

Addison County Regional Planning Commission FY 2024 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 Executive Board and Full Commission have the authority to make decisions to bind ACRPC. Eight 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.

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 and implementing mapping and policy within local plans.



Trail to Little Otter Creek, Ferrisburgh

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:

- Continued working with the towns of Waltham and Ferrisburgh on their 2023 MPG. Waltham has finished its Plan update and is in the process of getting local approval. We continue to work with Ferrisburgh on the Travel and Trails Master Plan.
- Orwell has completed its Town Plan update, including a new section focusing on its Village Center, and is going through local approval.
- ACRPC assisted Addison in applying for a 2024 MPG to update its Town Plan and continue to work with Addison on a community survey and plan revisions.
- We are working with Salisbury on their 2024 Bylaw Modernization grant.
- Currently we are helping Lincoln, Bridport, Shoreham and New Haven to collect data and generate maps for their Town plan updates.
- ACRPC provided technical support to all Zoning Administrators within the Region.
- ACRPC held several trainings for local Planning Commissions. Topics included "Roles and Responsibilities", "Creating Accessory Dwelling Units" and "Solar siting on Municipal Property".
- ACRPC conducted municipal consultations in the Towns of Bridport, Cornwall, Lincoln, Middlebury, New Haven, Orwell, Shoreham and Starksboro.
- ACRPC provided technical support to Starksboro and Whiting for Village Center Designation.
- 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. In Middlebury, the sidewalk/path ties neighborhoods and industrial areas to downtown Middlebury. In Vergennes the sidewalk ties the Otter Creek Basin with downtown Vergennes and the Tri-town Bike Loop provides biking connections between our communities.

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.

- ACRPC finished the Population and Housing section update for the regional plan in 2022. The housing committee followed that up with a survey demonstrating the strong desire for housing in the region. ACRPC also operated a housing navigator service to encourage building accessory dwelling units within the Region. ACRPC created a Guide to Creating Accessory Dwelling Units for the Region: [here](#) in the previous year. The guide provides a comprehensive guide for homeowners to use to create an accessory dwelling unit, including lots of practical connections to permitting authorities, forms and a financial calculator. This year ACRPC used its guide to support its housing navigator program. ACRPC worked with 12 Addison County residents to evaluate and plan for ADUs. Three have been constructed to date.
- ACRPC continued 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
- Worked on re-writing the Transportation section of the Plan
- Worked with other regional planning commission and partners on statewide housing legislation which will lead to new Future Land Use sections of the plan.
- Oversaw a regional health equity grant that supported the following projects:
 - Cornwall - outdoor recreation area project. Supported the town through grant research, applications, RFP development, permitting, engineer contracting, etc. Awarded VOREC grant and the project will enter construction in 2024.
 - Vergennes - Worked with Middlebury students to continue our regional work to capture sidewalk inventories for all relevant towns.
 - Supported the development of and outreach for the Addison Co. Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). For the CHNA, ACRPC utilized stipend funds to better engage priority populations in the region. We partnered with the Open Door Clinic, Addison Allies, Charter House, and CVOEOs Food access programs to meet low income, high risk community members where they are. We were successful in gathering 60 surveys from these individuals for the CHNA.

ENERGY PLANNING



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.

- ACRPC energy committee - hosted 10 energy committee meetings to provide updates on ongoing energy programs and opportunities. Included presentations on the Municipal Energy Resilience Program, Green Mountain Power sustainability, EV infrastructure planning
- Provided technical assistance to all towns in pursuing the MERP mini grant and energy assessments.
- Supported the Vergennes energy fair in 2023 and planned the regional energy fair in 2024. Recruited volunteers and energy organization representatives to communicate energy efficiency opportunities and raise awareness of available resources including ACRPC.
- Supported the development of the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County Energy Navigator program designed to support residents in accessing energy retrofits for their homes
- Provided technical assistance in understanding EV infrastructure requirements and available resources and programs to support community purchase of chargers.
- Collaborated with CVOEO's Green Saving Smart coach to communicate opportunities for low income individuals in relevant community spaces including the Addison County Hunger Council and member organizations, energy committees, church groups.
- Provided staff support for the Walk Bike Council of Addison County. Organized the meetings, generated minutes, and contributed programmatic expertise on new and ongoing Bike/ped funding opportunities.
- Worked with the Public Service Department to update the Regional enhanced energy planning materials and generated necessary materials and data for the regional and municipal enhanced energy planning process.

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.

- In 2022, ACRPC secured a \$500,000 Community Wide Assessment (CWA) grant from the EPA- the implementation will continue through 2026
- ACRPC has been working with a subcontractor to implement the CWA brownfields grant through work on the following:
 - i. Addison: Central School and Town Hall
 - ii. Middlebury: Satori Facility, Ilsley Library, Town-owned Maverick Station property, potential Flood-risk property buyouts
- Compliment ACRPC's Transit Oriented Development Program by Identifying potential brownfield areas for Area Wide Planning activities along the Vermont Rail corridor in Ferrisburgh-Vergennes-Middlebury

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Main Street Vergennes

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 worked jointly with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to create an EDA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. ACRPC/ACEDC and partners completed and the EPA approved a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy “CEDS” for the Region in the prior year. This year it focused on creating an application to form an Economic Development District.
- 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.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



Middlebury Amtrak Station

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.

- Led 16 coordination activities between VTrans and interested Addison County parties, including:
 - ACRPC Transportation Advisory Committee
 - Addison County Committee on the Older Adults and People with Disabilities
 - Tri Valley Transit Board of Directors (Chair), Finance Committee, Nominating Committee and Addison Regional Operating Committee (Chair)
 - Walk Bike Council of Addison County
 - Road Foremen meetings
 - Local Concerns meetings on various topics
- Initiated culvert inventories in seven communities
- Assisted thirteen towns in preparing grant applications to VTrans
- Coordinated installation of way-finding signs along the Triangle Bike Loop in seven towns
- Oversaw four municipal planning studies (4 TAC grants)
- Conducted 37 data collection activities on behalf of towns and VTrans (Speed counts, bike, ped, park and ride counts, etc.)
- Assisted with a Planning and Environment Linkages Study traffic in downtown Vergennes.
- Assisted in creation of an Asset Management Plan for Vergennes

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY

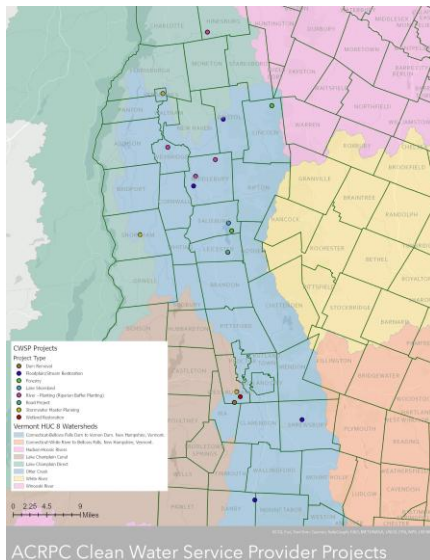


FRCF-funded old-bridge abutment removal to restore floodplain, Hollow Brook, Starksboro Vermont

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
- Recruited and trained 1 new local Emergency Management Director
- RPC staff trained and certified to work as post-event Local Liaisons to municipalities and for roles at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)
- Wrote and managed annual EMPG grant (\$53,100)
- Implemented two Flood Resilient Communities Fund grants (\$106,000), and one Building Resilient Infrastructures and Communities grant (\$30,000).
- Applied for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding.
- Worked on Local Hazard Mitigation Plans for the towns of Leicester, Monkton, and Salisbury; Panton's LHMP was submitted and accepted by FEMA.
- Organized quarterly meetings of the Addison County Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC).
- Assisted towns, state, and FEMA following July 2023 flood event.

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 updated town and regional data layers to ensure the best available regional data is available through the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.
- ACRPC created new and updated existing maps for town plan updates in the town of Ripton, and provided technical support for Monkton, Starksboro, and Cornwall on village center designation applications.
- ACRPC continued to support the data gathering efforts its transportation program is undertaking to map hydrologically connected roadways within the Region.
- ACRPC continued to support emergency management and planning in the Region by producing updated flood hazard maps and by mapping citizen reports of areas damaged by flooding in July.
- ACRPC continued to support regional conservation efforts by providing ecological mapping & analysis for many communities including Monkton, Waltham, New Haven, Ferrisburgh, Cornwall, Middlebury, and Ripton.
- ACRPC created interactive online GIS maps and dashboards for the Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative, Vermont Coverts, Middlebury College, the Addison County Economic Development Corporation, and the Western Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Program.
- ACRPC used spatial analysis and created map products to support Maple Broadband's high-level design and planning efforts (see Special Projects).
- ACRPC used spatial analysis to create a map of statewide opportunities for thermal network connectivity.
- ACRPC developed or updated regional databases of municipal facilities, transportation networks, and natural resources (e.g, zoning, state designations, trails, culverts, etc).

WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT



Tree planting in Addison County

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.
- Coordinated a Basin Water Quality Council to oversee the Clean Water Service Provider
- Provided funding through the Clean Water Service Provider to 17 projects to improve water quality, 5 of which are implementation projects.
- Oversaw Grants in Aid roadway improvement projects in 7 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

SPECIAL PROJECTS



Robert Frost Trail in Moosalamoo National Recreation Area

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 with GIS work for site identification, support systems development, marketing, and serving 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 continued its work with Middlebury College to develop a master plan for the College's Champlain Valley land holdings. ACRPC staff has been working to conduct public outreach and data analysis that will inform future planning on those lands and allow for more transparent and informed land management decisions.
- ACRPC began work in collaboration with the Green Mountain National Forest to create a master plan for the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area. The master plan will evaluate current conditions in the national recreation area and lay out possibilities for the future.
- ACRPC has been working with Conservation Commissions throughout the Region to create a collaborative working group that will allow for knowledge sharing and cross-boundary planning. ACRPC has created a website and listserv and has also hosted several meetings on development and vision for the group.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

ACRPC receives most of its funding through grants and performance-based contracts with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding. For fiscal year 2024, ACRPC's total revenue of approximately \$1,000,000 dollars was derived from 95 percent state and federal grants supporting regional and local projects, and 5 percent from town assessments. While percentages may vary slightly from year to year, the year was typical of ACRPC revenue.

ACRPC operates an electronic accounting and time tracking system based upon QuickBooks software;

- All of its critical documents are stored and backed up on the cloud;
- ACRPC's updated financial policies reflect the electronic systems;
- 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 implemented a bill payment system to provide tighter controls of vendor payments including the ability to have invoices locked once entered, multiple reviewers, and an audit trail











ACRPC has an audit on an annual basis. For FY 2023, 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 2024 will be completed by December 2024.

'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 2024

ACRPC Projects

-  Brownfields
-  Clean Water
-  Economic Development
-  Emergency Planning
-  Energy Planning
-  Grant Writing
-  Housing
-  Mapping
-  Transportation
-  Zoning

Designation

-  Designated Downtown
-  Designated Village

Town Plan Status

-  Current
-  Expired

Zoning Status

-  Adopted

