

Addison County Regional Planning Commission FY 2022 Annual Report

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) serves 21 municipalities within Addison County. ACRPC assists towns in the Addison Region (the “Region”) to help provide effective local government and works cooperatively with them to address statewide, regional and local issues.

Municipalities choose to be members of ACRPC. Each municipality’s legislative body appoints 1, 2 or 3 Commissioners, depending upon the population of the municipality, to represent the municipality’s interest on ACRPC’s Board. Additionally, ACRPC’s Board accommodates up to six citizen-interest commissioners who represent other regional interests such as business and industry, natural resources, agriculture and social services. ACRPC delegates a significant portion of its work to six (6) sub-committees, which review various aspects of the Commission’s business. Commissioners serve on these committees and make recommendations for action to the full Commission. All of ACRPC’s committees are advisory. Only the full Commission has the authority to make decisions to bind ACRPC. Seven highly-qualified staff with more than 100 years of combined professional experience provide support to the Commission and its committees and execute the Commission’s work program.



Conceptual small scale infill diagram for Salisbury Village.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

RPCs act as cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Of the 21 towns served by ACRPC, only Middlebury employs a full-time planner. All other communities rely on volunteer planning commissions aided and supplemented by ACRPC's staff or outside consultants. ACRPC's work in recent years has focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), modernizing bylaws, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development, flood resiliency planning and forest block and habitat connector mapping and policy. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential to ensure a smooth state and local permitting process. This work is supported through a combination of Federal, State and Local funding sources. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the "At Work" map; highlights include:

- Finished and closed-out 2020 Municipal Planning Grants (MPG) (Ferrisburgh: Visualizing Density and Shoreham: Farnham Property Conceptual Master Plan) in September 2021.
- Continued working on 2021 Municipal Planning Grants for the towns of Cornwall and Salisbury, both plan updates which included the required Forest Integrity and Flood Resilience. Cornwall's MPG also included developing a series of trainings for the planning commission. Completed and closed out these grants June 2022.
- Assisted the towns of Orwell and Vergennes in applying for 2022 MPG applications. Orwell is working on a plan update with a focus on the Village Center and Vergennes is developing a Public Art Master Plan for the city. ACRPC is doing the consultant work for both of these projects.
- Worked with the towns of Bristol, Lincoln and Shoreham to apply for ByLaw Modernization grants. ACRPC is doing the consultant work for all of these projects.
- ACRPC provided technical support to all Zoning Administrators within the Region and held a Zoning Administrator Roundtable.
- ACRPC conducted municipal consultations in Cornwall, Waltham, Bristol, Ripton and New Haven.

In Middlebury, New Haven and Vergennes, ACRPC continued to serve as the Municipal Project Manager on several community infrastructure projects creating sidewalks, shared use paths or bike routes to tie neighborhoods and industrial areas to downtown Middlebury, to tie the Otter Creek Basin with downtown Vergennes and to provide biking connections between our communities, starting to implement the Tri-Town Bike Loop Study ACRPC led the previous year.

BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. RPCs have performed environmental site assessments on brownfield locations throughout the state. Environmental site assessments allow properties, and formerly degraded properties, to be sold, remediated (if needed), developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

- Prior to this year, ACRPC had not participated in Brownfields because it lacked funding. This year, ACRPC secured a \$100,000 Brownfields grant from the Agency of Commerce and a \$500,000 grant from EPA. ACRPC intends to implement the FEMA funding starting September 2022.

REGIONAL PLANNING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- Finished Population and Housing section update for the regional plan. Prepared document for the public hearing process and ACRPC review. The updated section was adopted February 2022. ACRPC implements its Plan's goals by assisting communities with access to resources, education and funding opportunities to address their housing needs. A significant portion of the Housing Plan's goals focus on downtowns and village centers and how communities can plan to increase housing opportunities in these locations.
- ACRPC also began working on the Economic Development section of the plan. It intends to feed the Regional Economic Development data developed in the CEDS process (See Economic Development below) into the Addison County Regional Plan and the Plan for the Economic Development Corporation.
- Began working to update the Natural Resource and Childcare sections of the Regional Plan
- Organized and hosted a presentation/ training on Community Wastewater Strategies. Presented by Julie Beth Hines.
- Worked with the Preservation Trust of Vermont and Vermont League of Cities and Towns to create and host a forum on funding public building redevelopment for the Towns of Salisbury, Addison, Whiting and Monkton.
- Worked with the communities of Vergennes and Ferrisburgh to help them resolve issues surrounding shared municipal fire services.
- Participated in the health equity grant
 - Performed research on international health equity materials and examples
 - Provided feedback on toolkit draft and survey

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont to achieve long term economic gain.

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - ACRPC is working jointly with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to create an EDA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. ACRPC/ACEDC and partners completed the draft plan in June 2021.
- ACRPC also worked with ACEDC to create a list of important planning and economic development projects within the region and supported several grant applications for local businesses.



Map Depicting alternate route for Vergennes Planning and environmental linkages Study

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contracts with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), RPCs coordinate the federally funded Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort provides a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TAC). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the State’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement. RPCs help fulfill five transportation planning objectives. The Objectives and ACRPC’s work under each are listed below.

- Coordinated and hosted the statewide Walk Bike Summit for 2022
- Led 20 coordination activities between VTrans and interested Addison County parties, including:
 - ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee
 - Addison County Committee on the Elderly and People with Disabilities
 - Tri Valley Transit Addison Regional Operating Committee
 - Walk Bike Council of Addison County
 - Road Foremen meetings
 - Local Concerns meetings on various topics
- Initiated culvert inventories in five communities
- Assisted twelve towns in preparing grant applications to VTrans
- Coordinated a grant application between seven towns for way-finding signs for the Triangle Bike Loop
- Oversaw eight planning studies for local municipalities (7 TAC grants plus a Bridport culvert scoping study)
- Conducted 37 data collection activities on behalf of towns and VTrans(Speed counts, bike, ped and park and ride counts)
- Assisted with a Planning and Environment Linkages Study on reducing truck traffic in downtown Vergennes.



Firefighters at Amtrak Passenger Train Emergency Response training at Middlebury Siding

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPC's also assist with updating floodplain bylaws, creating FEMA-qualified hazard mitigation plans, coordinating updates to municipal emergency plans and providing as needed assistance in special circumstances and declared disasters.

- All 21 municipal Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs) completed and submitted
 - 2 new local Emergency Management Directors recruited and trained
 - Trained and certified to Work in the State Emergency Operations Center
- Wrote and managed annual EMPG grant (\$53k)
 - Facilitated transition from LEPC to Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC)
 - Distributed Hazardous Materials inventory and response guide to county agencies
- Wrote 2 Flood Resilient Communities Fund grants (\$106,000), 1 BRIC grant (\$28,000), 1 Dept of Health Hot Weather Planning grant (\$10,000)
 - Assisted with \$500k EPA Brownfields grant application
- Completed Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for Lincoln,
- Organized 2 Amtrak passenger train emergency response trainings
- Ran an emergency response exercise at the Patricia Hannaford Career Center
- Worked with 2 groups of Middlebury College students on Resilience projects for Mobile Home Parks, Shelters, and locating defibrillators in the Region.



GIS-mapping work with Lincoln Road Foreman

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES

RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis services in support of their projects.

- ACRPC's mapping program supports nearly every planning function it performs. Every municipal plan, enhanced energy plan or zoning bylaw created contains maps produced by ACRPC.
- ACRPC created new and updated existing maps for town plan updates in the towns of Orwell, Salisbury, and Cornwall and provided technical support for Salisbury's downtown village designation application.
- ACRPC continued to support the data gathering efforts its transportation program is undertaking to map hydrologically connected roadways within the Region.
- ACRPC created interactive online GIS maps and dashboards for the Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative and Vermont Coverts.
- ACRPC used spatial analysis and created map products to support Maple Broadband's high-level design and planning efforts (see Special Projects).
- ACRPC developed or updated regional databases of municipal facilities, transportation networks, and natural resources (e.g, zoning, state designations, trails, culverts, etc).



Solar Panels in Winter, Weybridge, Vermont

ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Helped the City of Vergennes and Town of Ferrisburgh start -up Energy Committees
- Supported the towns of Middlebury, Starksboro, Waltham, Ripton, New Haven, Whiting and Shoreham as they create and adopt enhanced energy plans.
- Supported 8 regional energy committee monthly meetings and provided three educational opportunities for committee members and town energy committees.
 - Efficiency VT
 - HEAT Squad / VHFA
 - GreenSavingSmart
- Developed energy resources and organized ACRPC's Energy webpages.
 - Created energy scorecards and dashboard for each town in the region using Efficiency VT and VT Community Energy Dashboard data.
 - Created an energy siting map to support discussions around renewables, ev chargers, and land-use planning.
 - Developed energy funding guide.
- Participated in the development of the CEAC climate action plan on the transportation team.
 - Advocated for land use planning and walk/bike infrastructure related actions and goals.
 - Oversaw CEAC intern in outreach and research coordination.
- Facilitated Drive Electric events in Bristol and Ferrisburgh.
- Supported continued Window Dressers Program and coordinated expanded training planning process.
- Hosted one Button-Up event.



Middlebury Falls, Summer 2022

WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the required watershed basin plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning efforts and regulations, which result in water quality improvements, riverine habitat and safer growth management decisions.

- Served as the Clean Water Service Provider for the Otter Creek Basin. Reviewed, commented on, and participated in development of Clean Water Service Provider guidance developed by the Department of Environmental Conservation Water Services Division. Created a website and spatial data hub for the Clean Water Service Provider.
- Empaneled and coordinated a Basin Water Quality Council to oversee the Clean Water Service Provider
- Oversaw Grants in Aid roadway improvement projects in 16 towns
- ACRPC continued its support of and participation as part of the Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC). ACRPC hosts the ACRWC meetings and sampling events, maintains the website with current sampling data for the public, and supports presentations to targeted community boards and “kitchen water chats.” ACRPC helped develop public outreach documents for the ACRWC including summary sheets of Middlebury River, New Haven River, and Lewis Creek, as well as information regarding recent contaminant levels at 8 observed recreational sites.
- ACRPC worked with ANR ’s Basin Planner to help add projects to the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan.
- ACRPC wrote and received a CWIP grant for all RPCs



The Historic New Haven Train Station heads up Route 17 on its way to its new home on North Street. Addison Independent photo- Steve James

SPECIAL PROJECTS

RPCs Work on a number of unique projects each year. Examples at ACRPC include:

- ACRPC continued to support the work of the Addison County Communications Union District, dba Maple Broadband, which it helped to create in 2020. Maple Broadband's goal is to bring broadband services to underserved populations throughout the county. ACRPC continued to help MapleBroadband in the current year. ACRPC wrote the grants that created Maple Broadbands feasibility study (Completed in October) and Business PI (Completed in February). ACRPC also helped with GIS work to support systems development and marketing, kept Maple Broad's books for the year and served as Clerk and advisor to Maple Broadband's Full Board and Executive Board.
- ACRPC continued its work with VTrans and the City of Vergennes to study and find solutions for the issues created by heavy truck traffic within the City Center. The Planning and Environmental Linkages Study ("PELS") now underway is taking a hard look at the land use planning impacts of any proposed solutions to ensure that the transportation design component of the project increases the overall economic vitality of all areas studied and to serve as a precursor to the federal NEPA process for any solutions chosen.
- ACRPC worked with the Town of New Haven, Vermont Historic Preservation, and VTrans to coordinate efforts around moving the historical New Haven Train Depot building. This included administrative, technical, and project management support for procuring funding, facilitating meetings about the Depot's new location and possible use, writing and posting RFPs, and identifying project needs (e.g., permitting, zoning, utility line management) and an approximate timeline. The station successfully moved this past winter and awaits a new purpose as part of New Haven's Village Center.
- ACRPC provided mapping and technical support to eco-global for their strategic planning involving a headquarters location and demonstration facility in Middlebury.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

ACRPC receives most of its funding through grants, and through a performance-based contract with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding. For the 2022 fiscal year, ACRPC's total revenue of approximately \$900,000 dollars was derived from 96 percent state and federal grants supporting regional and local projects, and 4 percent from town assessments. While percentages may vary slightly from year to year, the year was typical of ACRPC revenue.

ACRPC used the last couple of years to completely revamp its technical capabilities and accounting systems.

- ACRPC converted its accounting system from fully paper accounting system to QuickBooks;
- ACRPC created and implemented a fully electronic document filing system so that all of its critical documents are now electronically stored and backed up on the cloud;
- ACRPC implemented QuickBooks online to create an electronic time tracking system to replace the paper based and/or excel based employee time tracking system;
- ACRPC updated our financial policies to reflect the new systems;
- ACRPC researched & brought in outside help to present new options to consider regarding how to structure ACRPC's retirement system
- ACRPC moved Maple Broadband from a completely paper accounting and filing system to QuickBooks online
- ACRPC also upgraded its website and a significant number of its IT systems and software to help modernize its operations and improve its efficiency.

ACRPC has an audit on an annual basis. For FY 2021, its most recent audit, there were no significant findings, which is the same result found in audits conducted in past years. ACRPC's audit for FY 2022 will be completed by December 2022.

'AT WORK' MAP

The map depicting the range of services provided by the ACRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

ACRPC at Work: FY 2021

(July 2021-June 2022)

Type of Projects

-  Planning & Zoning Assistance
-  Equity & Environmental Justice
-  Bridge and Culvert Inventory
-  Enhanced Energy Planning
-  Transportation Planning Assistance/Traffic Count
-  Economic Development
-  Road Erosion Inventory
-  Brownfield Assistance
-  Clean Water Activities
-  Emergency Planning
-  Grant Writing
-  Mapping

Zoning Bylaw Status

-  Adopted
-  Flood Only
-  None

Town Plan Status

-  Current
-  Expired
-  No Town Plan

Designated Downtown or Village

-  Designated Downtown
-  Designated Growth Center
-  Designated Village

