

PURPOSE & VISION

our plan for a healthy future

Why should we plan for a healthy future? Health and well-being is the common theme that emerged as we developed this plan. The health of our economy, environment, neighborhoods, and city government have direct and indirect effects on the physical and mental health of city residents. And conversely, the health of residents affects many other aspects of our city. Promoting physical, mental and social health in Barre City is an investment in our future economic prosperity and revitalization efforts.

Barre City faces many challenges in planning for the future. The decline of the once-dominant granite industry means that we must build a new, more diversified economy. We must find new uses for the vacant, obsolete and under-utilized buildings and lands that are no longer producing granite monuments and building materials. We must re-train a workforce originally focused almost exclusively on manufacturing granite products.

These challenges, while daunting, are not insurmountable given the assets we have to draw upon. Barre City has the raw materials (land, buildings, infrastructure, transportation systems, and an available workforce). Our community has a tradition of entrepreneurship and a strong manufacturing heritage. The Main Street reconstruction project has already built on those assets, and is injecting a positive new energy into our city.

Without the support and participation of an engaged citizenry, Barre City's revitalization efforts could falter. At the core, these efforts are about investing in all of us – the people who live and work in Barre City – so we can achieve our goals and improve our lives. For that reason, the over-arching purpose of this plan is to improve the health and well-being of those who live and work in Barre City.

Where are we headed? Our plan for a healthy future recognizes that Barre City needs:

To attract and retain businesses that pay a living wage, provide health insurance benefits, and match existing levels of workforce education or provide job training.

To attract and retain residents, particularly households with moderate to higher incomes.

A transportation system that enables all residents to conveniently and safely travel around the community, accessing homes, jobs, schools, parks, shopping and services.

A system of public utilities that is reliable and well-maintained, that has affordable rates, and that is capable of supporting growth.

Access to reliable, affordable and clean sources of energy.

A quality school system that prepares students for higher education, employment and life-long learning.

To provide the community services and amenities that foster an attractive quality of life without placing an excessive burden on taxpayers.

Air that is safe to breathe, water that is safe to drink, land that is safe to use, and access to green spaces, parks and undeveloped areas where residents can recreate and enjoy nature.

What is the role of this city and this plan? City policies and actions can play a significant role in creating a healthy community that provides a high quality of life for all residents. Protecting public health, safety and welfare is at the core of many city policies and actions, yet previous plans did not directly address the topic.

In this plan, we will be highlighting connections between city policies and actions, and the health and well-

being of residents. We will present measurable benchmarks that can be used to evaluate how we are progressing towards our vision of a healthy future for Barre City.

Why focus on health? Health is becoming an increasing concern at the individual, municipal and state level. Healthcare now represents approximately 20 cents of every dollar spent in Vermont, and 1 in 3 of the state's jobs are in the health sector. The state is presently engaged in a major health reform effort to implement a single-payer system of health insurance coverage for all Vermonters and control the rate of growth in healthcare costs. For this effort to be successful, there will need to be more attention paid to the effects of our decisions – at the individual, municipal and state level – on health.

Vermont ranks as one of the healthiest states in the nation, but the average Barre City resident fares less well on common measures of health than the average Vermont resident. Our population includes a much higher proportion of individuals and families living below the poverty line. Barre City also has many other residents who face health disparities, including those who are elderly, disabled, and recent immigrants, as well as individuals who have experienced addiction, homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system. All of these groups have a greater need for healthcare and related services. The challenges we face make our city an excellent barometer of the effectiveness of initiatives and programs aimed at improving health outcomes.

While Vermont is in the vanguard of health reform, there are communities around the country exploring ways to improve their residents' health and quality of life. Many of these communities are realizing how significantly our physical environment affects our health. In response to current challenges, such as increasing rates of obesity and adapting to climate change, there has been renewed interest in the relationship between city planning and public health, and their shared goal of improving human well-being.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Health Impact Pyramid clearly shows that "Socioeconomic Factors" and "Changing the Context" have the largest impact on population health. It is these very factors that are addressed in this plan. By working to create a community with safe and affordable housing, educational opportunities and excellence, pedestrian-friendly streets, and ample recreation opportunities, for example, we can have a profound impact on the health of city residents.

our vision of a healthy barre city

Imagine that it was one of those beautiful summer evenings in Vermont. The weekend had arrived and you were walking downtown to do some shopping and socializing. Downtown Barre was a hopping place and you ran into many friends and neighbors who were also enjoying the downtown scene. Some had biked in on the regional path from nearby communities.

After picking up some local produce and other groceries at the market, and finding a few other items you needed at other downtown shops, you decided to grab a bite to eat. The restaurants were busy, as usual, so while waiting for a table you struck up a conversation with the fellow sitting next to you at the bar. He was visiting Vermont on vacation and here he was in Barre City. A few short years ago, you would have found this hard to imagine.

As you talked, it became clear that your new acquaintance really liked what our community had to offer. He and his family had spent the day learning about our granite heritage by visiting the History Center, Granite Museum, cemeteries, and the Rock of Ages Quarry. He recognized that unlike many postcard Vermont towns, Barre City was a real place with down-to-earth folks, the kind of community where he would want to work and raise a family. People were all very friendly and it was clear that people here took pride in their city, its heritage and its sense of place.

You tell him that Barre City wasn't always this nice, but downtown revitalization started with the upgrade of our Main Street business area. This was really just the catalyst that people were waiting for. With a desire to revive

Barre City's glory days, residents came together and worked step-by-step to turn our city around. So now we are enjoying the fruits of our labor.

Your new friend said that it was clear to him that Barre City was really about its people, its rich blue-collar heritage and its residents striving to make this city the best it can be. You thank him for the compliment and tell him that you hope to see him in Barre City again.

FRAMEWORK & PROCESS

the framework for our plan

This plan includes four elements:

Introduction that: presents our vision of a healthy future for Barre City; establishes the framework within which the plan was developed, and describes our planning process; and provides a snapshot of the city.

Strategic Plan that: summarizes the key points about our present condition; identifies the issues and challenges we face, as well as our strengths and opportunities; establishes goals and strategies; identifies specific actions to implement the goals and strategies; and sets benchmarks by which we can measure our progress towards achieving our vision of a healthy future for Barre City.

Community Profile, which serves as the foundation for the plan and which: inventories and analyzes current conditions in Barre City; and projects future trends and needs.

Appendices that: consist of a variety of plans, studies, maps and data; and supplement the community profile.

This plan is intended to be a guide for the achievement of short-term and long-term community goals through public investments, regulations and other implementation programs. Through this plan, Barre City residents and government seek to:

- Define our vision for the city's future.

- State our shared community values.

- Balance competing interests and demands.

 - Address both current and long-term needs.

- Promote appropriate revitalization, growth and development.

 - Reflect regional conditions and consider regional impacts.

 - Be consistent with statewide goals and policies.

 - Offer specific guidance while retaining enough flexibility to be useful when faced with unforeseen circumstances.

This plan also serves as a thorough research document of the community's present condition — our issues, challenges, strengths and opportunities. While writing this plan, we inventoried existing resources and conditions, and assessed likely future trends and needs in the city, region and state. Factors we considered included the:

- Capability of land to support revitalization, growth and development in the city.

- Availability of community facilities and services necessary to support revitalization, growth and development in the city.

- Need to improve undesirable conditions, revitalize neighborhoods, and improve our built environment.

- Interrelationship and compatibility of envisioned changes with existing conditions and development patterns.

Potential effects of envisioned changes on other policies of the city and region.

This plan follows the framework for municipal plans established in state law (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117). The strategic plan and community profile both incorporate the required elements (land use, energy, transportation, utilities and facilities, housing and economic development). Our strategic plan includes:

Statement of objectives and policies.

Recommended program for the implementation the stated objectives and policies.

This introduction addresses the compatibility of our plan with the plans of neighboring communities and the region, and describes our planning process. The plan is also consist with Vermont's 13 planning goals.

our planning process

The citizens and government of Barre City have a long history of planning for the future of our city. For five decades, we have had an adopted municipal plan, which as been regularly revised and updated:

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.

2005 - The 2003 plan was substantially revised and updated.

2010 - The 2005 plan was re-adopted with minor amendments.

Approximately once each decade since 1980, the Barre City Planning Commission has substantially revised or rewritten this plan in light of the ongoing evolution of our community. Each time, residents have been invited to participate in planning for the future of our community.

During the most recent three-year planning process, the Planning Commission distributed comment cards asking residents to share their vision for the city, held a series of public workshops, and shared information through traditional and social media. The Planning Commission also reached out to existing committees, organizations, city staff and officials, and other stakeholders for direct input while writing this plan.

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

Bringing plans to reality can be achieved by passing and enforcing ordinances (regulatory) and by providing services and making public improvements (non-regulatory). Zoning and subdivision regulations are two important mechanisms for implementing the vision for revitalization, growth and development set forth in the city plan. Barre City has had a zoning law in place for more than 60 years. Our land use regulations have also been regularly revised and updated:

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.

2006 – A Downtown Mixed Use district was created, the Bisson Farm area was rezoned, PUD regulations were adjusted for entire city, and minimum lot sizes were changed in PR district, along with other smaller changes.

2010 – Changes made to the sign regulations, enforcement, and general provisions.

Barre City has also had a long history of non-regulatory actions that support the vision for revitalization, growth and development set forth in the city plan. Most recently, the city has:

Upgraded our municipal water and wastewater systems.

Expanded public parking in our downtown.

Installed energy-efficient lights in City Hall and the auditorium.

Installed a hydro-electric unit in the water line on Nelson Street.

Undertook various brownfield assessments and clean-up of polluted sites, such as Enterprise Aly.

Applied for grants to help businesses expand or move into the city.

Developed a capital budget to plan for future equipment and vehicle purchases.

Completed the long-planned North Main Street Reconstruction project.

This plan recommends additional regulatory and non-regulatory actions to continue the substantial progress we have made in recent years towards revitalizing our city (see the Strategic Plan).

our plan in a regional context

While the primary purpose of this plan is to guide the future revitalization, growth and development of Barre City, we recognize that our community is part of a larger region. Our decisions can affect our neighbors, and likewise their decisions can affect Barre City. As part of developing this plan, the Barre City Planning Commission considered the Berlin Town Plan, the Barre Town Plan and the Central Vermont Regional Plan.

No inconsistencies between these plans and our plan for Barre City appear to exist.

Berlin Town Plan. Berlin is west of Barre City. Route 302 and Route 62 connect the two municipalities, and the Stevens Branch of the Winooski River flows from Barre City into Berlin. The forested hillside south of Route 62 continues across the city line into Berlin.

The Berlin Town Plan was most recently revised and readopted in 2012. Both plans recognize the forested hillside south of Route 62 as a sensitive natural resource through planning areas that recommend low-density residential, conservation or recreation uses. Both plans share a similar concern about poorly-managed highway commercial businesses along the Route 302 corridor, and recommend actions to revise regulations to facilitate appropriately-scaled and -designed development. Both plans also speak to the critical need to maintain and restore the natural floodplain along the Stevens Branch near the municipal boundary.

Barre Town Plan. Barre Town surrounds most of the city, reflecting the fact the city was separated out from the town in 1895. Route 302 and Route 14 serve as major transportation routes between our two communities. In addition, numerous side streets and neighborhoods extend over municipal lines.

Our two communities have a long history of sharing resources including wastewater, water, stormwater utilities and school operations. Many residents have lived in both communities and many facilities, services and amenities located in Barre City are used by both town and city residents. There is a recognized need for greater coordination and cooperation between our municipalities to improve government efficiency and equitably finance the facilities, services and amenities we share.

All of the land in Barre Town that adjoins the city is zoned residential. This plan recommends that most of the land along the city line continue in its present use as residential neighborhoods. Along the highway corridors this plan recommends a reduction in the density and intensity of use closer to the city line.

Central Vermont Regional Plan. Barre City is an active member of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, which includes 23 municipalities in Washington and Orange counties. CVRPC staff reviewed this plan before it was adopted and found it to be compatible with the regional plan and state planning requirements. A central theme of the 2006 Regional Plan is the “preservation and enhancement of the quality of life for all Central Vermont residents,” which aligns with our focus on a “healthy future for Barre City.”

OVERVIEW OF BARRE CITY

Barre City, formed and separated out from Barre Town in 1895, is a community of four square miles and 9,000 residents located in Central Vermont. Our city developed and became known as the “Granite Capital of the World” in the late-19th century when the arrival of the railroad in 1875 spurred the rapid growth of the granite industry. Between 1880 and 1890, Barre’s population more than tripled as stoneworkers from around the world migrated here with their families. These skilled craftsmen extracted, cut, shaped, polished and sculpted our “Barre gray” granite into building materials, monuments and memorials that were exported around the country and world. The booming granite industry fueled the development of Barre City. But as is the case with many American cities that relied on a single industry, our once vibrant community faced a challenging period of economic decline and stagnation when the granite industry began to contract in the mid-20th century.

Today, our city is entering a new period of revitalization. Barre City is preparing for future growth and development, and we are actively working to encourage private investment in our city. We have recently completed a \$17.5 million reconstruction of North Main Street, that replaced the public infrastructure below and above ground in our downtown business district. This project was a complete face-lift for downtown Barre City and is the cornerstone of our revitalization plans. And it is working – only a few months after work was completed on North Main Street, construction of City Place and rehabilitation of the Blanchard block began. Our successful pursuit of a TIF (tax increment financing) district in 2012, will make it possible for the city to fund other critical improvements downtown and keep our revitalization efforts moving forward.

Barre City is a 10 minute drive from Exit 7 on Interstate 89 and 15 minutes from Montpelier. U.S. Route 302, a major east-west route through New England, brings travelers through downtown Barre City where the highway serves as our main street. Vermont Rail runs through Barre City to Montpelier where it connects to New England Central Railroad. Many of our industrial properties abut the rail line and have the potential for rail service. The regional Knapp airport is located four miles outside the city. There is public transit service linking Barre City to neighboring communities. Today we have ample public parking in our downtown, and we are actively planning to provide additional parking to meet future demand. The city’s wastewater treatment plant has 900,000 gallons per day of uncommitted capacity, and our water treatment facility has nearly 2 million gallons per day of excess capacity.

Barre City is located at the junction of two valleys, carrying the Stevens and Jail Branches of the Winooski River. The Stevens Branch runs through our downtown, with the rail line and Route 302 sharing the relatively narrow valley. The valley floor is densely developed with residential neighborhoods extending up into the flat-topped, gently rolling hills surrounding downtown Barre City. To the north and west, where the terrain is steeper, the hillsides remain largely undeveloped and forested. The southwestern edge of the city has a more rural character, with farmland extending over the city line from a portion of Barre Town that remains largely agricultural.