years, GMP has expanded and upgraded its facilities to meet the needs for new growth.

Charter Communications provides adequate cable TV services and also broadband access throughout the city. In addition, the zoning regulations allow television satellite dishes to be installed in residential districts without a zoning permit, making it easy to obtain satellite TV as an alternative TV service.

The city water facilities were updated in 1995 to meet the current federal and state requirements. Adequate capacity exists to service the community and certain surrounding areas.<sup>18</sup> City water rates need be at a level to continue to fund required improvements to keep the water operations updated and efficient.

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<sup>17</sup> Source: General utility information was derived from the 2003 Central Vermont Regional Plan

<sup>18</sup> Source: Specific information about sewer and water expansion needs were reviewed with the City Engineer

The Barre Wastewater Treatment Plant serves the City and parts of the Town of Barre. It has a design capacity of 4.0 million gallons per day (mgd), an average flow of 2.1 mgd and serves a population of about 16,000. In 2003, there were 3,456 residential hook-ups, 220 commercial hook-ups, 80 industrial hook-ups and 62 public hook-ups<sup>19</sup>. Assuming new hook-ups will come on line in the same ratios and require the same daily flows, the plant could be able to accommodate 1,300 new residential connections, 49 new commercial users, an additional 18 industrial hook-ups and about 14 semi-public users. No upgrades are anticipated to be needed in the near future. The City works closely with the Town of Barre regarding future capacity needs for those areas served by the plant. 588 dry tons of sludge are disposed of each year from this operation.

Cell phone coverage is provided throughout most of the city. Cellular antennas are encouraged to co-locate in or onto existing structures when possible in an aesthetically pleasing manner. A series of cellular antennas currently are located on the side of the Auditorium.

During the 1999/2000 legislative session, the state stormwater management regulations were substantially modified. Stormwater runoff, which is defined as precipitation that does not infiltrate into the ground, causes extensive damage to both private property and public infrastructures, and adversely affects water quality. As development occurs, the amount of impervious cover increases, and so do the potential problems associated with stormwater runoff. These problems can be categorized into two main components: the increased volume and rate of flow of water draining from the site, and loading of pollutants which are directly washed off these impervious surfaces and carried into receiving waters. The State is currently evaluating the stormwater permitting process for new development and redevelopment. The new regulations are expected to be more stringent and require stormwater management for more projects. These new stormwater regulations will also affect existing and new city stormwater systems. Nationwide, some communities are establishing stormwater management utilities, whereby property owners pay a fee to maintain the stormwater system based upon the amount of additional runoff from their site. The City may need to consider establishing a stormwater management utility fee if the costs for the new regulations exceed the ability to fund required improvements through regular property taxes.

### **Non-Education Public Buildings**

Barre City includes many public facilities. Facilities not operated by the City include the post office, library, various types of senior housing, Barre Housing Authority complexes, Barre Opera House, Studio Place Arts, Vermont Granite Museum, Vermont History Center, the court house and various state office buildings. The City owns and administers a public works garage, City Hall, fire station, the Barre Outdoor Recreation (BOR) building, and the Auditorium.

Currently a new public safety building is being constructed that will house the police, fire, and emergency services. This building is designed to serve the long term needs of these operations and will leave both the fire station and police station vacant. Planning is underway to expand the City Hall offices to make use of the old police station. Studies are being conducted to determine how to best make use of the vacant space in order to alleviate overcrowding within City Hall and how to best consolidate services in order to provide better public service.

Plans have not yet been developed to make use of the Fire Station. A previous study found extensive building code upgrades were required for continued use. Built in 1904, the Barre firehouse was patterned after the Wollaston Street station in Quincy, Massachusetts.<sup>20</sup> The station retains its original wooden-arched folding doors as well as most of its original architectural integrity. It is currently listed

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<sup>19</sup> Source: 2003 Central Vermont Regional Plan

<sup>20</sup> Source: Historical information derived from the Barre City National Register of Historic Places Inventory

on the National Register of Historic Places. Any final use should be required to retain its historic character. It is recommended that Council conduct a study to consider potential re-uses of this historic building.

### **Public Parks and Recreation**

The City of Barre has a wide range of recreational facilities including:

- Municipal pool
- BOR facility
- Municipal Auditorium
- Alumni Hall
- Tennis courts
- A variety of ballfields
- A variety of small playgrounds

In recent years upgrades have been made to the Farwell Street ballfields. In addition, space has been reserved next to the new public safety building for future recreation needs. No other new playgrounds or ballfields are anticipated to be built in the next several years, but small scattered green spaces are encouraged.

Volunteer-based organizations provide significant recreation opportunities beyond the city-sponsored recreation program. These organizations make use of many publicly-supported recreation facilities such as the BOR and city ballfields.

The pool, BOR and Auditorium serve as regional assets by providing recreational and entertainment opportunities to not only city residents, but also to residents from surrounding communities. Unfortunately, the recreational fees to support these facilities are currently not sufficient to cover expenses and the facilities and programs require local property tax support or an aggressive fund raising campaign. At the same time, the costs for other required city services continue to increase and support for increased taxation decreases resulting in less discretionary funding for services such as recreation. Efforts are underway to determine how to best operate these facilities without increasing the tax burden. It is possible some recreational opportunities will be lost if more effective operations and/or increased revenue sources are not found. Coordinated recreation planning and programs between neighboring communities could result in more cost-effective programming, increased scales of economies, more varied programs, and increased use of city facilities.

Improvements have been proposed for City Hall Park including restoration of the gazebo and memorial, reconstruction of the sidewalks, and improved landscaping and streetscaping. External funding and matching funds have been secured for the gazebo restoration and sidewalk reconstruction. Other funding needs secured for additional improvements. Improvements to City Hall Park help further facilitate the downtown market study goal to "build an attractive and welcoming downtown environment."

### **Cemeteries**

The City is known nationwide for its showplace 73 acre Hope Cemetery. This cemetery, in addition to serving the traditional role of a burial place, contains a variety of monuments, mausoleums, and sculptures, which are excellent examples of Barre's greatest granite artists. The 27 acre Elmwood Cemetery and the 19 acre St. Monica Cemetery provide additional burial space. The Elmwood and St. Monica Cemeteries no longer have lots for sale. The Cemetery Department operates as a separate entity with enterprise funds from lot sales and burial fees providing a bulk of the operating funds. Increases in cremations (and therefore a drop in burials), competition from other available cemeteries, and ever increasing operating costs, are making it difficult to continue the current level of services and

maintenance. Efforts are underway to examine how to best operate the cemeteries given the financial constraints present.

### **Downtown Parking Areas**

Currently, much of the downtown parking needs are met by City-owned parking areas. The Merchant Row parking area provides much of this parking. Appearance improvements of this area further facilitates the downtown market study goal to "build an attractive and welcoming downtown environment ". Desirable improvements include:

- Improved landscaping
- Completing sidewalk connections to allow for safer pedestrian movement
- Improved appearance of the rear of buildings
- Improved rear access to businesses

External funding should be sought to assist with making these improvements. Discussions should be held with property owners abutting Merchants Row parking in order to secure their input and support.

### Proposed Implementation Strategies

Based upon a review of data and based upon comments at the housing public forum, the following potential strategies are recommended for consideration:

**Table 34: Proposed Facilities Strategies**

| Strategy  | Timeframe | Implementing Parties *                                    | Resources/<br>Funding<br>Required                              | Key Tasks   |
|---|-----------|---|--|---|
| Develop a plan for re-use of the old fire station                     | 2005-6    | <b>Co</b> , PC, PZA, BP, CE, State, VT Preservation Trust | Staff assistance<br>Study grants<br>Historic Renovation grants | Create an ad hoc study committee<br>Review existing building study<br>Develop overall desired directions<br>Obtain public input<br>Research grant opportunities<br>Develop final plan |
| Improve the appearance of City Hall Park                              | 2005-7    | <b>PZA</b> , CE, BP, Co                                   | Staff assistance, grants                                       | Follow through on existing funding<br>Developed detailed landscaping plans<br>Secure additional funds   |
| Improve appearance of Merchant Row parking area and rear of buildings | 2006-9    | <b>PZA</b> , CE, BP, Co                                   | Staff assistance, grants                                       | Develop plans<br>Seek public input<br>Secure funds  |

\* **Bold indicates lead implementing party**

PC-Planning Commission, PZ-Planning and Zoning Administrator, BP-Barre Partnership, Co- Council, CE – City Engineer, TP – TAC representative





# Transportation

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## Introduction

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes the following transportation-related goals:

- Provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Highways, air, rail and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated.

The Planning Commission sought advice and direction from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission transportation staff, VTrans staff, and the Green Mountain Transit Agency staff in developing this section of the plan. (See Appendix for map of arterial roadway)

## Transportation Goals

The following transportation goals are adopted:

- Optimize existing traffic configurations and traffic lighting to provide for the efficient movement of existing and future vehicular traffic.
- Improve the appearance of existing arterial roads in the City.
- Promote alternative modes of transportation.
- Create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Maintain and construct new sidewalks that serve areas of existing or anticipated high volumes of pedestrian use.
- Maintain neighborhood sidewalks within the financial constraints approved by the City voters.
- Promote and improve safe vehicular access with new development and redevelopment.

## Vehicular Traffic

### *Existing Conditions*<sup>21</sup>

Barre City has a well established road system that is not anticipated to see major changes in configuration except for limited new residential streets and possible modifications to various intersections to improve traffic flow. There are 5.5 miles of Class 1 road, 4 miles of Class 2 road, 37.7 miles of Class 3 road, .07 miles of Class 4 road, and 1.5 miles of state highway. The Class 1, 2, and 3 roads and state highway total 48.8 miles. The city road system includes Route 14 and Route 302 which are identified in the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission transportation plan (CVRPC plan) as part of the region's principal arterial system. The principal arterial system carries the major portion of trips entering the region as well as the majority of the intra-regional travel. In addition, the city has access to I-89 via Route 62 which is classified as part of the interstate highway and expressway system.

The CVRPC plan includes a comprehensive technical review of intersection levels of service, highway capacity, accident areas, and bridge capacity. The following is a summary of the major problem areas identified in the CVRPC plan that pertain to Barre City.

Level of Service (LOS) for intersections is the standard measure used to quantify the operational performance of highway facilities as perceived by the user. The grades A, B, C, D, E and F are the five possible LOS ratings where "A" indicates excellent conditions with free flow, "E" indicates intolerable conditions with unstable flow, and "F" indicates that demand exceeds capacity. In urban areas, where

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<sup>21</sup> Source: Central Vermont Region 2020 Regional Transportation Plan

drivers expect more delays than rural roadways, LOS of "D" is often considered acceptable. The following signalized intersections were identified as having a level of service of D for at least one approach currently or projected for 2020 according to the CVPRC plan. However, other traffic studies have identified LOS F for existing and future conditions and, therefore these intersections are considered problem areas.

| <b>Signalized Intersection</b> | <b>2000 Avg. LOS</b> | <b>2000 Worst Approach LOS</b> | <b>2020 Avg. LOS</b> | <b>2020 Worst Approach LOS</b> | <b>Notes</b>   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| US302/VT14/Elm                 | C                    | C                              | D                    | D                              | The proposed Main Street reconstruction project is planned to improve performance. |
| VT14/Prospect /Church          | C                    | C                              | C                    | C                              |  |
| US302/VT62 /VT14               | D                    | D                              | D                    | D                              |  |

The following unsignalized intersections were identified as having a level of service of E or lower for at least one approach currently or projected for 2020 according to the regional plan.

| <b>Unsignalized Intersection</b> | <b>2000 Worst Approach LOS</b> | <b>2020 Worst Approach LOS</b> | <b>2020 Worst Approach LOS with Proposed Improvements</b> | <b>Notes</b>  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| VT14/Circle St                   | F                              | F                              | NA  | No projects are proposed.   |
| VT14/Quarry St                   | D                              | F                              | NA  | Changes are being proposed via a VTrans scoping project that supports signalization.  |
| Elm St/ Summer St                | F                              | F                              | NA  | No projects are proposed. A traffic study to add turning lanes should be pursued.   |
| Summer St /Seminary St           | C                              | C                              | NA  | No projects are proposed.   |
| VT 14/ Summer St                 | C                              | D                              | NA  | Consideration for changes are being considered as part of the Main Street reconstruction project that includes signalization. |
| US 302/ Berlin St                | F                              | F                              | NA  | No projects are proposed. The island design was recently modified slightly to improve safety.                                 |
| US 302/ Beckley St               | E                              | F                              | NA  | No projects are proposed.   |

The CVRPC plan also reviewed unacceptable service of E or F on road segments now and in 2020. The CVRPC policy defines what is an unacceptable LOS for various roads as per a policy involving the nature of the area. The following problem areas were identified:

| Highway       | Segment                       | Unacceptable LOS | Avg. ADT |        | Level of Service |      |
|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------|----------|--------|------------------|------|
|               |                               |                  | 2000     | 2020   | 2000             | 2020 |
| US RT 302     | West of RT 62                 | E                | 16,600   | 19,000 | E                | E    |
|               | East of RT 14 (west)          | E                | 18,600   | 21,390 | E                | E    |
|               | West of RT 14(east)           | E                | 17,600   | 20,400 | E                | E    |
| RT 14 (south) | At Barre Town/Barre City line | E                | 15,700   | 18,055 | D                | D    |

The area of Route 302 running through the downtown was also rated by CVRPC as a high accident location area due to the numerous turning movements.

The segment of Route 302 running through the downtown has two conflicting uses. As a major transportation corridor it includes motorists and truckers traveling through the region preferring to bypass the downtown area. This segment is also used by local residents who are shopping and working in the downtown. These users park in town and add to the pedestrian traffic. The parking and pedestrian traffic hinders the through-traffic users while the through-traffic users conflict with the local users by adding additional noise, dust, and odors.

The Main Street reconstruction project described below will help alleviate congestion and result in improved intersection design, but overall the conflicts will continue. According to traffic consultants hired by the City, the key to improved flows is reducing the overall traffic volumes entering into the downtown area. A downtown bypass for through-traffic would alleviate congestion. However, no such bypass is currently in the planning process and is not anticipated to occur in the near future. Truck routing from Quarry Hill across the river and down Brooklyn Street to Route 62 has been considered, but, again, has no plans or funding.

The CVRPC plan also evaluates bridges. The Granite Street bridge is currently being replaced. Plans are underway for replacement of the Prospect Street bridge which is structurally deficient. All other bridges were rated as not deficient (structurally or functionally.)

***North Main Street Reconstruction***

The most significant proposed road construction project is the reconstruction of North Main Street from Route 62 to the City Hall Park. This project will involve replacement of all utilities, street lighting, sidewalks and complete reconstruction of the paving system. Final engineering is currently underway for this project and construction is scheduled within the next several years. Potential changes in traffic patterns, including a roundabout around City Hall Park, were also studied by traffic consultants hired by the City in 2005. It was found that the best traffic design was to keep the current configuration with optimization of the lights (which is proposed as part of the Main Street reconstruction.)

This project was initiated for utility replacement but evolved into a total reconstruction. The project will include complete revitalization of the streetscape, greatly improving the appearance of the downtown.

The N Main Street reconstruction project, which is likely to involve construction over a two-year period, will cause traffic disruption for local residents and businesses. Efforts must be made to guarantee support by the residents and businesses for this project since a loss of public support could result in a

loss of state funding. This could also result in additional local tax dollars being required to make required utilities upgrades.

### **Pedestrian Movement**

Some older city streets have sidewalks on at least one side. In recent years, the city has presented a sidewalk construction/replacement fund for voter consideration. The allocated funds are currently not enough to maintain the existing sidewalks. In 1998, the City Engineer developed a long-term sidewalk maintenance plan to ensure that sidewalk replacement occurs based upon an overall evaluation of sidewalk conditions. In addition, when funds permit, new sidewalks have been added. Due to limited local funds, external funding sources have generally been needed to construct new sidewalks. For example, sidewalks were added along Hill Street with partial funding through a Vermont Transportation Enhancement grant. External grant funds have also been secured for sidewalk replacement within the portions of the downtown and within the City Hall Park. Sidewalks are an important element in terms of commuting to work. The 2000 Census indicated 6.5% of the workers commuted by foot or bicycle and 33% of the worker lived and worked within Barre City.

Currently, an overall sidewalk replacement/construction policy does not exist. Such a policy is necessary in order to address the following questions:

- What sidewalks are considered critical due to high volumes of pedestrian use?
- When should developers be required to include sidewalks in new plans?
- When should sidewalks be removed?
- What is the process for notice when sidewalk removal is proposed?
- Who should pay for replacement of sidewalks (abutting owners or city)?
- Who should be responsible for snow clearance?
- Where are new sidewalks needed?

It is recommended that a sidewalk policy be developed as soon as possible.

The Main Street reconstruction project will result in sidewalk replacement on Main Street within the downtown. Part of the project includes review and potential redesign of pedestrian crosswalks. Suggestions have been made to better define crosswalks and limit the number of crosswalks. The proposed new streetscape will greatly improve the appearance of the sidewalk area.

Efforts should be made by city staff to secure external funding for new sidewalk construction in order to better leverage limited available local funds.

### **Central Vermont Regional Path<sup>22</sup>**

The Central Vermont Regional Path (CVRP) is a proposed 14.5 mile separated shared-use facility which will extend from Montpelier through Berlin, Barre City to Barre Town utilizing a former railroad bed and paralleling the Winooski River. This proposed bike path will connect certain regional employment areas, shopping districts, tourist attractions, recreational facilities, and schools. The primary purpose of the proposed path is to provide a safe, convenient, and inviting way for all ages of bicyclists and pedestrians to traverse the central portion of the state between Barre Town and Montpelier. A complete description of the proposed path is available in the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission transportation plan.

The following is proposed or constructed within the city:

- Within the city, Section 6 of the plan has an advance conceptual plan to proceed from the Granite Museum across the Stevens Branch to the fill slope of VT 62. At Berlin Street, the path would be

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<sup>22</sup> Source: Central Vermont Region 2020 Regional Transportation Plan

a bike lane within the roadway on Berlin Street, Smith Street, and Blackwell Street (crossing under Rt 62.) On the south side of VT 62, the bike lane would return to a separated share use path, cross the Steven's Branch into the Barre City rail yard, and continue to Depot Square in the downtown.

- A potential spur to the CVRP is completed and runs from Fairview Street in downtown Barre to the municipal pool area.
- Section 7 is proposed to follow the railroad line through the central business district where it meets and runs parallel to the Stevens Branch to the Spaulding Branch to the Spaulding High School, travel overland to the Washington County rail line near Thunder Road, entering Barre Town.

The projected final engineering and construction cost for Section 6 is 1.7 million dollars. A 20% local match, or \$340,000, is required to seek state funding to complete the project. To date, this has not been allocated due to budgetary restrictions. The bike path is considered a desirable project that will serve not only the city, but also the complete region. Although local funding is currently not available, future funding consideration should be given for possible inclusion as a voter ballot item and/or for potential external funding including grants and donations.

**Commuting Patterns and Mass Transit**

Many city residents commute to areas throughout the region and state. The following shows where residents are working.

| Work In                                   |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| Barre City                                | 1,486 | 33.3% |
| Montpelier, Berlin and Barre Town         | 1,841 | 41.2% |
| Other Towns in Washington & Orange County | 659   | 14.8% |
| Other Locations                           | 478   | 10.7% |

According to the 1990 census, 48.9% of the residents worked within Barre City indicating that residents are now commuting greater distances. The housing turnover survey (See housing section for more information) indicated that approximately 20% of the people were moving in from areas within Vermont, but from outside of Central Vermont. Although it can not be documented, it is suspected that some of these people may still be working in jobs near their previous residence location, accounting for the increase in commuting distances found in the housing turnover survey. In addition, according to the "Economic and Demographic Forecast for Central Vermont Region 2000 to 2020", in 1990 there were 6,773 jobs within the city, while in 2000 there were 6,512 jobs. A loss of local jobs will also result in increased commuting times.

Most workers commuted by motor vehicle. About 7% walked or biked to work. More people carpooled rather than used public transit when commuting with other persons.

|   |      |       |
|---|------|-------|
| Commute by Motor Vehicle                | 3991 | 92.8% |
| Drive Alone                             | 3295 | 76.6% |
| Carpool                                 | 686  | 16.0% |
| Commute by Public Transportation        | 30   | 0.7%  |
| Commute by Bicycle, Foot or Other Means | 278  | 6.5%  |

For those persons desiring or needing transit, there is local transportation services offered by Green Mountain Transit Authority (GMTA) and, to a lesser extent, several small-scale taxi operations. GMTA includes an elderly and disabled transportation program which includes:

- Deviated fixed routes
- Council on Aging transportation services
- Medicare transports
- Ticket to ride (an allowance program for non-ambulatory and ambulatory services for disabled persons and their families)
- Ridematch program
- PATH and various other third party transports

A total of 1005 Barre City clients use these services. GMTA places the value of these services in the current year as \$47,901.

GMTA also currently operates the following fixed routes serving Washington County residents<sup>23</sup>:

- The City Route connecting Montpelier and Barre on a 30-minute frequency
- Two hospital routes, Montpelier Hospital Hill and Barre Hospital Hill, running on an hour frequency.
- Commuter routes from Waterbury and Northfield into Montpelier, providing transit links to area residents and businesses.
- The Link Express (Operated by CCTA and GMTA), an express bus service which connects Washington County to Chittenden County. This route runs Monday through Friday during peak commuting times and makes stops at the Montpelier, Waterbury and Richmond Park and Ride lots and Fletcher Allen Health Care before arriving in downtown Burlington.
- Hannaford Shopping Special between Barre City and South Barre

These services also have interconnect opportunities to other GMTA and CCTA routes.

GMTA is also hoping to locate at least one new bus shelter in the downtown area in the vicinity of the new Brooks/Lenny's Plaza. This is encouraged by the city and limited staff support should be provided to assist with this project.

GMTA continually re-evaluates bus stops and routes. The overall routes are recommended to be maintained. The City should remain involved in future transit planning through active involvement with the Central Vermont Regional Transportation Advisory Committee.

### **Access Management**

Access management is a set of techniques that can be used to control access to highways, major arterials and other roadways. Access management includes several techniques that are designed to increase the capacity of these roads, manage congestion, and reduce crashes. These techniques include:

- Increasing spacing between signals and intersections
- Regulating driveway location, spacing and design
- Median treatments, including two-way left turn lanes
- Use of service and frontage roads
- Land use policies that limit right-of-way access to highways

Once development occurs, it is often too late to make use of access management techniques. The zoning ordinance provides limited access management including limiting the number of driveways per lot and controlling driveway design to some extent. Although the arterial roads have seen considerable

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<sup>23</sup> Source: Transit data provided from GMTA directly or from GMTA web site

development with only limited access control, new development and re-development should include consideration for access management.

It is recommended that the Planning Commission review the Vermont Access Management guide developed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation for consideration of possible additional access management techniques to be incorporated into the zoning and subdivision ordinances.

**Planning Commission Involvement in Transportation**

The Planning Commission has had only limited involvement in various transportation issues in the city. Most of the transportation planning has been managed by the City Engineer, and to a lesser extent, through the Central Vermont Regional Transportation Advisory Committee. The Planning Commission should become more involved in transportation planning as it relates to land use patterns. It is recommended that the Planning Commission periodically meet with the City Engineer and/or the City representative on the Central Vermont Regional Transportation Advisory Committee to learn about ongoing transportation planning efforts and to discuss the relationship with the current and anticipated development within the city and region. Proposed Implementation Strategies

Based upon a review of data and based upon comments at the housing public forum, the following potential strategies are recommended for consideration:

| <b>Table 40: Proposed Transportation Strategies</b>  |                  |                                 |                                    |   |
|--|------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b> | <b>Implementing Parties *</b>   | <b>Resources /Funding Required</b> | <b>Key Tasks</b>  |
| Develop a sidewalk policy  | 2005-6           | <b>Co</b> , PC, PZA, CE         | Staff assistance                   | Develop overall goals<br>Draft criteria<br>Obtain public input<br>Finalize policy                           |
| Gain public support for Main Street Project  |                  |                                 |                                    | See the Downtown Market Study for details on this strategy  |
| Review potential additional access management controls   | 2006-7           | <b>PC</b> , PZ, Co, CE, VTTrans | Staff assistance                   | Review VTrans guide<br>Develop draft regulations<br>Obtain public input<br>Adopt regulations                |
| Increase Planning Commission role in transportation planning   | Ongoing          | <b>PC</b> , PZ, CE, TP          | Staff assistance                   | Dedicate Planning Commission meetings to review transit and transportation projects as needed               |
| Secure external funding for sidewalk construction in areas that receive or are anticipated to receive high volumes of pedestrian use   | Ongoing          | <b>PZ</b> , CE                  | Staff                              | Define areas for new sidewalks<br>Continually review grant opportunities<br>Apply for potential grant funds |
| <p>* <b>Bold indicates lead implementing party</b><br/>           PC-Planning Commission, PZ-Planning and Zoning Administrator, BP-Barre Partnership, Co- Council, CE – City Engineer, TP – TAC representative</p> |                  |                                 |                                    |   |





## Education

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### Introduction

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes an education-related goal "to broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters."

The Planning Commission sought the advice and direction from the Superintendent of Schools in developing this section of the plan. Details regarding population trends in regards age distribution is provided in the community profile section. This section focuses on potential physical expansions required in order to meet changes in demographics and projected enrollments.

### Goals

The following education goals are adopted:

- Met the education needs of City residents
- Have the City and School District work together on community issues and needs by maintaining open channels of communications between key staff and elected officials.

### School Enrollment and Expansion Needs<sup>24</sup>

City residents are provided public education through the Barre City Elementary Middle School and Barre Technical Center/Spaulding High School. Private elementary schooling is also available at the St. Monica Church School.

The Barre City Elementary Middle School enrollment is about 900 students. It is projected that this enrollment level will continue for the next five years. The Spaulding High School enrollment of students from Barre Town and Barre City is about 850 students with 50 more students enrolling from the communities without designated high schools such as Orange, Washington, Topsham, and Corinth. It is projected that this enrollment level will also continue for the next five years. Enrollment at the Barre Technical Center that receives students from Spaulding High School, Cabot High School, Twinfield High School, U-32 High School, and Montpelier High School is expected to increase from its current enrollment of 215 students attending full or part time. Enrollment is anticipated to increase a full-time equivalent of 10 students per year for the next five years.

Since the Barre City Elementary Middle School is just ten years old and student enrollment is remaining steady, no major renovations are plan. An unfinished soccer field on the south side of the property will likely be completed over the next two years.

While there are no specific plans at this time, some future projects contemplated at the Spaulding High School and Barre Technical Center include:

- Renovation of the Jackson Dairy Building into usable classroom space
- Renovation of the science department facilities
- Renovation of the building trades and automotive program facilities
- Installation of lights on the football field

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<sup>24</sup> Source: Information provided by a letter dated November 15, 2004 from Dorothy Anderson, Superintendent of Schools

The Supervisory Union office building is located in the former Ayers Street School. No exterior renovations are planned. Possible future interior renovations reconfiguring into two offices as staff requirements dictate.

### **Proposed Implementation Strategies**

Based upon a review of data, no city strategies are recommended to be pursued at this time. The City should inform the Superintendent of Schools of any major development that is anticipated to potentially change school enrollment. In addition, the School District is requested to meet with the Planning Commission when there are significant proposed expansions or changes in school district facilities.

# Energy

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## Introduction

The Vermont Planning and Development Act includes an energy-related goal to include an energy plan as part of the municipal plan that includes an analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems within the municipality, a statement of policy on the conservation of energy, including programs to implement policy, and a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.

## Goals

The following energy goals are adopted:

- New building construction and major reconstruction include energy conservation measures
- Encourage development of Barre City as a micropolitan to avoid sprawl development in the surrounding rural regions, thereby reducing energy consumption associated with travel
- Promote ride sharing and public transit use
- Practice and incorporate energy-conservation within city operations

## Building Code Requirements

Local and state building codes currently require energy conservation measures when constructing new buildings or when completing major renovations. These requirements are recommended to be continued.

## Development as a Micropolitan

The most significant energy conservation measure recommended by the city is to encourage development within the city and not in the surrounding rural areas. As discussed in the housing section, zoning density requirements for the PR district should be revised to allow for controlled in-fill development. In addition, promotion of residential development of the upper stories of downtown buildings is recommended. Last, the land use section includes a recommendation to create a mixed-use district the downtown industrial area allowing further downtown residential development. Such recommendations will lead to development of the city core area and result in overall transportation energy savings.

## Traffic Signalization Improvements

The City is planning on signal optimization in the downtown area as part of the North Main Street reconstruction (See transportation section for more discussion.) Signalization optimization results in improved traffic flow which reduces fuel consumption. Signal optimization should be consider a significant means to improve energy usage by city and regional residents.

## Energy Efficiency of City Maintained Facilities

Previously, the City conducted energy audits of certain facilities and made certain improvements based upon these audits. The City should consider additional energy audits available through the services of Efficiency Vermont. This should also include a review of street lighting which is mostly rented from Green Mountain Power with a few exceptions.

## Proposed Implementation Strategies

The proposed strategies discussed above are covered in the housing and land use sections of this plan.

**Table 41: Proposed Energy Strategies**

| <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b> | <b>Implementing Parties *</b> | <b>Resources /Funding Required</b> | <b>Key Tasks</b>                |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Implement energy audits for city maintained facilities   | 2006-8           | <b>CE</b>                     | Staff assistance                   | Arrange with Efficiency Vermont |
| <p><b>* Bold indicates lead implementing party</b><br/>           PC-Planning Commission, PZ-Planning and Zoning Administrator, BP-Barre Partnership, Co- Council, CE – City Engineer, TP – TAC representative</p> |                  |                               |                                    |                                 |

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## **Consistency with Development Patterns in Adjacent Municipalities and Region**

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### **Introduction**

The Vermont Planning and Development Act requires a statement indicating how a plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities and the region. The Central Vermont Regional Plan, the Berlin Town Plan, and the Barre Town Plan were reviewed to establish consistency with this plan.

As required by state law, copies were provided to the abutting towns and Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. No comments were received from any of these organizations.

### **Central Vermont Regional Plan**

Last, the Central Vermont Regional Plan was reviewed for consistency with this plan. Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission staff were consulted to assist with review and recommendations regarding certain portions of the plan development. No inconsistencies between the Regional Plan and this plan appear to exist.

### **Town of Berlin**

The Town of Berlin is situated west of Barre City. Vermont Route 302 and Route 62 connect the two municipalities. Natural shared features include the Stevens Branch and forest cover in the southwest corner adjoining the Town of Berlin. Along Route 302, the land uses in Barre City adjoining the Town of Berlin are mixed including residential, commercial and industrial, which is compatible with the Berlin Town current and proposed future uses. The conservation area is zoned for residential development in Berlin with a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet.

No apparent use conflicts exist between Barre City and Berlin. This same finding was found in the Berlin Town Plan dated March, 2005.

### **Town of Barre**

The majority of Barre City is surrounded by the Town of Barre. Although divided into two municipalities in 1895, there has been a long history of sharing resources including wastewater, water, stormwater utilities, school operations, and certain recreation facilities. Staff coordination is ongoing between law enforcement, fire, and public works. Continued efforts are being made to determine areas to further share resources in order to provide for more efficient government operations. In addition, many residents have lived in both communities and, according to a recent market study, downtown Barre serves as a principal shopping center for Barre Town residents. Routes 302 and Route 14 serve as major transportation routes between the two communities. In addition, numerous less-traveled roads provide additional transportation connections.

All abutting lands in Barre Town are zoned residential which is compatible with the anticipated future uses in Barre City. This same finding was found in the Barre Town Plan dated September, 1999.



## **Appendix**

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**Downtown Barre Marketing Strategy and Action Plan**

**Vacant and Underdeveloped Parcel Assessment Survey Results**

**Housing Survey Results**

**Proposed Zoning Amendment Language**

**Maps**

*R-10 Level of Conformance of Developed Lots*

*PR Level of Conformance of Developed Lots*

*PR with Two or More Units Level of Conformance of Developed Lots*

*Vacant Lands and Areas Likely to be Redeveloped Over 2 Acres by Zoning District*

*Areas to be Considered for Rezonings*

*Current Zoning Districts*

*Areas to be Considered for Future Rezonings*

*VTRANS Arterial Road System*

*Public Facilities and Cultural Sites*

*Environmentally Sensitive Sites*

# **Downtown Barre Marketing Strategy and Action Plan**

Prepared for

Barre City  
and  
The Barre Partnership

*by*

**Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services**

with

**Mt. Auburn Associates**

March 2005



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## List of Acronyms Used in Report

|      |                                    |
|------|------------------------------------|
| BADC | Barre Area Development Corporation |
| BHS  | Barre Historical Society           |
| BOH  | Barre Opera House                  |
| BP   | Barre Partnership                  |
| BRC  | Business Recruitment Coordinator   |
| ER   | Economic Restructuring             |
| MOU  | Memorandum of Understanding        |
| NECI | New England Culinary Institute     |
| NMS  | North Main Street                  |
| SPA  | Studio Place Arts                  |
| UVM  | University of Vermont              |
| VHC  | Vermont History Center             |

## **Executive Summary**

To evaluate downtown Barre's market position and create a strategy to retain and expand its customer markets, the Barre Partnership and Barre City hired Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and Mt. Auburn Associates to conduct a market study and formulate a downtown marketing strategy. This report presents the recommended Downtown Marketing Strategy based on demographic and economic analysis, customer and business surveys and community input. The strategy advances shared goals by targeting key market opportunities, branding key downtown strengths, and applying successful approaches from other communities' experiences. A community-wide commitment to implementation with many organizations assuming new activities is central to the strategy's success. New funding, staff and/or volunteer resources will be needed for some organizations to fully implement these new responsibilities.

### **Downtown Vision and Market Directions**

A shared vision for downtown Barre emerged from surveys, community forums and focus groups reflecting the following desired long-term qualities:

- A diverse mix of stores and activities that encourage gathering and strolling downtown
- A special pedestrian-oriented environment with less truck traffic, better lighting and crosswalks, more flowers and green space, that is cleaner and more attractive
- Better coordinated downtown marketing, store hours and shopping opportunities
- A center for socializing and entertainment with many restaurants, events, cultural activities, nightlife and gathering places

Three market directions were selected, based on the market analysis and community input, that provide the best basis for strategies to strengthen downtown branding and expand its market:

- **Community and Convenience Shopping Center** to expand downtown's current role as a shopping destination and center for community activities with more varied stores and activities and effective marketing.
- **Historic Downtown** to enhance downtown Barre's appeal to existing customers, young adults, central Vermont residents and tourists by enhancing and showcasing its historic buildings and landmarks and promoting its diverse culture, connections to the Granite industry and key historic events and themes.
- **Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Center** to advance downtown as an arts and entertainment center by expanding and better promoting its arts, cultural and entertainment offerings.

### **Recommended Strategies and Action Steps**

Five strategies are proposed to expand consumer markets, strengthen downtown Barre's branding, market position and offerings, and increase long-term implementation capacity.

## **Strategy One: Build an Attractive and Welcoming Downtown Environment**

Expanding Barre's customer base depends on making downtown a more attractive and welcoming place, where people feel safe and comfortable and want to linger, stroll and shop. Key recommended action steps to create a more attractive and welcoming downtown include:

- **Ensuring the completion of the North Main Street reconstruction** with a community wide lobbying effort and an active design review process with Vermont Transportation.
- **Installing art and historic exhibits in empty store windows and vacant buildings.**
- **Developing a partnership between teen residents and businesses** to involve youth in downtown activities and reduce public safety concerns about teenagers hanging out.
- **Establishing a downtown clean-up and beautification squad that** organizes volunteers and hires teens to help maintain a clean and attractive downtown environment.
- **Create an attractive gateway** at the northern downtown entrance. :
- **Establish a façade improvement program** with design assistance and low-cost loans to motivate property owners to improve their façades and promote high quality designs.
- **Install aesthetic lighting of historic buildings, trees, window displays, and business interiors** to improve downtown's historic and aesthetic nighttime environment.
- **Implement a public safety partnership** to address customer perceptions of public safety downtown that may deter shopping and dining.
- **Commission artists to design signs and streetscape elements.**

## **Strategy Two: Coordinate and Expand Business Attraction and Retention Activities**

Barre has a strong and diverse business base, but needs to reuse several vacant buildings and expand its retail diversity to appeal to a larger customer base. The recommended action steps for business recruitment include:

- **Focus business recruitment on five target businesses: restaurants, cafes, specialty food/grocery stores, arts/crafts/gift retailers and home furnishings stores.**
- **Designate Barre Area Development as business recruitment coordinator (BRC)** to (1) coordinate strategy implementation (2) undertake direct marketing; and (3) serve as the contact person and ombudsman for firms. Complete a MOU to formalize this role.
- **Create a recruitment package** with effective collateral materials to make the case for locating in downtown Barre and provide useful information on how to start a business. Key materials include a *Market Profile* on downtown's customer markets; a *Community Profile* on Barre and Central Vermont as a place to live and do business; a *Guide to Starting a Business in Barre*; a *Downtown Revitalization Brief* on the downtown improvement strategy; and an up-to-date listing of downtown space to lease and buy.
- **Undertake an initiative to recruit target businesses.** A mix of formal and informal approaches are needed to reach existing businesses, new entrepreneurs and people interested in moving to Barre and to successfully recruit businesses.
- **Expand efforts to develop vacant and underused buildings.** A combination of community pressure, stronger enforcement of city codes, and identifying new owners with an interest in acquiring the property are needed.

### **Strategy Three: Expand Downtown Arts and Cultural Activities and Strengthen Their Connection to Regional Tourism Attractions**

Augmenting and more effectively leveraging Barre's solid base of arts and cultural activities to make downtown a more vibrant and attractive destination for area residents and visitors is a key component of the overall downtown marketing strategy. Additional action steps to strengthen the strategic value of its arts and culture activities for downtown include:

- **Produce a monthly arts and events calendar** to supply a central and high quality source of arts information. The calendar should be widely distributed at arts organizations, government offices, churches, restaurants, retail locations, and the state's Visitor Centers. Copies also could be inserted in central Vermont newspapers. A web-site with the calendar should also be created and linked to the web-sites of other organizations.
- **Add events at the Vermont History Center.** The Center's current lecture and performance schedule should be expanded to include new events targeted to local residents and visitors. One option is a series of events that focus on the state's history and genealogy.
- **Establish joint promotions with key attractions.** The City and Barre Partnership should use joint promotions to broaden the marketing of arts and culture activities. Joint promotions can be developed both among arts and cultural organizations and between these organizations and the business community.
- **Expand downtown festivals and events.** Add a few new programs and events to broaden Barre's existing successful festivals and fill in seasonal gaps. This effort should include reviewing the pay-off from current events and culling ideas from the experiences of other small communities.
- **Create a strong Central Vermont regional identity around granite-related attractions** by consolidating granite-related attractions and activities into a highly visible critical mass of destinations and events and integrating them more effectively into the regional tourism promotion infrastructure. This will help Barre and Central Vermont fully capitalize on this first-class cultural asset and its status as a premier destination for granite-related activities.

### **Strategy Four: Undertake a Sustained Cooperative Marketing and Promotion Initiative**

With growing competition on several fronts, downtown Barre needs to aggressively market itself as a destination and coordinate advertising to (1) establish a strong and positive brand image for downtown Barre; (2) retain and increase patronage among its core customer base; and (3) attract a greater share of the young adults and visitor markets. The following action steps are recommended to achieve these goals:

- **Establish a cooperative downtown advertising campaign** to market the overall downtown while advertising individual stores. Sustained regular newspaper and radio advertisements should be included in the campaign.
- **Create a downtown map and guide** with a comprehensive listing of downtown stores, restaurants and attractions. Additional simple fliers can build recognition for three large clusters: *dining and entertainment; clothing and gift stores; and home supply/home improvement.* Distribute guides in downtown stores and destinations, the Montpelier and I-89 Visitor Centers, major regional attractions, lodging locations, and major employers.

- **Organize a "buy local" campaign** to capitalize on strong customer recognition that shopping downtown helps the local economy. This campaign should use a grass roots marketing approach to directly motivate residents to shop at locally owned downtown stores and foster a community ethic for shopping downtown.
- **Organize a "Make a Night of It" promotion** to expand recognition and patronage of downtown evening offerings and use these dining and entertainment venues to encourage downtown shopping.
- **Establish sales promotions linked to major events** in which stores hold a special sale around and during the event both to attract more people downtown to the event and to encourage shopping by people who come to the event. Barre Homecoming Days is a first candidate to develop and test this promotional approach.
- **Use a common logo and consistent themes and images in key materials and promotions**, including the cooperative ads, Barre Partnership materials, downtown event and festival posters to strengthen downtown branding.

### **Strategy Five: Expand funding, capacity and community support for the Barre Partnership**

The Barre Partnership has successfully spearheaded downtown revitalization for many years, but new resources are needed to successfully implement the downtown marketing strategy. The following action steps will strengthen the Partnership's capacity and expand community commitment to downtown improvement initiatives:

- **Formalize membership and dues.** The Partnership's new membership and dues system is an important step to clarify that all are welcome to participate in the organization, obtain more predictable annual revenue, and expand its membership and revenue base.
- **Recruit community-wide volunteers.** The Partnership should launch a community-wide volunteer recruitment campaign. Tools to recruit new volunteers include contacting recent community forum participants, radio public service announcements, news articles, and one-on-one outreach by staff, board and committee members.
- **Create a monthly e-newsletter** to keep members and supporters informed about the Partnership's activities and upcoming meeting and events.
- **Update and regularly review staff and committee work plans.** Each committee should update its work plan to reflect new projects and responsibilities under the marketing strategy. The Executive Director's work plan should also be revised and reviewed on a quarterly basis.
- **Expand financial support for a full-time staff person and administrative staff.** The current part-time staffing is insufficient to implement the marketing strategy. Increased annual city funds and business pledges, perhaps on a 50/50 basis, is a quick way to raise the funding needed to readily put in place full-time staffing for implementation.
- **Institute an annual celebration.** The Partnership should proceed with its planned annual awards dinner and make the event a fun celebration designed to attract a broad group of volunteers and celebrate their contribution to, and progress in, improving downtown Barre.
- **Create new subcommittees for key tasks.** Three new committees are recommended to focus on priority projects and facilitate new partnerships: (1) an Arts, Culture and Tourism committee to implement Strategy Three; (2) a Public Safety Committee to work on public safety issues; and (3) a subcommittee of the design committee to focus on advocacy and design review for the North Main Street reconstruction.

- **Organize a monthly breakfast meeting for businesses** to network and build trust, stay informed and engaged in downtown improvement efforts; and learn about important local and regional resources and issues.
- **Focus the Barre Partnership’s mission on downtown.** Barre City would be better served by having the Barre Partnership focus exclusively on downtown initiatives and establishing a separate economic development committee to direct work on the city’s overall economic development agenda.

## Introduction

Downtown Barre has long been a commercial center for Central Vermont. In response to disinvestment and growing competition from shopping centers in neighboring communities, merchants and community leaders established a non-profit Main Street revitalization organization in the 1980s. This organization evolved into the Barre Partnership in 1997 and became the designated downtown organization under Vermont's downtown program. Over the past twenty years, business, government and civic leaders have completed many projects and improvements that maintained downtown Barre as an active business and retail center with a growing number of arts and cultural attractions. Key accomplishments include:

- Restoration of the Barre Opera House as a regional music and performing arts venue
- Renovation of the Spaulding School as the Vermont History Center (VHC) archives
- Renovation of a historic downtown building for Studio Place Arts (SPA)
- Establishing the Granite Museum and its initial exhibit at the downtown rail depot and acquiring a building for museum's permanent exhibits
- Creating several successful downtown festivals and events such as Homecoming Days, a summer concert series, and the Green Mountain auto show
- Completing historic façade renovations at several prominent downtown buildings

To better understand downtown Barre's market position, define its future market directions, and formulate a strategy to retain and expand its customer markets, the Barre Partnership and Barre City retained Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and Mt. Auburn Associates to undertake a market analysis and formulate a marketing strategy for downtown Barre. This report presents the recommended Downtown Marketing Strategy, drawing upon findings from demographic and economic analysis, customer and business surveys and local community input. Formulation of the Downtown Marketing Strategy was based upon:

- An inventory of downtown businesses
- A detailed analysis of secondary demographic and economic data
- A random telephone survey of 469 households in the primary and secondary market areas
- A survey of 39 businesses
- Focus groups conducted with six stakeholder groups: (1) arts, cultural and tourist attractions; (2) bankers and economic development professionals; (3) young adult residents; (4) property owners and real estate professionals; (5) retail and service businesses, and (6) town officials.
- Interviews with major arts, cultural and tourist attractions, government leaders, and economic development organizations
- Two community forums: one held to formulate a downtown vision and select future market directions and a second to review strategies and prioritize action steps.
- Four meetings with the Market Study Committee.

This report details the final Downtown Market Strategy that emerged from this process. To set the stage for the strategy recommendations, Section One summarizes key findings from the market analysis phase of the study and Section Two presents the shared vision, market



directions and goals that guided strategy formulation. Section Three details the following five-part Downtown Marketing Strategy:

- **Strategy One: Build an attractive and welcoming downtown environment**
- **Strategy Two: Coordinate and expand business attraction and retention activities**
- **Strategy Three: Expand downtown arts and cultural activities and strengthen their connections with regional tourism attractions**
- **Strategy Four: Undertake a sustained cooperative marketing and promotion initiative**
- **Strategy Five: Expand funding, capacity and community support for the Barre Partnership**

To emphasize and advance strategy implementation, the discussion of each strategy component is organized in three parts: (1) an explanation of the strategy and its activities along with key action steps; (2) implementing entities; and (3) required resources. The fourth and final section summarizes strategy implementation by detailing the responsibilities of each organization and presenting a two-year implementation timeline.

## 1.0 Phase One Market Analysis Findings

A profile of regional customers and the downtown economy was prepared in the study's first phase from the 2000 US Census and other data, a customer telephone survey, an inventory and survey of downtown businesses, and interviews with tourist and cultural attractions<sup>1</sup>. This section summarizes key findings from this extensive market research in five categories:

1. An overview of the market area demographics
2. Customer demand and shopping patterns
3. A profile of the downtown business base and area attractions
4. Customer and business views on improvement priorities
5. Key issues and opportunities to strengthen downtown Barre and expand its customer base

### Demographic Overview of the Downtown Market Areas

The primary and secondary trade areas<sup>2</sup> for downtown Barre were defined through conversations with downtown merchants. Data from the 2000 Census was used to profile the size and characteristics of these market areas. Key findings from this profile include:

- **Downtown's primary market area has 20,755 households and 51,538 residents.** Barre City, Barre Town and Montpelier together house 48% of the primary market area population.
- The secondary market area is 24% larger with 25,630 households and a total population of 64,127.
- Almost 45% of residents are under 35 years old, one-third are in the 35 to 54 age group, and 23% are 55 or older.
- **Families without children are the largest household type (33%)** followed by families with children (32%). Single people are 24% of all households.
- Median income, at \$40,000, is below that for the US and Vermont, but 38% of primary area households had 1999 incomes above \$50,000 with one in six above \$75,000.
- **Income is concentrated geographically in 4 towns** (Barre City, Barre Town, Montpelier & Northfield) that accounted for 60% of primary market area income in 1999.
- Households headed by people 35 to 54 years old had over half of the combined primary and secondary market area income in 1999.

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<sup>1</sup> A more complete and detailed presentation of this analysis is provided in the July 2004 report *Downtown Barre Market Study Phase 1 Report: Customer and Business Profiles*.

<sup>2</sup> The primary trade area represents households that shop in downtown Barre City on a weekly or near-weekly basis. It includes Barre City, 11 other Washington County communities and four towns in Orange County. The secondary trade area includes households that shop occasionally in downtown Barre but on a recurring basis and live within 20 to 30 miles of Barre City. It includes the balance of Washington County, four towns in Lamoille County, nine Caledonia County communities, Bolton and Richmond in Chittenden County, and eight towns in Orange County.

## Customer Spending and Shopping Patterns

Based on the 2003 Consumer Expenditure Survey and a 2002 report by the University of Vermont's School of Business Administration, estimates of customer spending were prepared for primary market area year-round residents, vacation home owners and tourists. The customer telephone survey provided detailed information on customer shopping patterns and their patronage of downtown Barre stores. Results from this analysis include:

- Combined retail spending (exclusive of housing and transportation) for all three market segments was estimated at \$387 million in 2002.
- **Primary market area residents, with \$1.2 billion in 2002 income and \$317 million in annual non-housing and transportation spending, are downtown Barre's largest market.** They account for 82% of the total estimated retail spending.
- Tourists are a smaller but significant market. Visitors to Montpelier spend \$64 million per year while all central Vermont tourists spend \$160 million. Restaurants, retail goods, and entertainment/recreation account for 50% of visitor spending.
- Vacation homeowners are a minor market estimated at \$6.1 million.
- The largest spending categories across the three customer groups are food at home (\$85 million), food away from home (\$70 million), entertainment and recreation (\$59 million) and apparel and related services (\$53 million).
- Saturdays and mornings are the most common shopping times for local residents. Almost half of survey respondents (44%) shop most often on Saturdays (Friday is next most popular shopping day when 16% shop most often). Forty-two percent of surveyed customers shop most often in the morning while 37.2% primarily shop in the afternoon.
- **Just under half (49%) of surveyed customers said they would shop in downtown more often with evening store hours.**
- **Downtown Barre is a key shopping destination for regional customers.** Shopping is the primary reason to visit Barre for 62.5% of surveyed customers with dining second at 20.7%. Almost one-third of the residents that visit downtown shop several times a week and 34% shop several times per month.
- Downtown Barre is the primary shopping destination for the largest share of customers in five categories: hardware and building supplies (42.7%), dining and meals (41.2%), banking and financial services (34.1%), gifts and crafts (28.5%), and books (23.8%).
- Downtown Barre is the second ranked destination for appliances and personal services.
- Downtown Barre ranks lowest as the primary shopping area for groceries (8.1%), music, tapes and CDs (15.9%) and clothing (17.6%).
- **The Burlington area is not the first ranked shopping destination for market area consumers in any category, but is a key source of competition for appliances, clothing and home furnishings.**
- No one area is the dominant destination for several products including books, clothing, home furnishings and music, tapes and CDs.

## Downtown Business Base and Attractions

A profile of the downtown business base and area attractions was prepared from several information sources: a spring 2004 downtown business inventory, interviews with area attractions, and a comparative analysis of Vermont Department of Employment data. A survey conducted in June 2004 with 39 respondents helped characterize downtown businesses, their recent trends and future plans. The major findings from this profile are as follows:

- **Downtown Barre has a diverse economic base with large retail, financial, and government sectors.** This diverse set of activities is an asset, enhancing the downtown's convenience and ability to attract residents as a "one-stop" destination for many items.
- Retail is the downtown's largest economic sector with 43 firms (24% of the total) and 21% of the estimated occupied space for private businesses. The largest concentrations of stores are in clothing (11 stores with 39,000 square feet) and home supply (14 hardware, furniture/home furnishing and appliance stores with 52,000 square feet).
- Barre has some important gaps in retail stores. It lacks a large grocery store or specialty food niche and has few specialty stores in sporting goods, crafts and gifts that help create local character to differentiate the downtown from shopping malls and big box stores.
- Financial service firms (banks, insurance agencies, and investment firms) are major downtown users, accounting for 9.4% of firms and 16% of occupied business space.
- Telephone survey results show that **Barre is a major regional shopping destination for building materials/garden equipment and appliances.**
- Berlin has the area's largest grocery and mass merchandise stores and is the primary shopping destination for groceries and clothing.
- Barre has a comparable number of restaurants as Berlin and Montpelier (although smaller), but is the primary dining destination for over 40% of regional customers.
- **Most businesses (60%) increased sales in the last 3 years and 64% expect future sales growth.** Almost half (46%) plan to expand and another 1/3<sup>rd</sup> plan other improvements.
- Most firms expanded customers from outside Barre City but a minority (27%) increased tourist patronage.
- **Firms are either overlooking or are uncompetitive for customers under 35;** businesses stated that 10% of their customers are in this age group but it is over 33% of the primary market area population.
- Several area attractions draw over 40,000 annual visitors from central Vermont and out of state with Rock of Ages and Hope Cemetery generating the most visitors.
- Barre Opera House had the largest share of surveyed residents at their events in the past year (42%), but there is good potential to expand local attendance at area attractions since no venue attracted a majority of residents.
- Marketing linkages among attractions and with downtown businesses exist but are limited in scope and lack an overall strategy and coordination.

## Improving Downtown Barre

The following perceptions of downtown Barre and preferences for ways to improve it emerged from the customer surveys, business surveys and interviews with area attractions:

- **Customers rate downtown positively:** 60% found 10 of 15 characteristics either good or excellent. Customer service and quality of goods and services scored the best with 80% grading them good or excellent.
- **Traffic, selection of restaurants, and sales/promotions/special events received the lowest ratings** from customers. Firms found store hours, traffic, sales/promotions/special events and the selection of goods and services as the least positive downtown features.
- **More store sales, promotions and special events are priority downtown improvements for both customers and merchants.**
- Live music and street festivals promise to bring people downtown—at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of customers stated that these arts and cultural activities would attract them to downtown.
- Businesses have the most interest in supporting marketing-related activities including special events and promotions, cooperative advertising, and a downtown shopping guide or web site.
- Interviewees at area attractions suggested several ways to expand visitors and strengthen linkages to downtown: (1) stronger packaging and joint promotion of central Vermont attractions; (2) creating opportunities for visitors to view individual artists working with granite; and (3) training to improve customer service and knowledge of all area attractions among tourism and downtown business staffs.

## Key Issues and Opportunities

- Downtown Barre is performing well but faces growing competition from Berlin's mass merchandisers, chain stores, big box retailers, entertainment in the Burlington area, and Montpelier's restaurants.
- To compete more effectively, downtown Barre can emphasize its convenience as a diverse one-stop center and enhance the downtown shopping experience with special events, amenities and an attractive environment that highlights its historic buildings and cultural assets.
- Young adults are a key market segment to target given its size and under-representation among existing business customers.
- Downtown Barre can build on its strength in home supply products and restaurants by emphasizing them in marketing initiatives and diversifying its mix in these categories.
- Expanded collaboration among regional tourist attractions, cultural organizations, and downtown businesses will help downtown Barre capitalize on the tourist market by better promoting central Vermont as a tourism destination and strengthening linkages between downtown businesses and key attractions.

## 2.0 Downtown Vision and Future Market Directions

A shared vision for downtown Barre emerged from the customer and business surveys, the September 30, 2004 community forum and stakeholder focus groups. This community vision represents desired long-term qualities for downtown Barre based on brainstorming and painting a picture of Barre's future without considering feasibility or resources. This vision includes:

- A diverse mix of stores and activities that encourage people to gather and stroll downtown
- A special pedestrian-oriented environment with less truck traffic, better lighting and crosswalks, more flowers and green space, that is cleaner and more attractive
- Better coordinated downtown marketing, store hours and shopping opportunities
- A center for social activities and entertainment with more restaurants, events, cultural activities, nightlife and gathering places

Based on the market analysis, **market directions** were formulated to represent assets and advantages that customers recognize and value, and to capitalize on untapped market opportunities. After incorporating feedback from the public forum and focus groups, three market directions were chosen as the basis for formulating goals and strategies to create stronger downtown branding and expand its market:

1. **Community and Convenience Shopping Center.** This direction supports the vision for downtown as a diverse shopping destination and community gathering place. Building this brand will focus on expanding downtown's current role as a shopping destination and center for community activities with more varied stores and activities and undertaking effective marketing. Its goal is to expand patronage by primary and secondary market area residents and attract more young adult shoppers, drawing on accepted value propositions about the quality of goods, strong customer service, and local economic benefits from shopping in downtown Barre.
2. **Historic Downtown.** By strengthening its special physical and cultural character, this focus will enhance downtown Barre's appeal to existing customers, young adults, central Vermont residents and tourists, capitalizing on tourist interest in historic destinations and residents' appreciation of Barre's unique historic environment. It will promote and improve Barre as a special place by enhancing its pedestrian environment, showcasing historic buildings and landmarks, and promoting its diverse culture, connections to the Granite industry and key historic events and themes.
3. **Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Center.** A third direction advances downtown as an arts and entertainment center with more diverse activities. It complements the Historic Downtown theme and has the greatest promise to expand downtown's tourist and young adult markets. This market direction builds on important downtown assets, including SPA, the Barre Opera House, and the Vermont History Center, but is less recognized than the other directions by residents. Therefore, expanded arts, cultural and entertainment offerings and more time will be needed to achieve broad market acceptance of this downtown branding.

## Goals and Marketing Strategies

Six goals drawn from the downtown vision and market directions were formulated to guide the downtown marketing strategy. Five strategies were then developed to advance these goals and reviewed by the Market Study Committee, with priorities for each strategy set at a second community forum held on January 20, 2005. Each strategy comprises a set of reinforcing projects and activities designed to achieve a primary goal and to strengthen downtown Barre's position around the three market directions. Although each strategy is linked to a specific goal, some goals are supported by more than one strategy. Goal three, establishing a strong and more positive image for downtown Barre, is advanced by all five strategies. Goal five, expanding the downtown customer base, is the primary focus for the marketing and promotion strategy but it is also advanced by the business recruitment and arts and entertainment strategies. These goals and strategies transcend marketing to address a wide range of downtown improvements. This scope reflects the importance of improving the downtown physical environment, enhancing its unique character, and diversifying its stores and attractions for downtown Barre to succeed at expanding its market. It also continues the comprehensive approach that the Barre Partnership has followed under the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street model and the Vermont Downtown program.

Each goal is listed below along with a brief summary of its primary strategy. A full explanation and action plan for each strategy is detailed in the next section.

### **Goal 1: Create an appealing and unique downtown environment that emphasizes its historic character, culture, and function as a community center.**

**Strategy 1: Build an attractive and welcoming downtown environment** for residents and visitors through improvements to downtown's physical, social and service environment. Physical improvement projects include advocacy to shape the North Main Street reconstruction, gateway and lighting improvements, placing art and historic exhibits in vacant store windows, and having artists design store signs and streetscape elements. A public safety partnership, business-sponsored youth activities, and a downtown clean-up initiative will improve the social and service environment.

### **Goal 2: Strengthen and diversify the downtown retail base to offer a larger array of shopping destinations and foster more leisurely shopping and community gathering.**

**Strategy 2: Coordinate and expand business attraction and retention activities.** These activities include designating a coordinator to manage downtown business attraction and retention, preparing strong business recruitment collateral materials, working with property owners and undertaking direct marketing to recruit targeted businesses, conducting on-going business outreach, and completing a feasibility study for a downtown grocery store.

### **Goal 3: Establish a stronger and more positive image for downtown Barre that increases awareness and appreciation of our town's unique character, stores, and attractions.**

This goal is pursued through reinforcing initiatives across all five strategies.

**Goal 4: Expand downtown arts, cultural and entertainment activities, drawing on and reinforcing Barre’s unique culture and history.**

**Strategy 3: Expand downtown arts and cultural activities and strengthen their connections with regional tourism attractions.** This strategy focuses on expanding the offerings at existing arts and cultural venues and strengthening their visibility and patronage by area residents and tourists. Expanded arts and cultural offerings will include new downtown festivals and additional events at the Vermont History Center and Barre Opera House. Efforts to attract more residents and visitors will include producing a print and web-based community arts and events calendar, organizing joint promotions with the major attractions, and creating a downtown display for key visitor sites.

**Goal 5: Expand the downtown customer base especially among young adults and tourists.**

**Strategy 4: Undertake a sustained cooperative marketing and promotion initiative.** This strategy will expand and improve downtown marketing through sustained cooperative marketing by downtown merchants, creating a downtown map, guide and web-site, establishing new promotions that include a buy-local campaign, “Make a Night of It” dining, shopping and entertainment promotion, and sales linked to downtown events and festivals. The strategies for goals 2 and 4 also advance this goal.

**Goal 6: Build a stronger downtown partnership organization with broad community support to effectively implement the downtown improvement strategy.**

**Strategy 5: Expand funding, capacity and community support for the Barre Partnership.** The final strategy seeks to make improving downtown a community-wide endeavor in which all stakeholders are active participants while expanding the Barre Partnership’s capacity to lead strategy implementation. It includes expanding the Partnership’s membership base, funding and staff, conducting a community-wide volunteer recruitment campaign and using an email newsletter, monthly breakfasts, and an annual celebration to keep people informed about and engaged in downtown improvement efforts.



### 3.0 Downtown Barre Marketing Strategy

#### **Strategy One: Build an Attractive and Welcoming Downtown Environment**

Strategy Overview and Action Steps. Downtown Barre has strong assets in its pedestrian-oriented design and wealth of historic buildings. In both the customer survey and community forums, residents expressed a strong appreciation for this aspect of downtown and favored enhancing downtown as an attractive and “strollable” place. Moreover, downtown Barre’s historic and pedestrian character is a competitive advantage that differentiates it from shopping malls, big box stores and strip shopping centers. Due to several conditions, however, Barre is not gaining the full benefits of its special physical environment. First, downtown’s look and attractiveness is diminished by the design and condition of the public infrastructure (sidewalks, lighting, highway signs and streetscape). Second, although many historic buildings are in good condition and recently renovated, several unattractive façade and vacant buildings impair downtown’s appearance and discourage strolling the full length of North Main Street. Third, loitering and street activities may hurt public safety perceptions.

The marketing strategy’s success in expanding Barre’s customer base depends on making downtown a more attractive and welcoming place, where people feel safe and comfortable and want to linger, stroll and shop. These improvements are especially important for gaining market share among young adult shoppers, who are less positive about downtown safety than older customers and highly value the appearance of storefronts and downtown cleanliness. The following recommendations will foster a more attractive and welcoming downtown that highlights its historic buildings, upgrades North Main Street to encourage more pedestrian activity and engages teens, businesses and the police in making downtown feel cleaner and safer. High priority action steps under this strategy include:

- **Ensure completion of the North Main Street reconstruction.** With the long-awaited North Main Street reconstruction in the engineering phase, it is critical for Barre to ensure that the project proceeds to construction with a design that enhances downtown. This requires work on two fronts: (1) a community wide effort to lobby the state legislature to appropriate funds to complete the design and construction; and (2) engaging in a design review process with Vermont Transportation to ensure that the final design reflects key community goals, such as replacing the overhead road signs, improving pedestrian-level lighting, increasing downtown landscaping, and creating spaces for outdoor dining, gathering and activities. Given its scope and importance, a separate subcommittee within the Barre Partnership Design Committee should be created to focus on the North Main Street reconstruction project.
- **Install art and historic exhibits in empty store windows and vacant buildings.** This action provides a short-term and low cost way to improve the attractiveness of vacant downtown spaces while highlighting Barre’s artistic and historic character. A first step is to convince property owners at key vacant buildings to host such exhibits—one advantage is that it will draw positive attention to their buildings that may help attract new tenants. Once property owners are on board, artists need to be recruited and exhibits developed for the vacant spaces. Studio Place Arts can lead this effort, given its relationship with artists and experience organizing exhibits. A second “permanent”

exhibit on Barre's history could be organized by the Barre Historical Society and Vermont History Center, and could be moved to new storefronts when its host space is leased.

- **Develop a partnership between teen residents and the business community.** By involving Barre youth in downtown activities, this partnership expands community support for downtown improvement and reduces public safety concerns about teenagers hanging out. The Barre Partnership and businesses should work with New Directions for Barre, area churches and their youth groups, the Spaulding High School, and the Barre Technical Center to organize several ways for youth to get involved in downtown activities. Options include part-time jobs in downtown businesses, internships at the Barre Partnership, joining the downtown clean-up and beautification squad, and organizing a downtown youth art exhibit. Advertising and outreach efforts can then be undertaken to recruit teenagers to help lead and participate in these activities. As this project evolves, youth participation in the Barre partnership could expand to include a special youth membership category and teen participation on committees.
- **Establish a downtown clean-up and beautification squad.** This project will organize volunteers and hire teens to maintain a clean and attractive downtown environment. These efforts will supplement the work of merchants, property owners and Barre City to create more uniform cleanliness downtown. Many larger downtown organizations hire staff or contract for these services, but Barre's size and community spirit allows for a less costly approach. The first step is to identify social service, youth and civic organizations that will help recruit squad members. Next, a series of squads will need to be organized and trained to remove trash, sweep sidewalks and undertake other clean-up tasks. These squads could also plant flowers, install lights and help with other beautification projects. Since keeping downtown clean is a daily need, the ultimate goal would be to have squads working on a daily basis. However, this level of effort will probably need to be phased in beginning with the busiest seasons and days. Thus, the initial effort could focus on Fridays and Saturdays (the busiest shopping days) and then expand to additional days. Similarly, the squad can begin in the late spring and summer months and then expand into additional seasons as funding and recruits increase.
- **Create an attractive northern downtown gateway.** The large highway signs, gas stations and traffic signals at the northern downtown entrance do not provide an attractive gateway and belie Barre's historic and pedestrian character. Moreover, as the primary gateway for visitors from I-89 and Montpelier, it is particularly important to make it an attractive and welcoming entrance. The implementation of this project requires designing an innovative and attractive gateway and securing the funds to build it. A first step is to hold a community charette to define the goals and key elements for the gateway, generate creative ideas and foster interest in the project. Once these goals and ideas are in place, funding for the project would need to be raised through a combination of community contributions and grants. A firm could then be hired to prepare the final design in collaboration with a community review committee. Once full funding is secured, the project would be bid and constructed.

Several additional activities are important to this strategy but represent less pressing priorities:

- **Establish a façade improvement program.** Design assistance and financial incentives help motivate property owners to improve their façades and provide a tool to promote more consistent and higher quality façade designs. Barre City has secured funds to provide free design assistance to renovate building façades. A low-interest loan program should be established to help property or business owners finance these improvements. One option is to actively market Chittenden Bank’s statewide Downtown Revitalization Loan Program, which supplies long-term fixed loans for building façade improvements in Vermont’s designated downtowns. A second option, that provides local control over loan terms and decisions, is to create a loan pool among local banks. With each of the seven downtown banks committing \$50,000 to \$100,000, the loan pool would have \$350,000 to \$700,000 to lend. One bank would be responsible for administering the fund with all participating banks joining a loan committee to review and approve loan requests. Design and lending guidelines will need to be created, but Barre can simplify this task by adapting guidelines developed by other downtown programs. Some loans could also be supplemented with state grants under the Vermont Downtown Program. Once it is established, the loan program should be actively marketed to downtown property owners with special efforts made to convince the most strategic properties, i.e., large, prominent and historically significant ones, to improve their façades.
- **Improve aesthetic downtown lighting.** With its wealth of historic buildings and landmarks, well designed and coordinated lighting provides a low cost way to dramatically improve downtown’s historic and aesthetic environment. The goals for downtown lighting should be to create an attractive nighttime pedestrian environment to encourage shopping, dining and entertainment activities and to showcase downtown’s prominent historic buildings. An overall downtown lighting program should be prepared that combines spotlights that showcase historic buildings, tree lighting, window display lights, and improved interior business lighting. The Barre Partnership would then work with the City, private building owners and store owners to implement the plan. A mix of funding sources could be used for implementation, including the North Main Street reconstruction for pedestrian street lights and some building spot lights, façade improvement loans for other spot lights and window displays, and contributions and sponsorships for tree lighting.
- **Implement a public safety partnership.** Throughout the market study process, businesses expressed concerns that customer perceptions of public safety deter downtown shopping and dining. A partnership between downtown businesses and the Barre Police Department should be established to address these concerns. This partnership can take the form of a Barre Partnership Public Safety Committee in which police department representatives, downtown businesses, and residents work together to define downtown public safety issues and develop more effective ways to address them. Although specific actions will emerge from the committee’s deliberations, potential activities might include training store owners and employees on how to address loitering or potentially violent situations, improving communications with police to accelerate their response to problem situations and establishing a downtown beat patrol.
- **Commission artists to design signs and streetscape elements.** Barre can draw upon its arts community to create unique designs for store signs, public signs and downtown streetscape elements. This will enhance downtown Barre’s image as an arts and cultural

center and add to its unique character. Barre City and the Barre Partnership should work with SPA to identify artists that have an interest in such projects and then work to hire them for a range of designs. Artists could be commissioned directly to design new downtown gateway or way-finding signs. Design firms bidding on the final North Main Street plan could be encouraged to include artists on their design team. Finally, under the façade improvement program, the Barre Partnership could provide a list of these artists to building owners, business owners, and architects and encourage using them to design façade elements and signs.

Implementation Entities and Priorities. This strategy, while overseen by the Barre Partnership Design Committee, requires the involvement of many parties. The City, through its political leadership, Planning and Zoning and Engineering Departments will be central to ensuring the North Main Street Reconstruction and securing grants for other design improvements. SPA has an important role in recruiting and coordinating the work of artists to improve downtown aesthetics. The high schools and New Directions for Barre are essential for engaging youth in downtown activities while collaboration with the Police Department is needed to address public safety concerns.

The main priorities under this strategy are threefold: (1) organizing the community-wide effort to ensure the timely and successful reconstruction of North Main Street; (2) implementing short-term visual improvement through displays in vacant store windows; and (3) establishing the business-youth partnership.

Required Resources. The primary resource for this strategy is new organizational partnerships and increased volunteer efforts, especially to implement the youth and public safety initiatives. City and Barre Partnership leadership will be central to establishing these new partnerships. New funding will be needed for several projects, including installing exhibits in vacant storefronts, the clean-up/beautification squad, physical improvements for the northern gateway and aesthetic lighting, and new programming under the teen partnership. A combination of state and foundation grants will be the primary funding sources supplemented with business fees, corporate sponsorships and community contributions. Capital for the façade loan fund can be provided by local banks and credit unions.

## **Strategy Two: Coordinate and Expand Business Attraction and Retention Activities**

Strategy Overview and Action Steps. Barre has a strong and diverse business base, but needs to reuse several vacant buildings and expand its retail diversity to appeal to a larger customer base. An on-going need also exists to attract new businesses as new vacancies occur. To address these goals, the business recruitment strategy has five components:

1. Set recruitment targets
2. Designate a business recruitment coordinator
3. Create a recruitment package
4. Undertake recruitment to attract target businesses
5. Work to develop vacant and underused buildings

The following action plan is recommended to address these recruitment priorities:

- **Focus business recruitment on five target businesses: restaurants, cafes, specialty food/grocery stores, arts/crafts/gift retailers and home furnishings stores.** Restaurants and cafes will strengthen downtown Barre's current role as a dining destination, and address customers' desire for increased diversity in dining options. They also encourage more night-time activity and socializing downtown and can appeal to young adult and tourist markets. A café, in particular, was a strong preference at the young adult focus group. Food stores fill a key gap in the downtown retail mix and were an important goal for merchants and community forum attendees. Arts/crafts/gift retailers and home furnishing stores help diversify the downtown retail mix with the former having appeal to visitors and the latter complementing the downtown's strength in other home supply items (hardware, building supplies and appliances).
- **Designate a business recruitment coordinator (BRC) to manage recruitment efforts.** The coordinator's role is threefold: (1) coordinating implementation of the downtown recruitment strategy among parties; (2) undertaking direct marketing; and (3) serving as the contact person and ombudsman to follow-up with interested firms. The Barre Area Development Corporation, which has been responsible for business attraction in Barre City and Barre Town, is the logical choice for this role but two issues need to be addressed. First, it is important to ensure that downtown recruitment will be a priority and receive sufficient attention within the Corporation's overall work. Second, specific staff responsibilities should be defined with the planned retirement of the current director. A memorandum of understanding between the Barre Partnership, Barre Area Development Corporation and the City Manager should be completed to formalize Barre Area Development's role as business recruitment coordinator and address these issues. The corporation staff would then report monthly to the Barre Partnership Economic Restructuring (ER) Committee on recruitment implementation.
- **Create a recruitment package.** Effective collateral materials that make the case for locating in downtown Barre and provide useful information on how to start a business are needed to support recruitment efforts. The following materials should be included in a comprehensive recruitment package:

1. A *Market Profile* that documents downtown Barre’s market size, demographics, consumer spending related to target stores, and position as a shopping, dining and entertainment destination. Data from the July Market Analysis Report provides the basis for this profile.
  2. A *Community Profile* that emphasizes Barre and Central Vermont’s desirability as a place to live and do business. This document provides basic information on business costs, services, quality of life (housing, education, health care, recreation, arts/culture, civic life) and success stories or testimonials from new businesses that have located in Barre. Existing materials from the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce can provide the basis for this piece.
  3. A *Guide to Starting a Business in Barre* to explain the steps and process for starting a business, available tax incentives and assistance and contact information for the Business Recruitment Coordinator.
  4. A *Downtown Revitalization Brief* that summarizes the overall downtown improvement strategy, the community’s vision for and commitment to improving downtown, key successes and upcoming projects. Positive news articles on the downtown also should be included. This brochure can incorporate parts of the Barre Partnership membership brochure but needs to be pitched to businesses.
  5. A listing, updated regularly, of available spaces to lease and for-sale buildings downtown.
- **Undertake an initiative to recruit target businesses.** A mix of formal and informal approaches are needed to reach existing businesses, new entrepreneurs and people interested in moving to downtown Barre and to successfully recruit businesses. Formal recruitment includes the following advertising and outreach to target businesses:
- Direct outreach to strong stores in target categories located within Central Vermont and adjacent regions to discuss opening a branch location in downtown Barre. Almost 30% of surveyed businesses had multiple locations and getting established independent businesses to open a branch in Barre is a promising way to diversify downtown. The Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the BRC to develop a list of recruitment candidates for direct outreach, including soliciting ideas from Partnership volunteers and members.
  - Create a business recruitment web page for businesses and individuals seeking to start a business in Barre City. This page should be part of a new downtown web site and the City’s web site, and be linked to web sites for the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, Central Vermont Chamber, regional realtors, and the small business development center. Information from the business recruitment package will provide the content for this web site. The page also needs an e-mail link to the BRC.
  - Place advertisements for downtown Barre in trade publications that serve targeted niches. These ads would emphasize the advantages of locating in downtown Barre, the incentives, assistance and spaces available and BRC contract information. The cost of these ads could be shared with building owners and commercial realtors.

- Use the New England Culinary Institute to attract graduates who want to stay in Vermont to open a restaurant in Barre. ER Committee representative can meet with the NECI placement office to inform them of the market potential downtown, Barre’s interest in and incentives for restaurant start-ups and identify the best way to reach graduates and alumni that are interested in opening a new restaurant.

Informal recruitment activities can include:

- Encouraging all volunteers to identify potential recruitment prospects and talk up downtown Barre with friends and colleagues to generate “word-of-mouth” interest in and excitement about the downtown.
  - Create a simple flier on starting a business in downtown Barre to encourage visitors to consider Barre if they are interested in starting a new business or moving an existing one to Vermont. The brochure should include BRC contract information and can be placed at the Chamber of Commerce office, town offices, resorts, key visitor destinations and at displays at major events.
- **Expand efforts to develop vacant and underused buildings.** Barre has several long-standing vacant and under-utilized buildings that impair the downtown’s image and vitality and constrain new business opportunities. Although it is often difficult to get absentee or inactive property owners to lease, improve and better utilize their buildings, sustained community-wide efforts to foster change can have an impact. A combination of community pressure, stronger enforcement of city codes, and identifying new owners with an interest in acquiring the property are needed. The ER committee would need to organize and sustain this effort over time and might begin by targeting the 2 or 3 highest priority properties. Barre City could also consider creating financial incentives to release space, such as eliminating tax stabilization for buildings that remain vacant for an extended period and fail to address code violations.
- **Review and update city zoning for the downtown industrial area.** The area between North Main Street and the railroad right-of-way has historically been an industrial area with zoning regulations that reflect this use. Industrial uses, however, are likely to decline in the future, as evidenced by the vacant 7.5-acre Rouleaux Granite complex behind City Hall, and new uses will be needed for these buildings. Barre City needs to put in place zoning that will allow new uses consistent with the downtown vision. A review of existing zoning regulations for this ‘downtown industrial district’ should be undertaken by the Zoning Administrator and Planning Board to recommend appropriate changes to city zoning regulations for adoption by the city council. New zoning regulations should allow for diverse non-industrial uses including retail, restaurants, entertainment, galleries, lodging, and offices. The zoning should also encourage street-level uses that generate pedestrian activity and improvements to strengthen pedestrian connections to North Main Street.

Two lesser priorities can be implemented once these core business recruitment actions are well underway:

- **Conduct business retention outreach.** This outreach seeks to retain downtown businesses by identifying firms that are considering moving from downtown, closing

their store or have a retiring owner. Once these businesses are identified, the Barre Partnership, city officials and regional economic development organizations can see if feasible options exist to keep the business downtown. Both local volunteers and the BRC would conduct this outreach with the BRC responsible for coordinating the retention response.

- **Conduct a grocery store feasibility analysis.** Such a study would strengthen the case for attracting this key recruitment target and identify the most feasible type of grocery or food stores to recruit. Contacting the University of Vermont (UVM) business school to identify a class project or student intern would be a low-cost option to obtain this analysis.

Implementation Entities and Priorities. The Barre Partnership ER Committee and the Barre Area Development Corporation (BADC) are the lead entities to implement this strategy. While the BADC will staff recruitment efforts and its director serve as the BRC, the ER committee should oversee the strategy and assist with key tasks, such as preparing the recruitment package, identifying recruitment candidates for direct marketing, and providing incentives and pressure to reuse vacant buildings. Barre Partnership staff and board members also need to recruit key property owners and commercial brokers as active ER committee members since they play a critical role in business recruitment. Regional economic development organizations and city officials have important supporting roles in providing assistance and action to convince interested business to locate downtown.

Getting the basic business recruitment system in place is the first priority under this strategy. This entails formalizing the BADC role as recruitment coordinator, expanding ER committee membership, creating the recruitment package and beginning direct marketing efforts.

Required Resources. The key resource for this strategy is the time and effort by BADC staff and the BP staff and ER committee. Additional resources are the funds and expertise to prepare the recruitment packages and web site. Since these materials will benefit Barre City, the Barre Partnership, regional economic development organizations and building owners, the cost should be shared among them. These costs can also be reduced through contributions, pro-bono assistance from advertising and graphic/web design professionals or student internships and class projects (through Goddard College, Woodbury College, the University of Vermont, or the two high schools). Advertising costs could be shared between building owners, the Barre Partnership and BADC. The grocery store feasibility study, if not completed by UVM business students, will require funds to hire a consultant. A state planning grant or federal grant through the Economic Development Administration technical assistance program could cover a large share of this cost.



## **Strategy Three: Expand Downtown Arts and Cultural Activities and Strengthen Their Connection to Regional Tourism Attractions**

**Strategy Overview and Action Steps.** Barre has a solid base of arts and cultural activities, best exemplified by the work of the Barre Opera House, the Rock of Ages Visitors Center, Studio Place Arts (SPA), Hope Cemetery, and the new Vermont Granite Museum. Augmenting and more effectively leveraging these activities to make downtown a vibrant and attractive destination for area residents and visitors is a key component of the overall downtown marketing strategy. An arts and culture strategy has been used successfully by communities in Vermont and throughout New England to revitalize and strengthen downtowns (Bellows Falls and Brattleboro are two of many examples). The keys to their success have been: (1) developing a critical mass of arts and cultural offerings that emphasize diverse artistic content and its exhibition; (2) a connection to a city's unique culture and heritage; (3) strong community commitment to support arts and culture and (4) a highly visible promotion and marketing campaign. The City of Barre is well aware of the strategic value of its arts and culture activities for downtown, and we recommend that it take additional steps to make the connection even stronger. Key action steps include:

- **Produce an arts and events calendar.** To fully capitalize on Barre's existing strong base of arts and cultural activities, and new ones as they develop, it is imperative to have a central source of arts information that is consistent, visibly marketed, and high quality. Toward this end, we recommend creating a consolidated monthly arts calendar. Hard copies of the calendar (perhaps in a two-color, three-fold brochure format) should be widely distributed at major arts organizations, local government offices, churches, restaurants, and retail locations. Copies could be inserted in central Vermont newspapers, and should be available to the state's Visitor Centers. A web site ("Barre Arts") featuring the calendar should also be developed, with help from the Central Vermont Chamber, and linked to web sites of other arts and cultural organizations, tourist attractions, economic development organizations, and local governments. A mechanism to include Barre arts and cultural events in other local and regional events calendars should also be established.
- **Add events at the Vermont History Center.** The Center's current lecture and performance schedule should be expanded to include new events targeted to local residents and visitors. One option is a series of events that focus on the state's history and genealogy. Families and aging baby boomers are increasingly turning to these kinds of activities for vacation and recreational purposes. Examples of events that would capitalize on this trend include:
  - ***"Come Home to Vermont" program.*** This would be a weekend program targeting Vermont natives who now live elsewhere with a weekend-long series of events around the theme "Come Home to Vermont."
  - ***Ethnic-themed events.*** An evening series or weekend of events that focus on the history and contribution of different ethnic groups in Vermont – the Irish, Italian, and French-Canadian in particular have very strong roots in Barre and central Vermont.

- **Exploring history through art.** The Center could borrow on the theme of the "Fun with Family Photographs" events sponsored by the New England Historical Genealogical Society that use photographic documentation to highlight family history (see [www.newenglandancestors.org](http://www.newenglandancestors.org)). Hardwick, in a variation on this idea, has a program that engages senior citizens in various art forms as a means of understanding their history and their experiences in the community.
  - **Vermont literature and/or film series.** Studio Place Arts could use its upcoming "Letters, Words and Books" exhibit as the basis for a literary festival that features Vermont and New England writers and storytellers and plan it in conjunction with the Vermont History Center. The Center could also sponsor, possibly with the Barre Opera House, a film series of documentaries by Vermont filmmakers. Although the film topics may not always focus on Vermont, Vermont filmmakers are growing in importance as a cultural and historical asset.
- **Establish joint promotions with key attractions.** The City and Barre Partnership should use joint promotions to broaden the marketing of arts and culture activities. Joint promotions can result in higher visibility, broader exposure to new audiences, and, sometimes, the development of new activities or offerings. Joint promotions should reinforce key marketing themes for downtown, have a focus and scale with the potential to draw visitors from the secondary trade area, and have a strong retail promotional tie-in. They can be developed both among arts and cultural organizations and between these organizations and the business community. A good example of a **joint promotion among arts and cultural organizations** is a collaboration between the Barre Opera House, the History Center, the Granite Museum, and Rock of Ages to bring a noted granite historian to Barre (see section on consolidation of granite-related activities below). A good example of a joint promotion **between arts organizations and the business community** is last fall's SPA & All That Jazz program. SPA partnered with Sean and Nora's for a Jazz Brunch. After the brunch, guests were invited to SPA to view several exhibits and could "attend informal discussions about stone art with local experts" and hear presentations by the local librarian and a sculptor. Another potential joint promotion is to create a display about downtown Barre's history and attractions to install at key Central Vermont attractions and visitor centers. A rack with the downtown guide and brochures on downtown destinations and businesses could accompany the exhibit.

The Barre Partnership should contact the Vermont Arts Council about hosting a one-day "best practices" meeting on marketing and promotion. This meeting would help Barre and other communities learn from the experience of communities such as Bellows Falls, Bennington, and Brattleboro and share their own lessons on using the arts as an economic engine and downtown revitalization tool.

- **Expand downtown festivals and events.** As noted above, Barre has a base of arts and cultural activities offered through its principal arts organizations that are well-designed, well-executed and popular with residents and visitors from the region and beyond. We want to affirm this strong foundation of arts activities, and only recommend adding a few new programs and events that would broaden current offerings. Since new activities require scarce time and resources, we suggest that the community take on only those activities for which there are resources and a fundamental level of support among the arts

and business communities. The following recommendations reflect the suggestions and comments provided at interviews and focus groups.

- ***Festivals.*** Downtown festivals are an important way to attract residents downtown while improving its excitement and vibrancy. City residents and secondary market area residents are more likely to make the trip to Barre with the draw of a special event like a festival. Existing local festivals, including Homecoming Days and the Granite Festival, are already drawing residents and visitors downtown.
  - ***Create a small number of additional events.*** One or two additional festivals could augment these existing offerings and fill in seasonal gaps. There has been considerable interest in re-establishing a heritage festival in some form. A festival that highlighted the cultural contributions of Barre's various ethnic groups could include artisans, theater, food, and music. This kind of festival would involve collaboration between the History Center, Barre Opera House, the Granite Museum, and Rock of Ages. Activities could be planned over the course of a week and include mid-week performances at the Barre Opera House.
  - ***Draw on the successes of other small communities.*** New ideas can come from the experiences of other small communities. Jonesborough, Tennessee, a community of only 3,400 people, hosts an annual Storytelling Festival that attracted almost 10,000 people and generated \$5 million of economic activity. The Brunswick Maine Area Arts Council holds an annual Family Arts Festival on a Saturday in September that engages the entire community with music, theatrical performances, art-making activities for children, and art demonstrations; the festival is coordinated with area museums and regional arts and tourism-related organizations. The National Main Street Center publishes a compendium of downtown festivals that can be consulted to generate other ideas.
  - ***Review pay-off of existing events.*** While new events may be warranted, current events should also be reviewed to assess their continued value to downtown and the community. Such a review should determine which events are successful and why, which ones need to be dropped or updated to add more fun and excitement, incorporate arts/cultural activities and expand merchant and civic participation.

We also recommend the **creation of a strong Central Vermont regional identity around granite-related attractions.** This agenda will aid downtown by expanding the regional visitor base, increasing recognition of downtown Barre as a significant destination, and generate more downtown visits and customers. It entails consolidating granite-related attractions and activities into a highly visible critical mass of destinations and events and integrating them more effectively into the regional tourism promotion infrastructure. The opening of the new Rock of Ages Visitors Center, the development of the Vermont Granite Museum and the Stone Art School, the annual Granite Festival sponsored by the museum, the exhibition and promotion of granite artisans by SPA through its "Rock Solid" show, and the increased attention on Hope Cemetery from a *National Geographic* article have all contributed to Barre being the premier

center and destination for granite-related activities in the state of Vermont. The potential for Barre to capitalize on the convergence of all of these developments is significant – the city has a truly first-class cultural asset, and it needs to elevate its thinking about how it organizes and promotes this asset. We strongly recommend that the city, the business community, the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce, the principal organizations in the granite industry, and the city's principal arts and cultural organizations seize this opportunity and collectively develop a strategic plan for capitalizing on this asset. The plan is necessary because the potential is so great – if all of the granite-related organizations and activities are not coordinated and effectively organized, the results will be fragmentation and a missed opportunity. Leadership by the Barre Partnership, city political leaders and downtown arts and cultural organizations is needed to ensure that this opportunity is fully realized. We recommend that the plan address the following:

- **Promotional packages.** These could include discounted admission tickets for multiple venues and coupons from downtown merchants. Other special features could be offered, including a guided tour and transportation to the major venues.
- **Research and education programs.** Expanding on the programs already being developed by the Vermont Granite Museum, the major granite-related organizations could work with the Vermont History Center to develop educational programs for K-12 students, including field trip itineraries, and facilitate scholarly research on the region's granite history.
- **Special events.** Additional special events could be developed jointly by granite-related organizations and other historical and cultural organizations, perhaps corresponding to significant milestones in the region's granite history.
- **Collateral materials.** Joint informational and marketing materials could be developed that include a map and brochure that detail and “connects the dots” among Central Vermont's granite-related venues. It might also include short articles on the granite industry and its impact on Barre's development. The brochure could be partially underwritten by the Partnership and contain ads from local merchants. Other displays, videos, CD-ROMs, and web content could also be developed.
- **Marketing strategy.** A common strategy should be developed for marketing granite-related programs through regional and state tourism marketing programs.
- **Transportation.** Granite-related organizations should work with local officials to develop transportation infrastructure to promote visits to multiple sites. This includes the development of signage, a map of venues, and perhaps some kind of shuttle service. Opportunities for providing advertising and sponsorship for local businesses should be taken into account.

**Implementation Entities and Priorities.** Rather than create a new arts and culture alliance to implement this strategy, we recommend that an Arts, Culture and Tourism committee of the Barre Partnership be formed. The committee would draw on the administrative and organizational resources of the Partnership to avoid the burden of developing its own governance and administrative capacity. The committee should include the principals of the City's major arts and cultural organizations, as well as representatives from the downtown business community and the City of Barre. The executive director of the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce is also an important person to include on the committee. Beyond implementing the

actions recommended under this strategy, the committee could take on the following ongoing tasks:

- **Priority-setting:** developing a set of arts and cultural priorities based on the planned activities of each arts and cultural organization, as well as the recommendations contained in this report.
- **Coordination:** coordinating arts and cultural activities to maximize the visibility and economic impact for the City and the downtown businesses and arts organizations. Finding ways to collaborate and build on each others' events would also be a key function.
- **Resource development:** securing the volunteer and financial resources needed to successfully carry out planned and future arts activities. Resources within the city are scarce; therefore the committee should be a source of a strategic fundraising and community support.
- **Promotion and marketing:** developing and coordinating the promotion and marketing for all arts-related events. A coordinated effort will not only help individual arts organizations, but benefit the entire downtown and enhance Barre's image as an arts and cultural center.
- **Information-sharing:** creating a forum to share best practices. Businesses and arts organizations in Barre have undertaken different marketing and promotion strategies, and organized successful events that have brought in revenues and new audiences. Sharing these best practices could be an important learning tool.

Priorities under this strategy include establishing the Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee to coordinate implementation, producing the monthly arts and events calendar, and expanding offerings at Vermont History Central. Gaining regional buy-in to a collaborative plan around Granite-related venues is also a key priority.

**Required Resources.** The most essential resources needed to carry out the activities outlined above will be the time and critical thinking of the members of the committee. This contribution cannot be underestimated. There are, however, expenses associated with the proposed new activities, increasing the promotion and marketing of arts events, and building a more destination-oriented set of activities around the theme of granite. For these expenses, we suggest several sources: the Vermont Arts Council, the state Economic Development Department, the Vermont Community Foundation, Americans for the Arts, and possibly the Ford Foundation which sponsored a program to help small communities use the arts for economic revitalization.

## **Strategy Four: Undertake a Sustained Cooperative Marketing and Promotion Initiative**

Strategy Overview and Action Steps. A sustained marketing campaign is central to retain and expand downtown Barre’s customer market. As Barre faces growing competition on several fronts, it needs to aggressively market itself as a destination and coordinate advertising to establish a strong brand identity. The goals for the downtown marketing campaign include: (1) establish a strong and positive brand image for downtown Barre as a historic downtown, convenient shopping center, and destination for arts, culture and dining; (2) retain and increase patronage among its core primary market area customer base; and (3) attract a greater share of the young adult and visitor markets. The following action steps are designed to achieve these goals through a sustained cooperative downtown advertising program, new marketing materials that emphasize branding themes, and expanded promotions targeted to primary area residents and linked to dining, arts and cultural offerings. Recommendations incorporate key findings from the market analysis that emphasize Barre’s strength as a convenient shopping destination, customer and business support for expanded promotions and events, and strong customer response to the value of shopping locally and Barre’s unique historic character. Key action steps include:

- **Establish a cooperative downtown advertising campaign.** No cooperative advertising program currently exists to market downtown Barre, even though it is a well established practice for many downtowns and Main Street programs. Cooperative advertising is an effective way to market the overall downtown while also advertising individual stores. Both newspaper and radio advertisements should be included in the campaign. All ads should have two components: (1) a branding message for downtown Barre; and (2) rotating advertisements for individual stores. Branding messages should emphasize Barre’s historic character and the convenience of its diverse stores and services. Rotating the featured store (or stores) in the ad builds recognition of Barre’s diversity and provides a high profile to encourage business participation. A second type of newspaper ad can also be used, in which large half or full page ads also feature a listing of individual stores. Businesses can support the ads at three levels—purchasing a featured store ad, purchasing a regular store name listing, and making a contribution to fund the overall advertising program. To be effective, the advertisements must run regularly on a sustained basis. Regular and sustained advertising also will help the Barre Partnership negotiate discounted ad rates. Some ads can also be organized around prominent downtown niches. For example, rotating ads could feature clothing stores, restaurants, and home improvement. Based on the customer survey, the Barre-Montpelier Times Argus and the World, read by 63% and 44% of households, respectively, are the best vehicles for print advertising.
- **Create a downtown map and guide.** This map and guide should provide a comprehensive list of downtown stores, restaurants and attractions rather than listing businesses based on paid advertisements. Stores should be organized by and emphasize key retail categories. The primary audiences for these materials are secondary market area residents and tourists who are not familiar with downtown Barre’s offerings, but it will also help reinforce the diversity and depth of stores for primary trade area

consumers. In addition to this overall map and guide, the Barre Partnership can also prepare simple fliers to highlight and build recognition of three large clusters:

- *A dining and entertainment guide* with all downtown restaurants (with their hours, type of cuisine, price range and perhaps a brief quote from a restaurant review) and arts, culture and entertainment venues.
- *A clothing and gift store listing* given their substantial presence in Barre.
- *A home supply/home improvement guide* that lists hardware, appliance, furniture and other stores providing home-related products.

These guides should be distributed through several channels including stores and destinations in downtown Barre, the Montpelier and I-89 Visitor Centers, major regional attractions, lodging locations, and major employers.

- **Organize a "buy local" campaign.** The Barre Partnership can capitalize on strong customer recognition that shopping downtown helps the local economy by establishing a "buy local" advertising campaign. This campaign should directly motivate residents to shop at locally owned downtown stores and foster a community ethic for shopping downtown and in locally owned stores. Consequently, it needs to use a grass roots marketing approach. To maximize impact, the campaign should include the following elements:

- A campaign slogan that prompts people to shop locally (e.g., Be A Local Hero: Shop Downtown Barre)
- Wide use of bumper stickers and signs in store and business windows
- News articles that profile local businesses and highlight their contribution to the local community
- A brief "business-of-the-month" profile in the Barre Partnership e-newsletter
- Paid advertisements
- Sales promotions and discounts designed to reinforce and reward local shopping. Examples include a frequent buyer discount tied to shopping at multiple downtown stores, a coupon linked to shopping at 5 or 10 downtown merchants, and a downtown discount card or coupon book for becoming a member of the Barre Partnership.

- **Organize a "Make a Night of It" promotion.** This promotion seeks to expand recognition and patronage of downtown evening offerings and use these dining and entertainment venues to encourage downtown shopping. A first step is to gain a critical mass of merchants to commit to maintain evening store hours on a designated night (potentially Thursday or Friday) for a sustained period. To effectively test and build the customer market for evening shopping and entertainment, this promotion and evening store hours will need to continue consistently for many months. The ideal time to launch the campaign would be in late spring or early summer when the days are longer and continue it through the fall. In addition to organizing merchant participation, the promotion needs to be coordinated with nighttime cultural and entertainment attractions that offer a sustained series of concerts, films, speakers, and historical and art exhibits. The promotion needs to emphasize the range of evening activities downtown and prompt residents to combine shopping or dining with attending a cultural/entertainment event.

To motivate consumers to “make a night of it”, the promotion should offer a discount for combining downtown evening activities, such as a meal discount with proof of downtown shopping and/or entertainment attendance and a shopping discount linked to dining or attending downtown events. One simple way to do this would be to distribute “Make-a-Night of It” coupons at stores, restaurants, and arts and cultural attractions, and use stores’ on-going contact with customers to build awareness of and interest in coming downtown that night. Painted store windows, posters, public service announcements and the newly created community arts and culture calendar and Barre Partnership e-newsletter can all be used to market this promotion.

- **Establish sales promotions linked to major events.** A third area for additional promotions is sales and advertising built around major downtown festivals and events. Stores would hold a special sale around and during the event both to attract more people downtown to the event and to encourage shopping by people who come to the event. In addition to these special sales, businesses could use window displays and painting to promote the festival. Given its size, theme and extensive community effort, Barre Homecoming Days is a first candidate to develop and test this promotional approach.

A second order priority is establishing **a downtown web-site**. This site will become more important as Barre expands its tourist market by providing a centralized way for visitors to gain up-to-date information on downtown stores, restaurants, arts and cultural activities, special events and lodging. This site should also be linked to web sites for downtown businesses, the on-line community arts, culture and event calendar, Barre and regional attractions, and the Central Vermont and state of Vermont tourism sites. The Building a Better Brattleboro and Littleton, New Hampshire web sites provide good templates for beginning the design of a downtown Barre web site.

To strengthen downtown branding, a common logo and consistent themes and images should be used in all materials and promotions, including the cooperative ads, Barre Partnership materials, downtown event and festival posters and, when feasible, individual store signs and ads. This will reinforce the key marketing themes of a historic downtown that offers shopping convenience and diverse arts, cultural and dining attractions. A first step is for the Barre Partnership Marketing and Promotion Committee to develop a logo and tag line for its brochures and then build on this branding for the cooperative advertising campaign and subsequent promotion materials.

Implementation Entities and Priorities. The Barre Partnership Marketing and Promotion Committee is the appropriate body to implement this strategy. For several promotions, it will need to work closely with downtown arts and cultural organizations through the recommended new Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee. The Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce is a potential resource for development of the downtown guides and web-site.

The first priorities under this strategy are to establish a cooperative advertising program, launch one of the new promotions (perhaps the buy-local campaign) and create the downtown guides and map. With these core marketing initiatives in place, the Partnership can undertake the additional promotions and add a downtown web site.



Required Resources. Strong business participation and staff and volunteer time are the critical resources to implement this strategy, but funding will be needed to design, develop and print multiple marketing materials (guides, posters, bumper stickers, advertisements), to buy advertisements and to design, host and maintain a downtown web site. The cooperative advertising can be self-funded by businesses that pay to participate. Funding for the guides and promotion campaigns can come from several grant sources, including state downtown grants, state arts council and foundation grants (from ones that support either arts and cultural activities or community economic development). Business contributions from utilities and financial institutions can also help underwrite these costs. For example, Verizon and other telecommunications companies fund web-site development for non-profit community organizations. Finally, in-kind contributions from design, web-site development and printing firms can lower some of these costs, as can service learning projects from area high schools and colleges.

## **Strategy Five: Expand funding, capacity and community support for the Barre Partnership**

Strategy Overview and Action Steps. The Barre Partnership has successfully spearheaded downtown revitalization and been a strong voice for local merchants for many years, but the implementation of this marketing strategy poses new challenges for the organization. First, the marketing strategy adds projects and activities to the Barre Partnership's agenda that require more resources to implement. Second, the number of organizations active in downtown activities has grown and should continue to grow under this strategy. Thus, the Barre Partnership has an expanding role communicating with and coordinating the work of its many partners. Third, the Barre Partnership needs broad-based community support and participation to fully implement the marketing strategy. Many activities rely heavily on volunteer time and expertise for implementation. Moreover, making downtown improvement an active community-wide project, rather than the work of city government and downtown businesses and organizations, will generate local excitement about downtown Barre and add momentum to many initiatives. After strong participation in the planning process for the market study, this is a promising time to expand and broaden the Barre Partnership's volunteer base. Consequently, this strategy focuses on strengthening the Barre Partnership's internal organization capacity to meet these challenges and expanding overall community involvement in and support for downtown improvement initiatives. The following action steps are recommended to implement this strategy:

- **Formalize membership and dues.** In recent years, the Barre Partnership has operated without a formal membership system with defined categories and dues. By creating a variety of membership categories and dues levels, the partnership will make it clear that everyone is welcome to join and participate in the organization, obtain more predictable annual revenue from its membership, and expand its membership and revenue base. The Barre Partnership is now making this transition, having established five membership categories with dues ranging from \$10 to \$500 and plans to convert its existing members to this system during 2005. A general membership brochure is also being produced to support on-going membership recruitment, along with a computer database to maintain membership records and support membership mailings. A system for gaining annual membership renewals and undertaking periodic membership drives should also be put in place.
- **Recruit community-wide volunteers.** The Barre Partnership should undertake a community-wide volunteer recruitment campaign soon after the release of the marketing strategy report. This will allow the Partnership to capitalize on the interest in and momentum from completing the marketing strategy to expand its volunteer base for implementation. A key recruitment goal is attracting more young adults to participate in downtown initiatives and strengthen the Partnership's connection to this important segment of the community. Several tools should be used to recruit volunteers to join committees and work on specific activities:
  - Contacting participants in the community forums
  - A regular public service announcement on local radio stations
  - News articles in local newspapers

- Outreach to church and community groups, especially those in which young adults are active, to identify new volunteers from within their memberships
- One-on-one outreach by existing partnership staff, board and committee members.

A simple flier should be prepared to support the volunteer appeal with basic information on the Partnership, its key accomplishments and activities and an appeal to join neighbors in making downtown Barre a better place. The member database discussed above can also serve to help manage and communicate with volunteers by organizing data on their interests, skills, and involvement in committees and activities.

- **Create a monthly e-newsletter.** An electronic newsletter is an easy way to keep members and supporters informed about the Partnership's activities and upcoming meeting and events. It can also help recruit one-time volunteers for projects or when special expertise is needed. The executive director would be responsible for producing and sending the brochure, using information provided by each committee chair.
- **Update and regularly review staff and committee work plans.** The Barre Partnership uses committee work-plans to guides its activities. With the adoption of this marketing strategy, each committee should update its work plan to reflect new projects and responsibilities under the strategy. The Board should also work with the Executive Director to revise her work plan and review it on a quarterly basis.
- **Expand financial support for a full-time staff person and administrative staff.** The current part-time staffing limits the organization's capacity and is insufficient to support implementation of the marketing strategy. More funding is needed to make the director a full-time position and add part-time administrative support. A combination of increased annual city funding and business community pledges, perhaps on a 50/50 basis, would be the quickest way to raise these funds and readily put in place full-time staffing for implementation.
- **Institute an annual celebration.** The Barre Partnership plans to establish an annual awards dinner to recognize outstanding contributions to improving downtown. This event should be designed to attract a broad group of volunteers and celebrate their contribution and progress. The event also should incorporate some unique entertainment or activities to make it a fun celebration.
- **Create new subcommittees for key tasks.** Barre's existing committee structure is well suited to oversee most of the marketing strategy, but some new committees or subcommittees are needed to ensure sufficient focus on priority projects and facilitate new partnerships. The following changes to the Partnership's committees are recommended:
  - An Arts, Culture and Tourism committee to oversee strategy three and facilitate collaboration among the major arts organizations and tourist attractions.
  - A Public Safety Committee to work with the police department on public safety issues
  - A subcommittee of the design committee to focus on advocacy and design review for the North Main Street reconstruction.

- **Organize a monthly breakfast meeting for businesses.** These meetings can serve three purposes: (1) provide a venue for downtown businesses to network, get to know each other and develop mutual trust; (2) keep businesses informed about and engaged in downtown improvement efforts; and (3) provide information on important local and regional resources and issues. Other Main Street organizations have found such meetings helpful in strengthening relationships among merchants and fostering their interest in working collaboratively on downtown projects and issues. The meeting should last about one hour with time for networking, a brief talk, and general announcements, updates and questions.
- **Focus the Barre Partnership’s mission on downtown.** The Barre Partnership currently serves two roles: (1) the downtown partnership organization coordinating commercial district marketing and improvement efforts; and (2) Barre City’s economic development committee overseeing the city’s overall economic development plan. Although these functions are related (downtown is a key part of Barre City’s economic development agenda), they are distinct missions that require dedicated attention. Barre City would be better served by having the Barre Partnership focus exclusively on downtown initiatives and establishing a separate economic development committee to direct work on the city’s overall economic development agenda. Under this arrangement, the Barre Partnership can concentrate on implementing the extensive downtown strategy. A separate economic development committee would dedicate itself to addressing infrastructure, workforce, business development, and business attraction issues beyond the downtown, and coordinate this work with the Barre Partnership.

Implementation Entities and Priorities. Since these activities concern its own organizational development, the Barre Partnership is almost exclusively responsible for this strategy. It can implement most of these recommendations through its organization committee and staff. However, the Mayor and City Council are responsible for two items: (1) increasing funding for a full-time Barre Partnership director; and (2) establishing a new City economic development committee and relieving the Barre Partnership of this role.

The immediate actions needed to increase the partnership’s capacity are the priorities under this strategy: formalizing its membership structure; updating its committee structure and work plans; volunteer recruitment; and securing funds for full-time staffing. New newsletters, business breakfasts and the annual celebrations are important but a secondary priority, and will be easier to implement with the priority actions completed.

Required Resources. This strategy can largely be implemented by the existing board, organization committee and staff. The key new resource required is \$20,000 to \$25,000 to make the partnership director a full-time position and provide some administrative support, which can be match funded by the city budget and business contributions. Over the long-term, the partnership can incorporate the cost for a full-time director into project budgets and membership dues. Modest additional resources are also needed for a membership brochure and annual celebration; donated services and business sponsorships can cover most, if not all, of these costs. Expenses for the business breakfast are also modest and can be self-funded from an attendance fee.

## 4.0 Strategy Implementation

Successful implementation of the Downtown Marketing Strategy requires active participation and collaboration by many Barre City and Central Vermont organizations. This section summarizes implementation responsibilities by organization across the five strategies. Proposed roles reflect the special expertise, experience and capacity of each organization and, in many cases, additional funding or resources will be needed for organizations to fully carry out these roles.

An Oversight Committee should also be created to track overall strategy implementation across the responsible parties. Representatives from the major organizations responsible for implementing each strategy need to sit on this committee to report on and coordinate their implementation efforts. The committee would meet quarterly to review progress and make appropriate adjustments for each strategy. An annual report can also be prepared to document overall accomplishments in advancing the downtown vision, goals and strategies.

A quick reference on each organization's responsibilities clarifies understanding of implementation roles and helps secure each party's buy-in to the strategy. It will also aid the Oversight Committee in coordinating overall strategy implementation. Responsibilities are detailed in the following alphabetical list of organizations.

A two-year implementation schedule is presented in Figure 1. This is not intended to be definitive but rather to suggest how to phase implementation based on the designated priorities. The Oversight Committee should regularly review and update this schedule.

### **Barre Area Development Corporation (BADC)**

Primary implementation responsibility for Strategy 2

- Manage and undertake business recruitment activities
- Undertake and coordinate follow-up on business retention outreach
- Director serves as Business Recruitment Coordinator (BRC)

### **Barre Opera House (BOH)**

Provide leadership and support for Strategy 3

- Serve on Barre Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Assist in planning downtown events and festivals
- Work to expand Opera House bookings
- Help establish community arts calendar and web-site

Participate in implementation for Strategy 4

- Participate in cooperative advertising campaign
- Assist in establishing "Make a Night of It" promotion

## **Barre City Government**

Provide leadership and resources for overall Marketing Strategy Implementation

- Adopt the strategy as part of city economic development and comprehensive plans
- Ensure senior managers participation in Barre Partnership Committees and activities

### Strategy One

- Help lead community lobbying on North Main Street reconstruction and design review process
- School department participation and programming for teen-business partnership
- Lead efforts to plan, secure funding and implement northern gateway project
- Provide design and implementation support for façade improvement program, including help securing Vermont downtown program grants
- Assist in design and implementation of aesthetic downtown lighting
- Police department active participation in public safety partnership

### Strategy Two

- Complete MOU defining BADC role and responsibilities as downtown Business Recruitment Coordinator
- Assist with business recruitment activities and efficiently providing permits for new businesses
- Expand efforts to foster re-use of long vacant buildings through code enforcement, political leadership and removing financial incentives
- Help secure resources for grocery store feasibility study

### Strategy Three

- Help plan and implement new festivals and events
- Provide leadership to create a Central Vermont initiative to coordinate and promote granite-related destinations and activities

### Strategy Five

- Increase funding for Barre Partnership, in conjunction with business community, to expand staff capacity to full-time director with administrative support
- Focus Barre Partnership on downtown improvement and create new Economic Development Committee to oversee citywide economic development efforts

## **Barre Partnership (BP)**

Coordinate and oversee overall Marketing Strategy Implementation

- Assign each strategy to a specific committee and update committee work plans to incorporate new activities (Strategy One: Design Committee. Strategy 2: Economic Restructuring Committee; Strategy 3: Arts, Culture and Tourism; Strategy 4: Promotion Committee; Strategy 5: Organization Committee)
- Define implementation responsibilities and work plan for Partnership Director and regularly review progress

### Strategy One

- Create subcommittee for North Main Street reconstruction to coordinate lobbying and review plans
- Recruit property owners to host art and history exhibits in vacant windows and assist SPA, VHC and BHS in developing and funding window exhibits
- Convene high schools, New Directions for Barre and downtown businesses to work on youth partnership and assist with fund-raising and implementation
- Manage clean-up/beautification squad project
- Convene community charette on Northern Gateway; work with Barre City to secure funds
- Convene banks and credit unions to create Façade Improvement Loan Fund; assist with developing fund guidelines and marketing
- Form new committee to work with Police Department on public safety issues; assist with implementing resulting activities
- Assist SPA to identify artists willing to design downtown signs and streetscape; advocate to use these artists in the North Main Street reconstruction, other signage and façade projects

### Strategy Two

- Oversee and advise BADC on downtown business recruitment and retention
- Assist in preparing business recruitment package
- Participate in informal business recruitment efforts
- Secure business school students or funding for grocery store feasibility analysis
- Assist with business retention outreach and follow-up

### Strategy Three

- Organize and provide administrative support to Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Assist with fund-raising and volunteer recruitment to implement strategy
- Help plan and implement new festivals, events and joint promotions
- Advocate and participate in efforts to coordinate and promote granite-related destinations and activities in Central Vermont

### Strategy Four

- Organize and manage cooperative advertising program
- Secure funds and oversee design and production of downtown map and guide
- Organize and oversee buy-local campaign
- Coordinate weekly evening store hours and organize “Make a Night of It” campaign
- Organize sales promotions at major downtown festivals and events
- Secure resources for and oversee design of downtown web-site

### Strategy Five

- Complete transition to new membership dues structure
- Undertake community wide volunteer recruitment
- Establish monthly e-newsletter
- Secure new funding to support full-time staff

- Establish and recruit membership for three new committees ( North Main Street Reconstruction, Arts and Culture and Public Safety)
- Plan and organize annual awards dinner celebration
- Organize and host monthly business breakfasts

### **Barre School District: Spaulding High School and Vocational Center**

Provide leadership and support for youth-business partnership

- Participate in partnership body
- Incorporate downtown organizations and activities into existing internship and community service programs
- Help plan, implement and raise funding for new options for youth involvement in downtown improvement efforts

### **Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce**

Participate in implementation for Strategy Two

- Participate in Barre Partnership Economic Restructuring Committee
- Help design business recruitment package
- Support business recruitment with web links, referrals, cooperative advertising, etc.

Provide leadership and support for Strategy Three

- Serve on Barre Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Oversee development and marketing of regional granite tour for visitors
- Help raise funds for and develop downtown display for attractions
- Work to strengthen promotional linkages between downtown Barre and central Vermont attractions

### **Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation**

Participate in implementation for Strategy Two

- Participate in Barre Partnership Economic Restructuring Committee
- Help design business recruitment package
- Support business recruitment efforts with web links, referrals, cooperative advertising and providing access to appropriate financial assistance for new businesses
- Assist with business retention outreach and follow-up

### **Granite Museum**

Provide leadership and support for Strategy Three

- Serve on Barre Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Assist in planning downtown events and festivals
- Help establish community arts calendar and web-site
- Help raise funds for and develop downtown display for attractions
- Work to establish promotional linkages with area attractions



## **New Directions for Barre**

Provide leadership and support for youth-business partnership

- Participate in partnership body
- Incorporate downtown organizations and activities into existing internship and community service programs
- Help plan, implement and raise funding for new options for youth involvement in downtown improvement efforts

## **Studio Place Arts (SPA)**

Provide leadership in expanding arts community involvement in downtown design improvements

- Identify artists and help raise funds for art exhibits in vacant storefront windows
- Participate in North Main Street reconstruction design review
- Assist in design of aesthetic lighting program
- Identify artists interested in designing downtown signs and streetscape elements

Provide leadership and support for Strategy Three

- Serve on Barre Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Assist in planning downtown events and festivals
- Help establish community arts calendar and web-site

Participate in implementation for Strategy Four

- Participate in cooperative advertising campaign
- Assist in establishing “Make a Night of It” promotion

## **Vermont History Center**

Assist in developing historic exhibits for vacant storefront windows

Provide leadership and support for Strategy Three

- Serve on Barre Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Assist in planning downtown events and festivals
- Work to expand evening events at History Center
- Help establish community arts calendar and web-site

Participate in implementation for Strategy Four

- Participate in cooperative advertising campaign
- Assist in establishing “Make a Night of It” promotion

## **Other Attractions, Arts and Cultural Organizations**

Participate in implementation for Strategy Three

- Serve on Barre Partnership Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee
- Help establish community arts calendar and web-site
- Assist in planning joint promotions, festivals and events

- Incorporate downtown Barre display at attraction sites

**Figure 1. Initial Two-Year Implementation Schedule**

| <b>Implementation Step</b>  | <b>2nd<br/>Quarter<br/>2005</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2005</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2005</b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>2nd<br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2007</b> |
|---|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| City Council Adopts Strategy  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| BP Assigns Strategies to Committees and Committees Update Work Plan   |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Oversight Committee Created   |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Revised Work plan for BP Director Established                         |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| <b><u>Strategy One</u></b>  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Create Design Committee for North Main Street (NMS) Reconstruction    |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Advocate for NMS funding and conduct design review                    |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Install exhibits in vacant storefronts                                |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Establish teen-business partnership                                   |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Hold Northern Gateway Charette  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Implement façade improvement design and loan program                  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Develop aesthetic lighting program                                    |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Create Public Safety Partnership                                      |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| <b><u>Strategy Two</u></b>  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Designate BADC as Business Recruitment Coordinator                    |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Develop recruitment package   |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Undertake recruitment initiative                                      |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Expand efforts to fill downtown vacancies                             |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Review and update zoning for downtown industrial district             |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Begin business retention outreach                                     |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Secure resources for and undertake grocery store feasibility study    |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| <b><u>Strategy Three</u></b>  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Produce arts & events calendar  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Add events at Vermont History Center                                  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Establish joint promotions with key attraction                        |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Expand downtown festivals & events                                    |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Create strong Central Vermont identity for granite-related activities |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |

**Figure 1. Two-Year Implementation Schedule (continued)**

| <b>Implementation Step</b>                         | <b>2nd<br/>Quarter<br/>2005</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2005</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2005</b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>2nd<br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2006</b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup><br/>Quarter<br/>2007</b> |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Strategy Four</b>                               |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Establish cooperative advertising                  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Create downtown map and guide                      |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Organize a buy-local campaign                      |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Organize a make-a-night-of-it promotion            |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Establish sales promotions linked to major events  |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Create downtown web-site                           |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| <b>Strategy Five</b>                               |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Complete transition to new dues structure          |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Undertake community-wide volunteer recruitment     |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Establish monthly e-newsletter                     |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Secure funding for full-time staff                 |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Establish new committees and recruit members       |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Plan and organize annual awards dinner celebration |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |
| Organize and host monthly business breakfasts      |                                 |  |  |  |                                 |  |  |  |

# **Barre City Housing Turnover Survey and Results**

Dear Property Owner:

The Barre City Planning Commission is currently in the process of updating the Barre City Municipal Plan. One component of the plan involves evaluating the current housing needs and recommending future housing directions and policies. The Planning Commission has formed a housing subcommittee to assist with developing the housing component of the plan.

One area of interest to the housing committee is to better understand why people are purchasing residential properties in the city. You have been identified as someone who has purchased residential property since January, 2003. We would greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete the survey. Please return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by December 15, 2004. Your answers will help us in our housing evaluation. All information is considered confidential and will only be used in an aggregate compilation of data.

Please contact Rich Baker, Planning and Zoning Administrator, at 476-0245 if you have any questions.

| <b>Barre Housing Turnover Survey</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>General Information</b>  |  |
| Please answer the following questions. Please circle your response when several choices are provided. |  |
| Location of Property:   |  |
| Number of dwelling units on property:   | 1   2   3   4   more than 5                                      |
| Do you live at the property?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>         |
| Is any portion of the property rented?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>         |
| Have you made any major improvements to the property since the purchase? If so describe:              | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>         |
| Which of the following were used to help search for your property?                                    | Realtor   Internet   Friends<br>Newspaper Ads                    |
| Where did you previously live (town and state)?   |  |
| What other towns did you consider when selecting a property to purchase? (circle all considered)      | Montpelier   Berlin   Barre Town<br>Williamstown   Other towns   |
| If you currently live at the property please answer the following four questions:                     |  |
| How many minutes does it take you to commute to work?   | Less than 5   5to 19   20 to 39<br>40 to 59   60 to 89   Over 90 |
| How many minutes does it take your spouse or partner to commute to work (if applicable)?              | Less than 5   5to 19   20 to 39<br>40 to 59   60 to 89   Over 90 |
| How long do you envision living at this location?   | 0-5 years   5-10 years<br>Over 10 years                          |
| How many children by age group live in your household?  | 0-5 years ____   6-13 years ____<br>14-18 years ____             |

**Please turn over to complete survey →**

| <b>Evaluation of Reasons for Purchase</b>   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|----|
| Please rank the following as to the importance when you purchased your property.<br>Circle your answer according to the following criteria: |   |   |   |    |
| 1 Little or no importance   |   |   |   |    |
| 2 Some importance   |   |   |   |    |
| 3 Highly importance   |   |   |   |    |
| NA Not applicable   |   |   |   |    |
| Good rental property investment (if applicable)   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Quality of local public school system   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Quality of local private school system  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Quality and availability of local child care  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Price of property compared to other available properties  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Overall quality of property   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Availability of housing in area   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| General neighborhood quality  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Level of traffic on street  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Convenience to shopping   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Local recreation opportunities  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Proximity to work   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Proximity to other family living in the area  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Proximity to local school   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Security of neighborhood  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Appeal of Barre City downtown area  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Availability of sidewalks   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Desire to live in a Vermont urbanized area  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Quality and availability of local city services such as police, fire, EMS and public works  | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Overall regional appeal   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Level of local tax rate compared to other areas   | 1 | 2 | 3 | NA |
| Other: Please describe any other criteria that had a strong influence on your purchase in Barre City:                                       |   |   |   |    |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey



# **Results of Vacant and Underdeveloped Land Use Study**

## Land Along Undeveloped Right-of-Ways

### **Location: Upper Colby, Beech and Goldsbury Streets Area**

Acres: Approximately 19

Status: Vacant area along old undeveloped right-of-ways

Vegetative Cover: Young forest

Owner: Various owners

Zoning: R-10

#### Description:

Large parcel abutting undeveloped land to the east and low-density neighborhood to the south and west. ATV/old logging trails are present throughout property. Terrain is rolling and flat with varied moderate slopes. A steep slope exists to the east side. Vacant/seasonal trailers exist on property. Multiple access points exist. Scenic views are present.

#### History:

This area includes over 25 vacant properties owned by numerous individuals and was part of an older undeveloped subdivision.

#### Constraints to use:

Objections could be raised regarding by neighboring owners regarding the loss of wooded area. The lack of single ownership makes development difficult. Many properties exist without any frontage on a public road. Legal issues regarding access to properties may exist. Ledge exists throughout portions of the area.

#### Potential solutions to constraints:

Eventual single ownership would allow for an orderly development of the area and allow for construct of roads to service potential development. Without single ownership, small piecemeal development of larger lots is likely to occur.

#### Development Potential and Recommendations:

Good site for cluster development to preserve surrounding open space. Multiple housing sites possible.

### **Location: Angela Avenue Area**

Acres: Approximately 5

Status: Vacant area along old undeveloped right-of-ways

Vegetative Cover: Young forest

Owner: Various owners

Zoning: PR

#### Description:

Area abuts the large undeveloped Valsangiacomo property to the northwest and west, and residential development to the northeast, east and south. The land has a gentle slope with steeper slope in the northeast corner and wet area on southwest side. Access from Brown Avenue could be developed for a driveway or public road. Water and sewer is available with extensions. Quiet, moderate-priced housing immediately abuts area with no sidewalks. This area is then surrounded by a slightly higher-priced neighborhood with sidewalks. The property has scenic views to the east over looking the city and the parcel is within walking distance to convenience stores and bus route.

#### History:

This area includes over 12 vacant properties owned by about 8 individuals and was part of an older undeveloped subdivision. Angela Avenue was accepted as a public street in 1900 even though no actual road exists. The Environmental Court ruled that even though no actual road exists, the existence of an accepted street requires the City to allow development without construction of an actual public road. One owner plans to develop a single driveway to serve as access to one of the first available lots near Brown Avenue.

#### Constraints to use:

Objections could be raised regarding by neighboring owners regarding the loss of wooded area. The lack of single ownership makes development difficult. Many properties exist without any frontage on a public road requiring development of multiple private driveways or shared driveways.

#### Potential solutions to constraints:

Eventual single ownership would allow for an orderly development of the area and allow for construct of roads to service potential development. Without single ownership, small piece meal development of lots is likely to occur on private driveways. The cost of development of lengthy private driveways and private utilities will limit development of lots further up Angela Avenue. Stormwater run-off needs to be address given full development.

#### Development Potential and Recommendations:

Lots exists for development but will probably be limited to those close to Brown Avenue given the costs of development of private driveways and utilities.

#### **Location: Upper Portland, Congress and Federal Streets Area**

Acres: Approximately 15

Status: Vacant area along old undeveloped right-of-ways

Vegetative Cover: Young forest

Owner: Various owners

Zoning: R-10

#### Description:

Large parcel of land with ATV and farm vehicle roads defining possible right-of-ways. Land abuts large Booth property to the south and a moderate to upper-priced neighborhood to the north, northeast and south. The large vacant Fecteau Residential property exists to the west. The land is varied in slope with steep slopes on south and west, possible ledge in pockets and potential views to the west and south. Other areas of the parcel would be suitable for housing

sites. The existing neighborhood has no sidewalks and is within a few minutes drive from downtown. Water and sewer is available and roads could be built from multiple places.

**History:**

This area includes over 20 vacant properties owned by numerous individuals and was part of an older undeveloped subdivision.

**Constraints to use:**

Objections could be raised regarding by neighboring owners regarding the loss of wooded area. The lack of single ownership makes development difficult. Many properties exist without any frontage on a public road. Legal issues regarding access to properties may exist. A major power line runs through the area. Ledge exists in portions of property. Stormwater drainage needs to be addressed if developed.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

Eventual single ownership would allow for an orderly development of the area and allow for construct of roads to service potential development. Without single ownership, small piece meal development of lots is likely to occur on lengthy private driveways. The cost of development of lengthy private driveways and private utilities will limit development of lots furthest from existing public streets. Stormwater run-off needs to be address given full development.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

Eventual single ownership would allow for an orderly development of the area and allow for construct of roads to service potential development. Most likely potential exist for development with access from possible future development of the Booth property and/or Fecteau Residential Inc. properties.

**Location: Duffy Avenue Area**

Acres: Approximately 4

Status: Vacant area along old undeveloped right-of-way

Vegetative Cover: Young forest

Owner: Frederic and Marilyn Ford and City of Barre

Zoning: R-10

Description: This area consists of two parcels along the undeveloped Duffy Avenue right-of way. The city properties on the west side of Duffy are steep and have limited development potential. These properties will likely be available through a tax sale. The portion owned by the Fords has limited development potential for one house or several houses on a shared driveway from Maplewood Avenue. Duffy Avenue itself is unlikely to be developed as a public street due to terrain.

History: This area includes vacant properties that were part of an older undeveloped subdivision.

**Constraints to use:**

Utility extensions and a private driveway would be required from Maplewood Avenue.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

No major constraints exists.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

This area is anticipated to have limited development of only one or several homes on a shared driveway.

**Location: Mead Avenue Area**

Acres: Approximately 4

Status: Vacant area along old undeveloped right-of-way

Vegetative Cover: Young forest

Owner: Frederic and Marilyn Ford

Zoning: R-10

Description: This area consists of two parcels along the undeveloped Mead Avenue right-of way and extending along the existing Maplewood Avenue. The surrounding area includes upper-scale housing on a dead end road, which makes traffic circulation minimal. All city services are available on Maplewood Avenue although there are no sidewalks for pedestrian travel. There is an historic stone wall on the east side of the Perrin property and there are informal grassy trails throughout the land. A natural steep slope runs from the east to the west and is extremely steep at the end Maplewood. The vegetation is young and has lots of pits and mounds. The portion along Maplewood Avenue is step and undeveloped. The area more suitable for development is about 50 feet in elevation higher than Maplewood Avenue.

History: This area includes vacant properties that were part of an older undeveloped subdivision.

**Constraints to use:**

The Mead Avenue right-of-way is less than the required 50 feet. Utility extensions and a road would be required from Maplewood Avenue to access the rear portion of this parcel which contains the area more suitable for development. A road would need to be design with reasonable grades to reach the developable area.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

No major constraints exists except for the development costs of utilities and a road given the potential value of the available lots. In order to gain better access it is suggested that an integrated network of streets be constructed.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

Some constraints exists due to the natural steep slopes but it is possible for the less sloping piece of land to be built for residential housing and would fit into the character of the neighborhood. Additional right-of-way would need to be dedicated to increase the width to 50 feet. A road would need to be built at the northern end of the parcel to connect with Maplewood Avenue which is more likely due to slopes at the southern end.

## Larger Undeveloped Tracts of Land

**Location: End of Maplewood Avenue (commonly known as the city cow pasture)**

Acres: Approximately 70

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Fields with some wooded areas

Owner: City of Barre

Zoning: R-10

Description:

The City owns this parcel, and its primary value is for low-impact recreation. The land is used and well-appreciated by neighbors. Current uses include walking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, running, and berry picking. There is also use by and damage from ATVs and trail motor bikes.

History:

This area has remained under city ownership since 1895.

Constraints to use:

Parcel has limited constraints to development.

Potential solutions to constraints:

No major constraints exists.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This parcel of land may be underutilized by city residents. A few more trails could be laid out or existing ones improved, and a map could be created and publicized so more residents could use this parcel. A plan for this property should be developed to address public recreational use, management, and resource protection. Its proximity to the downtown and Hope Cemetery is an asset, and there are several access points that could be improved. Some potential exist for future expansion of Hope Cemetery.

**Location: Above Route 62 (Lower portion of Valsangiacomo property)**

Acres: Approximately 158

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Wooded

Owner: Trustees of Oreste Sr. and Helen Valsangiacomo

Zoning: Conservation

Description:

This the lower portion of the Valsangiacomo property. The upper area, which is zoned PR, is discussed in a separate description. This parcel is the largest undeveloped tract of land in the city. The primary values of this property are wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. The parcel has been logged over the years and is a diverse and productive mix of habitat types that support abundant wildlife, including turkey, deer, bear, bobcat, and moose. Although privately owned and posted, the landowner does allow its use, primarily through word of mouth. A website for mountain bikers lists this site as a place to ride. The land is used by the public for walking,

mountain biking, snowshoeing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, and some hunting (especially deer hunting, including bow, rifle, and muzzleloader seasons with permission from the owners). There is also some use by and damage from ATVs despite the discouragement by the owners.

History: Three generations of landowners are stewards of this land. Some of them have pursued options for conserving it (e.g., site visit by Vermont Land Trust staff) but no arrangements have been made.

Constraints to use:

Steep slopes and wet areas limit development for building and road construction. Unfragmented forest blocks should be conserved in Barre given the few that remain. If developed, sewer lines would need to be extended under Route 62. An existing sleeve under Route 62 may be undersized for required utilities.

Potential solutions to constraints:

Promote to continue use as an open space area.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

It is recommend that wildlife biologists from the Vermont Dept. of Fish and Wildlife visit the site and assess its value, and the City should support the landowners' interests in preserving it through a conservation easement that would prevent or limit development and would continue to allow low-impact recreation. Landowner enrollment in the state's Current Use Program would also be appropriate and should be encouraged. This property in conjunction with the Bisson and Morse properties overarching value is that they are all abutting and together they comprise a surprisingly large, undeveloped block of land for wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. Consideration for an overall conservation and limited development plan should be considered.

**Location: End of Bailey Street**

Acres: Approximately 123

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Active and abandon farm fields and some wooded areas

Owner: Raymond II and Linda Bisson and Timothy and Sharon Bisson

Zoning: Conservation

Description:

Currently, this parcel is being used for some agricultural purposes, including cornfields and hayfields. About half of the property is abandoned fields and about 20% is forested.

History:

This property was historically used as a farm.

Constraints to use:

This property appears to have a high potential for development, such as housing on the former agricultural lands with limited development constraints. However, if developed, sewer lines may need to be extended under Route 62. An existing sleeve under Route 62 may be undersized for

required utilities. In addition, there is inadequate water pressure above the 1075 foot elevation to service homes.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

An engineering study of sanitary sewage options would need to be completed to determine the best sewage options. Additional water pumps could be considered for homes at higher elevations.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

This property is currently on the market. It would be desirable to see this farm become active again. Barring that, ideally some portion of the parcel near the end of Bailey Avenue could be used for residential development while preserving the balance for wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. This property in conjunction with the Valsangiacamo and Morse properties overarching value is that they are all abutting and together they comprise a surprisingly large, undeveloped block of land for wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. Consideration for an overall conservation and limited development plan should be considered.

**Location: Parcel above Route 62 next to Valsangiacamo property**

Acres: Approximately 81

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Approximately a 50/50 mix of active farm fields, including cornfields and hayfields, and forest or abandoned field woodlots

Owner: Walter and Patricia Morse

Zoning: Conservation

**Description:**

This parcel is approximately a 50/50 mix of active farm fields, including cornfields and hayfields, and forest or abandoned field woodlots. The ownership extends into the Town of Berlin.

**History:**

This property was historically used as a farm.

**Constraints to use:** There is no access to this property from within the city. Any development is likely to occur with access from the Town of Berlin. Steep slopes and a stream exist on the property.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

This property is not likely to be developed in the near future given available access.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

This property, in conjunction with the Valsangiacamo and Bailey properties, overarching value is that they are all abutting and together they comprise a surprisingly large, undeveloped block of land for wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. Consideration for an overall conservation and limited development plan should be considered.



# Downtown Industrial Areas

## **Location: Downtown Commercial/ Industrial Northern Portion**

Acres: Approximately 7  
Status: Developed with various uses  
Vegetative Cover: Developed area  
Owner: Various owners  
Zoning: Industrial

### Description:

This area is bounded by Granite Street, the river, the Beltline and the railroad tracks behind Main Street Buildings. Current uses are industrial, commercial and vacant. Public utilities are available throughout this area.

### History:

This area traditionally was industrial uses.

### Constraints to use:

Access to this area is limited and requires traffic to enter from Main Street which can be congested at times. All of this area is within the 100-year flood zone.

### Potential solutions to constraints:

The most intriguing aspect of this area is the potential for access from the Route 62. As the Route 62 curves around to approach Main Street there is a railroad right-of-way that would allow a straight line access to this area from Route 62. Convenient access to this area would allow for further commercial development and general improvement to this underutilized area. It would also provide an alternative access/bypass to Main Street which would provide public safety benefits and would reduce traffic congestion, especially during the upcoming Main Street reconstruction. This area is under the control of the State of Vermont and currently leased to the railroad.

Any new development would be required to be elevated above the flood plain level.

### Development Potential and Recommendations:

This area is likely to see continued development of a mix of commercial and industrial uses. There is also potential for multi-family development in this area. Consideration should be given to change the zoning to commercial-industrial to allow for continual development of commercial uses. An alternative would be to develop a new zoning district allowing for mix development throughout the downtown industrial area.

## **Location: Downtown Commercial/ Industrial Central Portion**

Acres: Approximately 4  
Status: Residential development  
Vegetative Cover: Developed area

Owner: Various owners  
Zoning: Industrial-Commercial

**Description:**

This portion of the area behind Main Street consists of mostly residential properties along Granite Street. This area is a quite distinctive, though small, residential neighborhood. In includes older houses, mostly multi-family and also the historic Old Labor Hall. Across from the Labor Hall is a three story multi-family brick building that may also have historical significance. There is a small green space at Zanleoni Place.

**History:**

This area includes various residential built between 1890 to 1920.

**Constraints to use:**

No major constraints exist.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

None required.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

While the area is surrounded by commercial and industrial uses, it seems that the best future use would continue to be residential/historical. This is a neighborhood with character and easy access to downtown. The area could possibly be improved through reinvestment tax credits and historic site development. The three story brick building might have potential as a small hotel. Professional office usage is also a possibility.

**Location:** Downtown Commercial/ Industrial Southern Portion

Acres: Approximately 8

Status: Various industrial uses

Vegetative Cover: Developed area

Owner: Metro Development, State of Vermont and various others

Zoning: Industrial

**Description:**

The surrounding land uses include railroad tracks and the downtown business district to the east, and industrial-commercial uses, a transformer station and a scenic view of the river to the south. Within a quarter of a mile is residential and multi-family housing. There is low and limited traffic circulation and sidewalks are available for pedestrian access. Some historic granite sheds are in good to fair repair. Others, which are mostly are comprised of metal, are in poor condition.

**History:**

This has served as a key industrial area during the peak of the granite processing business. The Rouleau Granite buildings were vacated in 2002 and were recently purchased as part of bankruptcy process.

**Constraints to use:**

Access requires traveling through the downtown area although potential exist for access to Prospect Street. The complete area is within the 100-year flood zone. Another possible limiting factor is a brownfield site on the southwest side.

Potential solutions to constraints:

As discussed for the northern downtown area, a long term solution for better access would be a road built to Route 62.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This site has considerable potential for redevelopment. Possible uses include an incubator, commercial box store, other retail and professional uses, industrial uses and mixed uses. Plans are under way for a 12,000 square foot commercial baking facility. The Rouleau Granite shed has some potential for reuse although it is anticipated that it will eventually be demolished to allow for reconstruction to accommodate other uses. Consideration should be given for incorporating the river into future plans including public access and beautification. Much of this area is under one ownership, allowing development of a comprehensive redevelopment plan.

Consideration should also be given to change the zoning to commercial-industrial to allow for continual development of commercial uses. An alternative would be to develop a new zoning district allowing for mix development throughout the downtown industrial area.

## Undeveloped Areas on Allen Street

Location: Wall Street Industrial Area on Allen Street

Acres: 19

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Open undeveloped fields

Owner: Wall Street Investments

Zoning: Commercial-Industrial

### Description:

This property is currently vacant. The land slopes moderately upward from Allen Street. The surrounding areas are in agricultural use, residential and wooded.

### History:

This area was zoned Light Industrial in 1968. The area was previously approved for a four-lot industrial subdivision although state approvals were not received. No development ever occurred.

### Constraints to use:

The area immediately adjacent to Allen Street is low lying and includes wetlands. The proposed subdivision included a design for an access road to the center of the parcel. Green Mountain Power controls a 100-foot wide easement across the south-west corner. In addition, the parcel is not located closed to the downtown which is desirable to certain types of businesses.

### Potential solutions to constraints:

The area could be developed with consideration for wetlands and slopes.

### Development Potential and Recommendations:

Potential uses of the land include clustered housing, perhaps away from the wet area near Allen Street and near the wooded area. Commercial or industrial use would be difficult due to the challenging access off of Allen Street, wetlands and general location. Consideration for a rezoning to PR should be considered if a multi-family development is proposed.

### **Location:** Gordon Booth Area on Allen Street

Acres: 43

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Open undeveloped fields and wooded area

Owner: Gordon Booth

Zoning: Commercial-Industrial for southern half (approximately 22 acres) and PR for northern half

### Description:

This property is currently used in conjunction with the Booth farm further up Allen Street. Haying and pasturing occurs on the property. The area is a mix of undeveloped fields and wooded area. The land in the rear of is steep. The surrounding areas are in agricultural use, residential and wooded. The land drains down toward the Wall Street Investment property towards housing along Allen Street. There is a stream on the property. The surrounding land

uses include housing, an industrial subdivision, and other farmland and undeveloped land. Most of the surrounding land uses are undeveloped.

**History:**

Property has remained vacant.

**Constraints to use:**

The area immediately adjacent to Allen Street is low lying and includes wetlands. Green Mountain Power controls a 100-foot wide easement across portion of the property. In addition, the parcel is not located close to the downtown which is desirable to certain types of businesses. The access to the property for commercial and industrial purposes is poor.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

The area could be developed with consideration for wetlands and slopes. Some potential exist for access by extending Essex Street.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

Potential uses of the land include clustered housing, perhaps away from the wet area near Allen Street and near the wooded area that would retain farm and forest land contiguous to other farming and forestry parcels. Commercial or industrial use would be difficult due to the challenging access off of Allen Street, wetlands and general location. Consideration for a rezoning of the Industrial area to PR should be considered

# Undeveloped Residential Properties

## **Location: Bailey Street –Bisson R-10 area**

Acres: 18

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Open fields

Owner: Various members of Bisson family

Zoning: R-10

### Description:

This property, sometimes known as the Upper Bisson Heights, is part of the old Bisson farm. Access is available from Bailey Street and Prospect Avenue. Residential properties exist to the north and west. The remaining surrounding property are open fields. The property has good views. Utilities are available along Bailey and Prospect Streets.

### History:

This was part of the Bisson farm.

### Constraints to use:

Little constraints exist.

### Potential solutions to constraints:

None required.

### Development Potential and Recommendations:

This property has good potential for single family residential development.

## **Location: Adjacent and rear of 347 Prospect Street**

Acres: 5

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Mostly open fields

Owner: Tammy and Russell Wood

Zoning: R-10

### Description:

This property is open fields behind High Gate Apartments with access to Prospect Street. Scenic views exist. Slopes are gentle.

### History:

This property was purchased in 2004 for development of a single family house.

### Constraints to use:

A sewer pump station is required to utilize existing sewer on Prospect Street. An alternative configuration would be to tie into the private sewer system within Highgate Apartments.

### Potential solutions to constraints:

No major constraints except for sewage pumping exist.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This property has potential for multi-family development except it is zoned R-10. However, the current owner intends to build a house with a large lot resulting in open space being preserved.

**Location: Valsangiacomo property off Berlin Street**

Acres: Approximately 32

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Wooded

Owner: Trustees of Oreste Sr. and Helen Valsangiacomo

Zoning: PR

Description:

This property is the upper portion of the large Valsangiacomo property zoned PR. The area is wooded with single family residential property abutting along Berlin Street. Views to the north east exists.

History:

Plans were started to develop multi-family dwellings on a portion of this property but were not completed.

Constraints to use:

Some ledge exists. Limited access exists from Berlin and Brown Streets. Slopes are moderate in this area.

Potential solutions to constraints:

There are no solutions to the limitations due to slopes and ledges.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This area would be suitable for limited multi-family development.

**Location: Land off Prospect Street near Jacque Street**

Acres: 34

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Wooded with some open fields

Owner: Fecteau Residential Inc.

Zoning: R-10

Description:

This property is has steep slopes near Prospect Street and more level areas near the city boundary. Views are present. Utilities are available along Propsect Street. Abutting properties are single family and multi-family residential.

History:

This property was bought in 1989 by a local developer. A PRD was approved in 1990 for 50 single family lots and 78 condominium units. Act 250 approval was not obtained.

Constraints to use:

Steep slopes near Prospect Street make access difficult. A Green Mountain easement for transmission lines exists. Groundwater in the area needs to be managed and retained.

Potential solutions to constraints:

The approved plan lays out a road from Prospect Street with reasonable grades. A PRD development allows for utilizing the more gentle areas while preserving the steeper slopes as conservation areas. Stormwater retention will need to be developed either on-site or at off-site locations.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

The approved plan shows that this property can be reasonably developed as a PRD while still protecting steeper slopes.

**Location: Upper Allen Street on east side**

Acres: 26

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Open fields and small wooded area

Owner: Norman and Madeline Booth

Zoning: PR

Description:

A gentle sloping site with good exposure and views. Utilities exist along Allen Street. Surrounding properties are Green Acres housing to the north, Barre Middle School to the rear and open spaces to the south. Steep slopes exist in the rear of the property.

History:

This was part of the Booth farm.

Constraints to use:

None

Potential solutions to constraints:

None to overcome.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This property is very suitable for mixed residential uses with potential preservation of some open space.

**Location: Upper Mill Street**

Acres: 3.69

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Open fields and wooded

Owner: Michael Lavanway

Zoning: PR except lower end zoned Industrial/Commercial



**Description:**

Abutting this parcel are industrial uses to the north, multi-family to the south and the river to the east. The upper portion has gentle slopes. The site does not have views. Old grout piles exist over springs. Some buried debris is reported to exist. Utilities are available along Mill Street.

**History:**

This property was bought in 2005 by a person interested in developing residential uses.

**Constraints to use:**

The portion near the river is in a flood zone. Spring water needs to be addressed. Steep slopes near the river exists.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

Development needs to be limited due to flood areas, steep slopes and springs.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

Potential exists for either multi-family or limited single family construction.

**Location: End of Boyce Street**

Acres: 3.2

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Wooded

Owner: Nelson and Bonnie Lyford

Zoning: PR

**Description:**

This is a steep sloped area wooded area without any direct frontage of a developed public road. Residential uses abut the property except to the south which is wooded. Sandy soils exists.

**History:**

The property was remained vacant. The current owner bought the property in 2003. Several existing lots on Lewis Street have been sold for development of homes.

**Constraints to use:**

Steep slopes exist on the property. Utilities would need to be extended into the site. Road access would also be required for development.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

Only limited development is possible. Utilities could be extended.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

This property has very limited development potential.

**Location: Corner of Green and Birch Streets and also along Boyce Street**

Acres: 8.2  
Status: Undeveloped  
Vegetative Cover: Wooded  
Owner: Lague Inc  
Zoning: R-10

**Description:**

This is a steep-sloped area wooded area with limited frontage on a developed public road. Wooded areas abut the property except to the west which is residential. Sandy soils exists.

**History:**

This is a parcel that remains from previous development in the area.

**Constraints to use:**

Steep slopes, limited utilities and limited road frontage restrict development. The upper area is too high for adequate water services.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

Only limited development is possible.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

This property has very limited development potential.

**Location: Next to 123 Batchelder St.**

Acres: 12  
Status: Undeveloped  
Vegetative Cover: Wooded with some open areas  
Owner: Eva Cassavoy  
Zoning: PR

**Description:** This area is undeveloped, mostly wooded area, and has gentle slopes. It is surrounded by multi-family to the north, single-family to the east and west and open undeveloped land to the south. It's southern boundary forms the city boundary line. Sewage and water is available with extensions.

**History:**

This property is under the ownership of a person who owns and lives in a single family house abutting the parcel.

**Constraints to use:**

Water pressure for new development is limited at higher elevations. The rear of the property has steep slopes.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

No major constraints if development is limited to the more gentle slopes.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

About two-thirds of the property with flat or gentle slopes and is suitable for multi-family development.

**Location: Onward St. in area of Winter Meadow**

Acres: 48

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Open with some wooded areas

Owner: Florence Perrin

Zoning: R-10

**Description:**

This property has good access, good views and gentle to moderate slopes. It is surrounded by single family to the south and north and undeveloped to the east. It's northern boundary forms the city boundary line. Sewage and water is available with extensions.

**History:**

This property was part of the Perrin farm and is currently vacant. The owner lives in a single family house that abuts the property.

**Constraints to use:**

Wet areas exist. This parcel use to be a local water source for neighboring homes.

**Potential solutions to constraints:**

No major constraints exist.

**Development Potential and Recommendations:**

Although very suitable for single-family development, it would be desirable to preserve portions of the open space through some type of PRD development or a mixed use of single-family and multi-family.

**Location: End of Sixth Street**

Acres: 8.8

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Wooded

Owner: Old County Realty

Zoning: PR

**Description:**

This property has good access but has steep slopes on portions of the parcel. Some views exist. Sewage and water is available.

**History:**

This is property is the remains of a small subdivision and is owned by a developer that is no longer active in the area.

**Constraints to use:**

Steep slopes, wet areas and ledges exist.

Potential solutions to constraints:  
Only limited development is possible

Development Potential and Recommendations:  
Only limited development is possible due to slopes in area.

**Location: Across street from 14 Richardson Rd**

Acres: 6.6  
Status: Undeveloped with an approved subdivision.

Vegetative Cover: Wooded  
Owner: Herbert and June Jorgensen  
Zoning: R-10

Description:  
This wooded parcel is surrounded by some residential areas and also an undeveloped tract.

History:  
This property was recently approved for a 10-lot subdivision including construction of a new street.

Constraints to use:  
No major constraints except some wet areas exist.

Potential solutions to constraints:  
No major constraints exist.

Development Potential and Recommendations:  
This area is likely to be developed for single-family homes as approved.

**Location: Off North Main Street just past Richardson Road**

Acres: 2.27  
Status: Undeveloped  
Vegetative Cover: Mixed  
Owner: Paul Irons  
Zoning: R-10

Description:  
This property has moderate slopes and frontage on N Main Street and Richardson Road. It's northern boundary forms the city boundary line.

History:  
This property was bought in 1997 by the current owner.

Constraints to use:  
Some moderate slopes exist. Access from N Main Street is limited.

Potential solutions to constraints:  
Development is limited due to slopes.

Development Potential and Recommendations:  
This property has limited development potential due to slopes. Development could possibly be in done in conjunction with abutting property in Barre Town.

**Location: off N Main Street behind Knoll Motel**

Acres: 16  
Status: Undeveloped  
Vegetative Cover: Open fields with some wooded areas  
Owner: Quantum Keys  
Zoning: PR

Description:  
Gentle slopes exist on the upper portions of the property. Access from N Main Street is difficult due to slopes. The parcel is surrounded by residential development to the west, commercial to the south and undeveloped to the south and west.

History:  
The current owner purchased the land in 2002.

Constraints to use:  
Some steeper area exist. Sewage would require a pump station to access truck line along N Main.

Potential solutions to constraints:  
Access needs to consider steeper slopes. Sewage pump station feasibility need to be studied.

Development Potential and Recommendations:  
This property has good potential for multi-family or single-family development. Potential exist for development in conjunction with abutting property in Berlin with access from the Berlin side.

**Location: End of Brooklyn Avenue**

Acres: 2.8  
Status: Undeveloped  
Vegetative Cover: Wooded and open  
Owner: Ernest and Linda LaBrie  
Zoning: PR

Description:  
This is a vacant parcel of land across at the end of Brooklyn Street. Slopes are gentle to moderate. Across the river are industrial uses. Surrounding the property to the south is school property, to the north are single-family and multi-family homes in low to moderate quality. Stream exists with considerable spring run off. The city bike path abuts this property on the west.

History:

This property was bought through a tax sale in 2001 by the current owner.

Constraints to use:

Some moderate slopes. Location is marginal due to abutting industrial uses. The stream restricts development.

Potential solutions to constraints:

Build a bridge over stream.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This property could be developed with a few single-family homes or small multi-family development but would require development of a bridge.

**Location: Next to 181 Merchant Street**

Acres: 4

Status: Undeveloped

Vegetative Cover: Wooded

Owner: Kenneth Lunde

Zoning: PR

Description:

This property has 540 feet of frontage on Merchant Street. The property is steep in the rear. A stream flows through the property. Sewage and water are available. Surrounding uses include commercial across the street, single family to the north and south. Undeveloped city owned land abut to the east.

History:

This property was bought in 2002 by the current owner.

Constraints to use:

Steeps slopes exists.

Potential solutions to constraints:

Steeps slopes need to be avoided.

Development Potential and Recommendations:

This property has potential for development for several lots with frontage on Merchant Street or a small multi-family development.

# **Proposed Language for Zoning Amendments**

# Proposed Language for Zoning Amendments

The Planning Commission completed a review of the Zoning Ordinance as part of the Municipal Plan update. Below are some issues reviewed and possible amended zoning language. Additional language will be drafted to address other zoning amendment changes recommended in the Land Use section of the Municipal Plan. The following is only draft language and is not proposed as final language for adoption.

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**Issue:** Pole-mounted signs are prohibited in the Design Overlay districts but there is no definition of a pole-mounted sign. A definition needs to be added. There probably is a desired to allow signs mounted on short poles such as a sign raised a few feet off the ground by two posts.

## Proposed New Definition:

POLE-MOUNTED SIGN: A sign mounted on one or more vertical poles or posts greater than three feet in height.

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**Issue:** The permit expiration process needs to be modified and simplified. Currently, you must start a project within 24 months but could take forever to complete it unless it has a DRB approval. If DRB approved, you have five years to complete. In addition, since the DRB approves subdivisions, it would appear that possible subdivision improvements would need to also be completed within five years. The concern is not when you start a project, but completing the project within a prescribed time period. There also needs to be clarity as to what needs to be completed. Below is some proposed language.

## Proposed Language:

### 14.2 PERMIT AND APPROVAL EXPIRATION

- 14.2.01 Development pursuant to any action by the DRB which is granted approval shall secure the necessary Zoning Permits within 12 months of the ~~granted approval~~ **date of the signed decision.**
- 14.2.02 Development associated with a Zoning Permit shall commence construction within a 24-month period. The applicant of the Zoning Permit may request a one-time 12-month extension to the 24 months to commence construction. The granting of any extension shall be pursuant to the DRB review.
- 14.2.03 ~~Development pursuant to any approval granted by the DRB~~ **All development associated with a Zoning Permit shall be completed have all exterior work, including, but not limited to, siding and roofing, completed within five- seven years from commencement of construction the date the Zoning Permit becomes effective.**



- 14.2.04 In the event that any of the time limits listed above are not met, then the Zoning Permit is null and void.
- 14.2.05 Permits and DRB approvals outstanding as of June 12, 1998 shall be exercised by January 1, 2007. If an outstanding approval secures the Zoning Permit, that permit shall be exercised “as if” just issued as mentioned above. Outstanding approvals which are not secured by January 1, 2007 shall be deemed null and void as of January 2, 2007.

**Issue:** There are several minor items to correct in the parking standards. First, currently parking standards apply to all parking lots, regardless of size. This has proved problematic for small lots. In addition, clarity should be added that this applies to all new parking lots only. It is recommended that aisle widths (area that you drive down) be less for smaller sized parking lots. Next, there is no provision to deal with storage or removal of cleared snow. Last, a provision to allow for parking lot waivers by the DRB would be useful.

**Proposed Language:**

- 8.3.01 Sizes: **All newly constructed** off-street parking spaces shall be designed in accordance with the following minimum standards **except for lots with less than 10 parking spaces and serving residential uses only:**

| Parking Angle Degrees) | Aisle Width | Space Size (feet) |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 45                     | 13          | 9 x 19            |
| 60                     | 18          | 9 x 19            |
| 90                     | 24          | 9 x 19            |

**Parking lots with less than 10 parking spaces and serving residential uses only are required to have 9 x 19 foot parking spaces, but are only required to have aisle widths of at least 12 feet.**

- 8.3.02 Calculations: When determining the number of required parking spaces results in a fractional space, the fractional space shall be interpreted as one required parking space.

- 8.3.03 Access: Parking facilities **except for lots with less than 10 parking spaces and serving residential uses only** shall be designed to the following requirements for vehicular access to a street or alley unless otherwise regulated by another governmental agency:

| Dimension         | Requirements (feet) |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Minimum (two-way) | 24                  |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Minimum (one-way) | 12   |
| Maximum           | 35 (except when it can be demonstrated that additional width is required for truck access) |

**Parking lots with less than 10 parking spaces and serving residential uses only are required to have 9 x 19 foot parking spaces, but are only required to have aisle widths of at least 12 feet.**

**8.3.08 Snow Removal: All parking plans must either provide adequate space for storage of cleared snow or else must include a provision that cleared snow will be removed from the site.**

## **8.5 PARKING/LOADING SPACE WAIVERS**

**The Development Review Board can grant a waiver from the parking and loading requirements when an applicant can demonstrate that the parking lot design provides for safe and adequate circulation. All such waivers shall require that the City Engineer review and provide a recommendation whether such a waiver should be granted. Parking and loading requirement waivers do not need to meet the criteria for a variance in Act, 24 V.S.A.**

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**Issue:** Currently the design review district standards require a list of required items be included with all applications. There is no provision for exemption of certain items if they are not applicable. For example, signs are technically required to provide for a complete layout of the property. It is recommended that the Development Review Board decide items that are applicable.

### **Proposed Language:**

#### **REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIAL**

10.1.06 A Zoning Permit application shall include the following **unless waived by Development Review Board because it is considered not applicable:**

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**Issue:** There is a need for clarification regarding allowance for business signs to mean the occupied area of the business. In addition a provision is needed to deal with businesses that have no street frontage such as those in the back of an office building.

### **Proposed Language:**

#### **9.1 PERMITTED SIGNS**

9.1.01 The following signs are permitted when located on the lot in which the use or matter that is the subject of the sign is located:

1. One professional or home occupation sign, not exceeding two square feet;
2. Signs identifying any permitted nonresidential use, not exceeding a total of 20 square feet, except as provided in (4);
3. Signs necessary for public welfare;
4. In the commercial, central business district and industrial district, one business identification sign per **outside** wall fronting on a street, not to exceed one square foot for each lineal foot of ~~building~~ **of outside wall space occupied by the business. Said sign is permitted to be mounted on the building or may be a free standing sign unless regulated otherwise in this ordinance.**
5. **One additional business sign up to 10 square feet is permitted per property.**

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**Issue:** Repair shops and contracting services do not seem to fit into any use categories. These should be defined and added to the use table. It is recommended that it be permitted in the same zones as a vehicle repair facility.

**Proposed Language:**

**CONTRACTING SERVICES:** A use of land for off-site repair and/or serving of buildings which does not include the outside storage of building materials. This includes, but is not limited to, plumbing repairs, electrical repair and general contracting services.

**REPAIR SHOP:** A use of land for the on-site repair of equipment or parts of machinery within an enclosed building. This includes, but is not limited to, electrical motor repairs, yard equipment servicing, and small engine repairs.

**The contracting services and repair shop would be a permitted use in the Commercial, Industrial-Commercial and Industrial zones.**

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**Issue:** Zoning permits are required for land developments. Land developments are defined by the state to include ... “any change in the use of any building or structure, or land, or extension of use of land”. With the newly adopted long list of uses, it is difficult to determine if there is a change in use requiring a new zoning permit. It is recommended that this be clarified by adding a definition for a change in use.

**Proposed Language:**

**CHANGE IN USE:** A change in the use of any building or structure, or land, or extension of use of land when:

1. The change is from a residential use to a nonresidential use.
2. The change results in a different number of dwelling units.
3. The new use has higher requirement for off-street parking.
4. The change results in the use of a previously unused, vacant lot.
5. The new use is classified as a conditional use.
6. Any change of a non-conforming use.
7. Any change where a new home occupation is established.

---

**Issue:** The new regulations allow single-family and two-family dwelling uses as conditional uses in the commercial districts. The conditional use status includes all changes including additions and sheds. We have already had a shed in such a district require DRB approval. It is recommended that the conditional use approval only be required for construction of a new structure and that additions and accessory structures be administratively approved.

**Proposed Language:**

**Change the conditional use class of Dwelling, single-family and Dwelling, two-family to Dwelling, single-family (new construction only), Dwelling, two-family (new construction only), Dwelling Multifamily (new construction and additions only). Add three new uses that would be a permitted use in the commercial districts of Dwelling, single-family (additions and accessory structures only), Dwelling, two-family (additions and accessory structures only) and Dwelling Multifamily (accessory structures only).**

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**Issue:** All home occupations require DRB approval. It is recommended that home occupations be classified into two classes with major home occupations requiring DRB approval as a conditional use and minor home occupations not requiring DRB approval. All home occupations would still need to meet the requirements of Section 5.5

**Proposed Language:**

**MINOR HOME OCCUPATION: A home occupation where there are no nonresidents employed at the home occupation site, there are no retail sales occurring at the home occupation site, no walk-in traffic occurs, there is no outside storage of materials, and there is not an increase in the level of noise, smoke, dust or odors.**

**MAJOR HOME OCCUPATION: A home occupation which is determined not to be a minor home occupation.**

**Issue:** One accessory structure under 480 square is permitted at 4 feet from the side and rear lot lines under the new regulations. There have been several cases where an accessory structure was attached to the principal building. The issue was does the 4 foot yard requirement rule apply. The DRB ruled it did. It is recommended that a definition of an accessory structure be added as follows:

ACCESSORY STRUCTURE: A structure customarily incidental, subordinate and clearly related to the principal use or building, attached or detached to the principal structure, and located on the same lot;

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**Issue:** There are currently several exemptions from setbacks. It is recommended adding several more as follows based upon projects submitted to the Zoning Office. Handicapped ramps are already mentioned as exempt elsewhere in the ordinance and the addition here is for clarification only.

#### **4.6 SETBACK EXEMPTIONS**

4.6.01 Within any required yard area, there can be no structures or buildings unless otherwise explicitly exempted as follows or elsewhere in this ordinance. Exempt structures and buildings include the following unless noted differently elsewhere in this ordinance:

1. Fences and walls
2. Sidewalks and driveways
3. Lampposts
4. Signs
5. Patios or terraces at grade level
6. Swing sets and similar playground equipment
7. Handicapped ramps
8. Flag poles
9. Barbecue pits
10. Decorations such as statuettes or similar items
11. Playhouses
12. Animal housing up to 40 square feet