



## TOWN OF BENNINGTON

September 17, 2013

Faith Ingulsrud, Planning Coordinator  
Vermont Department of Economic, Housing & Community Development  
National Life Building, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
One National Life Drive  
Montpelier, VT 05620

Re: Bennington Growth Center Designation – Five Year Review

Dear Faith:

With this letter, the Town of Bennington is submitting to the Vermont Downtown Board the information DEHCD staff has requested in order for the Board to conduct the required five year review of Bennington's Growth Center Designation. The information submitted includes: this cover letter which provides an overview of the changes in the growth center over the last five years; a copy of the Board's written decision regarding Bennington's Growth Center annotated with comments on the Findings of Fact; and multiple maps and tables and supporting documentation describing new development inside Bennington's Designated Downtown and inside and outside Bennington's Growth Center.

As you know, the Town's Growth Center Designation was approved with the condition that the draft Bennington Capital Budget and Program submitted to the Downtown Board be adopted by the Bennington Select Board prior to the Growth Center designation becoming effective. This was accomplished prior to formal notification of the Town of the Board's approval of the Growth Center (see attached letter from DEHCD). Therefore, Bennington did not have any conditions to meet after notification of designation.

No material change in circumstances that would impact the Findings of Fact in the Designation Decision has occurred in the last five years. Only one change in the boundaries impacting the Growth Center has occurred in the last five years. In May of 2012 the Downtown Board approved (approval letter attached) a modification of Bennington's Designated Downtown boundary to include the former Catamount School (a former public elementary school). A portion of the school now houses the Vermont Soccer Academy and renovations of the rest of the school property are ongoing. The owner was recently awarded historic preservation tax credits to facilitate the continued re-development of the property. Additional recent development activity and recently adopted planning policies and regulations that may be of interest to the Downtown Board are noted in the attached annotated Growth Center Designation Decision.

The Town of Bennington has issued over 1,400 building and/or zoning permits between 2008 and 2013. These permits include everything from decks and sheds to multi-million dollar commercial projects. In accordance with the guidance for the Five Year Review Process, the attached maps and tables only address permits for new dwellings, new lots and new development that resulted in new space or structures or involved the renovation of persistently vacant space. Substantial investment has also been made to renovate occupied or recently occupied existing structures and space over the last five years, but this investment is not reflected in the attached tables and maps.

The attached tables, maps and additional supporting documentation indicate the following.

### **Subdivisions**

From 2008 to 2013 the Town issued subdivision permits for 36 new lots (traditional and PRD/PUD). 10 of these lots are located in an industrial park. 24 (66.7%) of the lots are located in the Growth Center. 12 (33.3%) of the lots are located outside the Growth Center.

### **Dwellings**

62 dwelling units were permitted and constructed between 2008 and 2013 in Bennington. 8 (12.9% of the total) dwellings were constructed in the Designated Downtown. 37 (59.7% of the total) dwellings were constructed in the Growth Center (but outside of the Designated Downtown). 17 (27.4% of the total) dwellings were constructed outside the Growth Center. The attached supporting documentation indicates the location as well as the types (single family, duplex, apartment, condo) of dwellings constructed. It is worth noting that 14 of the dwelling units constructed were new affordable housing units (7 duplexes).

### **Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Development**

35 permits for 279,771 s.f. of new commercial/industrial/institutional space were issued between 2008 and 2013. Construction has commenced or been completed on all of the permits issued. 32.7% of the square footage is located within the Designated Downtown. 51% of the square footage is located within the Growth Center (but not within the Designated Downtown). 16.3% of the square footage is located outside of the Growth Center.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the information submitted, or if you need additional information to facilitate the Downtown Board's five year review of Bennington's Growth Center Designation.

Respectfully,



Daniel W. Monks  
Planning Director

Enclosures



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Agency of Commerce &  
Community Development

February 3, 2009

Stuart Hurd, Town Manager  
Town of Bennington  
205 South Street  
Bennington, VT 05201

Dear Mr. Hurd:

As you know, at its meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Expanded Downtown Development Board approved Bennington's request for Growth Center Designation under 24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A, subject to one condition, which was:

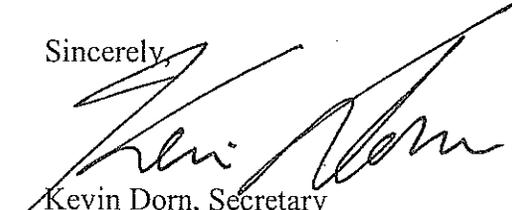
*Designation is conditioned on the Town of Bennington adopting the Capital Budget and Program that was included in the application, with no substantial changes. Designation will not become effective until said Capital Budget and Program is adopted and submitted to the Board.*

On January 21, 2009 we received documentation that the Bennington Selectboard adopted the Capital Budget and Program on January 12<sup>th</sup>, along with a copy of the adopted Program. My staff has determined that no substantial changes were made to this document. Having fulfilled the condition of designation, I am pleased to provide this formal notification that Bennington is now an official Designated Growth Center as of January 21, 2009. This approval includes the entire district as mapped in the Town's application. Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the Expanded Board Decision.

We applaud Bennington for the commitment you all are making toward growth center planning in support of your downtown. The designated area will be eligible for all benefits available to a designated growth centers for the next five years. At the end of that five-year period, in January 2014, the Town will need to request renewal of designation.

Congratulations again, and on behalf of both the Vermont Growth Centers Program and the Vermont Downtown Development Board, we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

  
Kevin Dorn, Secretary  
Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Cc: Dan Monks, Town of Bennington Planning Director  
Jim Sullivan, Assistant Director, Bennington County Regional Planning Commission

Enclosure



## **5 YEAR REVIEW COMMENTS**

**The Town of Bennington's Growth Center Designation has been annotated with comments by Town of Bennington staff to facilitate the Vermont Downtown Board's 5 year review of the designation. Comments are set forth below in underlined red text.**

### **TOWN OF BENNINGTON APPLICATION FOR GROWTH CENTER DESIGNATION**

#### **Formal Approval Growth Center Designation**

**Expanded Downtown Board  
October 27, 2008**

### **5 Year Review Comments – September 2013**

#### **Introduction**

The Planning Coordination Group (PCG) met on July 22<sup>nd</sup> to review, discuss and deliberate on the Town of Bennington's application for Growth Center Designation, and then again on August 26, 2008, to vote on their recommendation to the Expanded Downtown Development Board. On September 22, 2008 at their warned public meeting, the Expanded Board voted 7-1 to formally approve Bennington's application and award growth center designation, based upon their review of the application materials, the PCG's recommendation, and the statutory designation criteria (24 V.S.A. §2791). Below is a summary of the Board's finds and conclusions, with attached condition.

**The following comments are provided to the Vermont Downtown Board to facilitate the Five Year Review of Bennington's Growth Center. The Vermont Downtown Board staff has requested that Bennington provide "Comments on Each of the Findings of Fact in the Designation Decision, noting any circumstances that have changed."**

**No material change in circumstances that would impact the Findings of Fact in the original Designation Decision have occurred in the last five years. Minor changes and items of possible interest to the Vermont Downtown Board are noted below.**

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### **Proposed Growth Center includes or is adjacent to a Designated Downtown, Village Center or New Town Center**

The Growth Center includes Bennington's Designated Downtown, which acts as the central core of the downtown. MAP 1 IN THE APPLICATION SHOWS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOWNTOWN AND THE GROWTH CENTER.

On May 21, 2012 the Vermont Downtown Board approved a minor change in the boundary of Bennington's Designated Downtown to include the former Catamount public school that is being redeveloped as a mixed use facility, including a Soccer Academy. The project was recently awarded Historic Preservation Tax Credits to facilitate the continued re-development of the property.

A copy of the notification of the Board's decision and a map indicating the boundary change is attached to these annotated findings.

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### **Rationale for Growth Center**

- 1. The proposed growth center growth cannot reasonably be achieved within an existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located within the applicant municipality (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(G)(ii)).*

Based on the municipality's 20-year projections for population, housing and commercial growth (SEE DETAILS IN APPENDIX A IN THE APPLICATION), a majority of the projected growth cannot reasonably occur within the existing designated downtown within the municipality. There is capacity for the downtown to absorb more residential and commercial growth, but not 50% of that projected by 2030. For example, the need for 500 residential units is projected by 2030, with a capacity for only about 120 in the CBD. The applicant also demonstrates that the downtown does not have the capacity to absorb much of the proposed institutional and industrial growth. Even if maximum densities and building heights were encouraged, the amount of growth would still be less than 50%.

This Finding remains accurate.

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### **Size and Configuration of Growth Center**

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2. *The proposed growth center is of an appropriate size sufficient to accommodate a majority of the projected population and development over a 20-year planning period. The proposed growth center does not encompass an excessive area of land that would involve the unnecessary extension of infrastructure to service low-density development or result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development at the conclusion of the 20-year period (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(F)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by development that is not serviced by municipal infrastructure or that requires the extension of municipal infrastructure across undeveloped lands in a manner that would extend service to lands located outside compact village and urban centers (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(l)(iv)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(l)(v)).*

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Table 3 in the application indicates the amount of growth that can be accommodated both town-wide and within the growth center over the next 20 years, as well as full build-out based on the regulations and constraints. With 534 acres of land available for development or redevelopment within the growth center, there is no question that it is large enough to accommodate a majority of the projected growth. It is also clear that with Bennington's regulatory review process, the Town is encouraging a majority of development to occur within the growth center in order to discourage scattered development outside along highways and in sensitive areas.

The size of the growth center encompasses excessive amount of land that could potentially result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development over the first 20-year period, especially in the industrial and planned commercial districts (PCD). The growth center statute establishes a minimum standard for size so that the designated areas can accommodate a majority of growth in a community over a 20 year planning period. The statute also stipulates that there will be no "*unnecessary extension of infrastructure to service low-density development or result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development at the conclusion of the 20-year period.*"

The Board finds that Bennington has expended substantial effort in protecting its historic downtown and should be entrusted to prevent competing development in the PCD and industrial districts. The bylaws and design guidance encourage dense, multi-story, mixed use in these outer areas. The Board concluded that the Town has been doing a good job in planning for the Town's growth within a defined center, appropriately distinguishing the types of development that should and will occur both inside and outside of the boundaries.

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The Town has demonstrated through their municipal plan, land use bylaws, and other implementation tools, that whatever development takes place within the Growth Center will be of higher density than in surrounding areas. It was also understood that the entire area had municipal sewer and water supply. A majority of the Board members agreed with the Town that the industrial and PCD areas are already developed and that any new development or redevelopment would be infill in character. New development will increase the density within existing developments, and the proposed boundary is a logical proposal given the current situation. This may not necessarily be the case with other applications that show a growth center boundary larger than what is needed for a 20-year period of growth.

This Finding remains accurate. The Town's regulatory and policy framework implementing the Growth Center remains in place. The only changes to the Town's Land Use Regulations involved the adoption in 2009 of a Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone restricting development along the Roaring Branch and the adoption in 2012 of revised Floodplain regulations to satisfy FEMA requirements. Policy documents recently adopted by the Town reinforce the Growth Center designation. These policy documents include an updated Bennington Town Plan (2010), a Park and Open Space Plan (2009), Economic Development Plan (2013) and Municipal Energy Plan (2012). These documents are available online at <http://www.benningtonplanningandpermits.com/planning-policy-documents/>.

### Appropriateness of Growth Center

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3. *The proposed growth center will support and reinforce any existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located in the municipality or adjacent municipality by accommodating concentrated residential neighborhoods and a mix and scale of commercial, civic, and industrial uses consistent with the anticipated demand for those uses within the municipality and region (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(G)(i)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to develop compact mixed-use centers at a scale appropriate for the community and the region (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(B)).*

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The downtown serves as the core to the growth center, and most of the areas surrounding the downtown are well integrated at an appropriate scale. While there was some concern about the large scale of the industrial and planned commercial areas and the more scattered nature of the existing development in these areas, it was noted that new development within these two areas will be infill in nature, resulting in a more compact pattern of development. These areas are also planned to become more pedestrian oriented and will gradually be of a scale more in character with surrounding areas.

Some concern was expressed about potential impacts on the downtown businesses by the

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Planned Commercial District (PCD), located on Northside Drive and that development in the PCD may limit the downtown from realizing its potential build-out. Town officials stated that they are working hard to encourage continued commercial development in the downtown. The downtown has an active downtown organization, Better Bennington Corporation (BBC), which may be able to better address market share issues between the two areas. Town officials perceive these two areas as having different kinds of commercial activity that are not in competition with each other. They described an economic impact analysis that had been conducted by the group opposing expansion of the WalMart. The applicant stated this report concluded that the economic impact to the downtown would not be significant. In the end the Board agreed with the Town that including the PCD in the Growth Center in itself did not appear to unduly impact the downtown.

This Finding remains accurate. The proposed expansion of the WalMart in Bennington that is referenced in this Finding has not, yet, been constructed. A court settlement was recently reached between the WalMart developer and a local citizens group opposed to the WalMart expansion. As part of the settlement, the WalMart developer will make a cash payment that will be used to offset possible negative impacts to the downtown.

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## Development Pattern

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4. *The proposed growth center promotes densities of land development that are significantly greater than existing and allowable densities in parts of the municipality that are outside a designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center, or, in the case of municipalities characterized predominately by areas of existing dense urban settlement, it encourages infill development and redevelopment of historically developed land (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(iv)).*

*The proposed growth center results in compact concentrated areas of land development that are served by existing or planned infrastructure and are separated by rural countryside or working landscape (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vi)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to maintain the historic development pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(A)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by scattered development located outside of compact urban and village centers that is excessively land consumptive (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(l)(i)).*

*The approved plan and the implementing bylaws further the goal of retaining a more rural character in the areas surrounding the growth center, to the extent that a more rural*

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*character exists (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)(iv)).*

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Densities within the growth center are higher than the surrounding areas. SEE MAP 3 IN THE APPLICATION. The downtown provides the highest density. The mixed use and residential districts within the growth center surrounding the downtown generally have ¼ acre lots, with residential densities allowing up to 10 units per acre or more, depending on the district. The planned commercial area allows for residential densities of up to 20 units per acre, as well as for relatively dense commercial development. In comparison, the residential density of the districts outside the growth center varies from 1 acre to 25 acres per lot. SEE TABLE 4 ON PAGE 44 IN APPLICATION TO SEE ZONING OUTSIDE THE GROWTH CENTER.

While the bylaws have maximum density requirements rather than minimum, the town has several mechanisms to encourage higher densities, including density bonuses, as well as a minimum two-story requirement within the downtown. The developers generally take advantage of the maximum densities since it is more efficient (and thus less costly) for them to develop. The Town states that the Development Review Board does not discourage higher densities in spite of occasional public pressure. They do, however, discourage higher densities in the rural areas. The rural residential areas allow 1-acre zoning, but there are additional requirements for conservation of resources, as well as application of the PRD standards, allowing for a distinction in how districts are zoned within the growth center versus outside.

**This Finding remains accurate.**

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## **Diversity of Development**

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5. *The proposed growth center incorporates a mix of uses that typically include or have the potential to include the following: retail, office, services, and other commercial, civic, recreational, industrial, and residential uses, including affordable housing and new residential neighborhoods, within a densely developed, compact area (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(i)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to support a diversity of viable businesses in downtowns and villages (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(G)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to provide for housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each community (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(H)).*

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The application demonstrates that there is and will continue to will be a variety of uses located within the growth center, including residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and parks and other open space. SEE MAP 5 IN THE APPLICATION. While some

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of the uses are segregated within a district (such as the industrial areas, some of the commercial areas, and the medical institutional area), there is pedestrian access to office and commercial uses from all residential areas. And most neighborhoods contain small grocery and food and beverage stores. Redevelopment of the planned commercial area (PCD) could encourage more mixed uses and not be strictly commercial. Bennington's downtown is currently vibrant with a diversity of businesses and residential units, and the Town is committed to maintaining that diversity.

Bennington has the tools in place that will encourage the provision of more housing choices, including housing that is more affordable for residents and the workforce. Housing choices range from conventional single-family houses and duplexes, to condominiums in upper floors of the downtown, as well as a multitude of rental housing. The Town notes that they have worked closely with the area affordable housing developer in providing lower cost housing and are continuing to do so. They also provide a density bonus to developers who include affordable housing in their proposals.

This Finding remains accurate. The regulatory and policy framework encouraging a diversity of housing remains in place.

The local affordable housing organization, Shires Housing (formerly RAHC), recently completed, with financial support from the Town, 14 new housing units located on North Branch Street within the Growth Center. The project consisted of 7 very attractive duplexes on in infill parcel in an established residential neighborhood. The project has been very well received.

The Town has also begun work on a Housing Study (funded by a MPG) that will document existing needs and develop suggested actions to create housing to address existing needs and to address the Town's desire to retain and attract professionals to Bennington.

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## Capital Budget and Program

6. *The applicant has adopted a capital budget and program in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4426 and the existing and planned infrastructure is adequate to implement the growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(E)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to balance growth with the availability of economic and efficient public utilities and services (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(F)).*

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The application includes a Capital Budget and Program that lists the town's proposed improvements to existing infrastructure, much of which will support the growth center, including a local road network, water and sewer improvements, and other facilities. There are no planned expansions, and the Board finds that there will be sufficient

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capacity within the existing systems to accommodate proposed growth (especially with improvements and upgrades).

Much of the proposed improvements will be paid for by both tax-based funds (General and Highway Funds) and user-fee based funds (Water and Sewer Funds). In addition, the town uses grant funds to pay for some improvements, such as for pathway development or transportation-related improvements.

SEE THE CAPITAL BUDGET AND PROGRAM, APPENDIX C, AND THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE PLANNING COORDINATION GROUP (PCG) THAT DETAILS THE AMOUNT OF NEEDED SEWER CAPACITY OVER 20 YEARS COMPARED TO EXISTING CAPACITY.

The Capital Budget and Program within the application was not adopted at the time of this decision and the Board's approval of this Growth Center is conditional upon adoption by the Town of the document, as presented in the Application, with no substantial changes.

The Town adopted a Capital Budget and Program before final approval of the Growth Center Designation was issued to the Town. Please see the attached approval letter from the Downtown Board staff acknowledging the Town's adoption of the required Capital Budget and Program. Therefore, the Town's Growth Center designation was issued without conditions.

The Town continues to implement the Capital Budget and Program and it is updated by Town staff and approved by the Select Board every year as part of the annual budget process.

The Town continues to implement a policy of maintenance of existing roads (no expansion) and the maintenance and expansion of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The Town continues to have sufficient water and sewer capacity to serve expected growth.

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## Public Spaces

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7. *The proposed growth center incorporates existing or planned public spaces that promote social interaction, such as public parks, civic buildings (e.g., post office, municipal offices), community gardens, and other formal and informal places to gather (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(ii)).*
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Nearly all of the town's civic buildings are located within the growth center, with the exception of the middle school (which is located immediately adjacent to the growth center) and those facilities that are in the Village of North Bennington. The growth center also includes a number of parks and recreational facilities. SEE MAP 15 IN THE APPLICATION.

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This Finding remains accurate. Improvements to the Town's public parks continue to be implemented.

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## Spatial Pattern

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8. *The proposed growth center is organized around one or more central places or focal points, such as prominent buildings of civic, cultural, or spiritual significance or a village green, common, or square (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(iii)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(v)).*

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The central focal point for the growth center is appropriately the designated downtown. Areas surrounding the downtown have subsets of focal points, such as schools, recreational facilities, the Veteran's Home and the hospital.

This Finding remains accurate.

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## Transportation and Other Infrastructure

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9. *The proposed growth center is supported by existing or planned investments in infrastructure and encompasses a circulation system that is conducive to pedestrian and other non-vehicular traffic and that incorporates, accommodates and supports the use of public transit systems (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(v)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to enable choice in modes of transportation (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(C)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by development that limits transportation options, especially for pedestrians (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(ii)).*

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The Town has a transit system that already serves much of the area within the growth center. A fixed route bus system provides service to major destinations, including the downtown, shopping centers, state offices, hospital, schools, a park, and a park & ride. There is also door-to-door on-call transit for those without auto access. The Town and

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Green Mountain Community Network continually seek opportunities to improve transit routes.

In terms of pedestrian facilities, the growth center is currently serviced by about 40 miles of sidewalks, as well as some other pathways (including the River Walkway). The Town has plans for extending sidewalks, in relation to transportation improvement projects, and developing more pathways, including a rail-trail that runs into the downtown from the west. Bicycling is also recognized as an important transportation option, and all roadway improvement projects are evaluated for bicyclist safety.

No new roadways are planned for the growth center, except for local/private roads that will serve new development at the edges. A number of roadway improvement projects have been identified (SEE TABLE 6 IN THE APPLICATION), but the existing system can accommodate projected traffic increase from growth over the next 20 years. The Town evaluates traffic impacts of major developments and requires mitigation.

The Board discussed potential impacts of the Bennington Bypass on the designated downtown and concluded that any potential impacts are irrelevant to designation of the Town's growth center.

This Finding remains accurate.

The Bennington Economic Development Partners (a coalition of several local organizations, including the Town, BBC, BCRC and the Chamber) is currently working with the local colleges and Green Mountain Community Network to provide expanded bus service during the evenings.

Several new bike/ped initiatives are underway, including a pathway from downtown Bennington to North Bennington spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce and supported by the Town. The projects are outlined in the attached excerpts from BCRC's Active Transportation Guide. In addition, the Town has expanded its sidewalk network and will be developing a comprehensive Sidewalk Plan.

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## Natural and Historic Resources

10. *The applicant has identified important natural resources and historic resources within the proposed growth center, anticipated impacts on those resources and has proposed mitigation (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(B)).*

*The approved plan and the implementing bylaws provide reasonable protection for important natural resources and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)(iv)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to protect the state's important environmental,*

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*natural and historic features, including natural areas, water quality, scenic resources, and historic sites and districts (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(D)).*

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The application identifies important natural resources, both within and outside the growth center (SEE MAP 20 IN THE APPLICATION). The Town has tools in place to help protect these resources, including scenic resource protection standards, and PUDs. No permanent development is allowed in the expansive Forest districts. SEE CHAPTER 3 OF THE TOWN PLAN FOR SPECIFIC POLICIES THAT THE TOWN EMPLOYS FOR RURAL DISTRICTS. The Town also cooperates with area non-profits to protect resources on key parcels, and is in the process of developing an open space plan. Bennington is fortunate to have large natural areas permanently protected as federal or state lands.

The Town has mechanisms in place to identify and help protect historic resources, including an inventory of historic sites and structures, historic preservation guidelines for building owners and development review, and historic review as part of the development review process. The Historic Preservation Commission is required to review all development projects within the downtown, but also is given the opportunity to review all other projects that go through the Development Review Board (DRB). In terms of identification and protection of archaeological resources, there is a section in the subdivision regulations that allows the DRB to address these resources as they review each proposed project. There is an archaeology specialist on the Historic Preservation Commission.

*This Finding remains accurate. The Town adopted a Park and Open Space Plan in 2009. The Town also adopted Fluvial Erosion Hazard regulations in 2009 that restrict development in areas adjacent to the Roaring Branch. The Town is currently working with the Vermont Land Trust and a local group, Friends of the Morgan Street Wetlands, to conserve a 124 acre parcel of land adjacent to the Growth center and proximate to downtown. The parcel, a mix of uplands, wetlands and watercourses represents a unique recreational and natural resource for recreationalists, naturalists, anglers, floaters, hikers, school children, bicyclists, and other residents of and visitors to the community.*

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## **Agriculture**

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11. *The most recently adopted guidelines of the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets have been used to identify areas proposed for agriculture and the proposed growth center has been designed to avoid the conversion of primary agricultural soils, wherever possible (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(C)).*

*The proposed growth center serves to strengthen agricultural and forest industries and is*

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*planned to minimize conflicts of development with these industries (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(E)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by the fragmentation of farm and forest land (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(iii)).*

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While Bennington's downtown and surrounding neighborhoods are developed on some of the best agricultural soils, these areas have been out of active agricultural use for a long time. Thus the primary agricultural soils within the growth center have been previously impacted and are not used for agricultural purposes. Most of the remaining areas within the growth center targeted for development do not contain primary agricultural soils.

The Town does have important agricultural soils in areas outside the growth center, including to the west and south of the growth center, and has policies and land use regulations that support the protection of these lands. SEE MAP 23 IN APPLICATION FOR IDENTIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL SOILS, APPENDIX D IN THE TOWN PLAN FOR SPECIFIC POLICY LANGUAGE SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF RURAL OPEN LAND AND AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST SOILS, INCLUDING PROGRAMS AND FUNDING SOURCES TO ASSIST LANDOWNERS. The land use regulations include provisions that restrict use, density, and location of new density in the rural areas, as well as applying PUD standards, limiting the possibility of fragmenting these lands. Even single-family development in the Rural Conservation District must be sited in a manner that avoids loss of farmland.

*This Finding remains accurate.*

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## **Planning Process**

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12. *The applicant has a regionally confirmed planning process and an approved municipal plan. The approved plan contains provisions that are appropriate to implement the designated growth center proposal. The applicant has adopted bylaws in conformance with the municipal plan that implement the provisions in the plan that pertain to the designated growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to reinforce the purposes of 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151. The proposed growth center is planned in accordance with the planning and development goals under 24 V.S.A. § 4302 (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vii) and (viii)).*

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The Bennington Regional Planning Commission approved Bennington's municipal plan and planning process on May 18, 2006. The Plan contains provisions that support the

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growth center, and the land use regulations were last amended in June, 2006, to conform to the Plan's land use policies and further implement the growth center. The town planning process and the growth center support the goals of 10 VSA Chapter 151 and the goals under 24 VSA § 4302.

The Town's regulatory and policy framework implementing the Growth Center remains in place. The only changes to the Town's Land Use Regulations involved the adoption in 2009 of a Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone restricting development along the Roaring Branch and the adoption in 2012 of revised Floodplain regulations to satisfy FEMA requirements. Policy documents recently adopted by the Town reinforce the Growth Center designation. These policy documents include an updated Bennington Town Plan (2010) (approved by BCRC soon after), a Park and Open Space Plan (2009), an Economic Development Plan (2013) and a Municipal Energy Plan (2012). These documents are available online at <http://www.benningtonplanningandpermits.com/planning-policy-documents/>

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### **Expanded Board Approval**

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The Board concludes that Bennington has successfully demonstrated that its growth center meets the statutory criteria for growth center designation as discussed herein, except for the adoption of the proposed Capital Budget and Program. The applicant has demonstrated that it has concentrated compact development within the growth center which will easily accommodate a majority of the Town's growth over the next 20 years. Bennington has also adequately demonstrated that they have adequate tools in place to protect important resource lands outside of the growth center. The Board hereby approves Bennington's application on a vote of 7-1, based on these findings and conclusions. Designation is conditioned on the Town of Bennington adopting the Capital Budget and Program that was included in the application, with no substantial changes. Designation will not become effective until said Capital Budget and Program is adopted and submitted to the Board. If substantial changes have been made to the adopted Capital Budget and Program from the one submitted in the Town's Growth Center Application, the Board will need to review and approve it before designation can become final.

The Town adopted a Capital Budget and Program before final approval of the Growth Center Designation was issued to the Town. Please see the attached approval letter from the Downtown Board staff acknowledging the Town's adoption of the required Capital Budget and Program. Therefore, the Town's Growth Center designation was issued without conditions.

---

Kevin Dorn, Chair  
Expanded Downtown Board

---

Date

State of Vermont  
Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development  
One National Life Drive  
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  
www.development.vermont.gov

Agency of Commerce and  
Community Development

July 2, 2012

Daniel Monks, Planning Director  
Town of Bennington  
PO Box 469  
Bennington, VT 05201

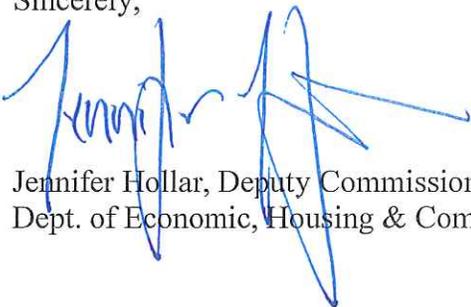
Dear Mr. Monks,

I am pleased to provide this formal notification that, at its meeting on May 21, 2012, the Downtown Development Board approved an extension to Bennington's designated downtown boundary to include the Catamount School property that will be redeveloped.

Please send us a copy of your revised board approved map as we will be posting it on our website.

We applaud Bennington for the commitment they are making toward the downtown, and look forward to assisting you in this effort.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Hollar, Deputy Commissioner  
Dept. of Economic, Housing & Community Development

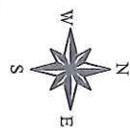
cc: John Shannahan, Better Bennington Corp.



# Town of Bennington, Vermont Downtown Improvement District

 Downtown Improvement District (DID)

The Downtown Improvement District was amended on May 21, 2012. This map was produced by BCRC on May 22, 2012.



# Active Transportation Project Guide

UPDATED FEBRUARY 2013



*Children crossing the US7/Kocher Drive intersection in Bennington*

# Active Transportation Project Guide

WINTER 2013

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# Active Transportation Project Guide

WINTER 2013

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## **Introduction:**

This project guide is a catalog of active transportation projects and needs in the Bennington County Region. It is updated periodically to reflect stakeholder feedback, project progression and new project ideas.



*Walking in Old Bennington*

# Bennington: Applegate to Willow Brook Path

## PATH PROJECT

### What is the project?

The project is a new 480-foot gravel path and boardwalk that will span a wetland and stream to connect two affordable housing complexes, Applegate Housing (104 units) and Willow Brook Apartments (75 units).

### Why is this project needed?

Applegate residents have no safe pedestrian access to the outside world. The new path will connect them to Willow Brook Apartments. From there they can safely walk to schools, jobs and grocery stores.



# Bennington: Applegate to Willow Brook Path

## PATH PROJECT



*Orchard Road's steep embankments make sidewalk construction unfeasible.*



*Applegate residents walking on Orchard Road. Guardrail and embankments force pedestrians to walk in the travel lane.*

Children from Applegate are bussed to the Molly Stark School less than half a mile away, because Orchard Road, which connects Applegate to the school, is unsafe to walk on. Children from Applegate have a high rate of absenteeism. When they miss the bus they often miss school.

Orchard Road lacks sidewalks. Guardrails and steep embankments force pedestrians close to the vehicle travel lane. The steep embankments make sidewalk construction prohibitively expensive. The only feasible way to create a safe walking route from Applegate to the Molly Stark School is to build a path through the wetland to Willow Brook.

### **What will this project accomplish?**

*Creates a safe route to school*

- Gives the 107 children from Applegate mobility, independence and a healthy alternative way to get to school and to the larger community.

- Reduces absenteeism at the Molly Stark Elementary School because children who miss the bus will have a safe walking route.
- Makes it easier for children to walk or bike to Bennington's middle school, high school and to the Grace Christian School.

### *Improves public health*

- Encourages physical activity to help reduce childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes. Eight percent of Bennington County residents have type 2 diabetes.
- According to a recent study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, every \$1 spent on building walking paths and biking trails in Vermont could save approximately \$3 in obesity-related medical expenses.

# Bennington: Applegate to Willow Brook Path

## PATH PROJECT

---



*Many residents already walk between the two housing complexes. The new pathway will follow a “path of desire.” This bridge made from a shopping cart and a board shows residents’ desire to walk between the two complexes.*

### *Follows a “path of desire”*

- Children hop the fence and walk between the two developments now—there is a well-worn “path of desire” and an improvised bridge made from boards and abandoned shopping carts. The existing path is not usable as a route to school because it crosses private property, disturbs a wetland, crosses a stream, and has steep slopes on either end. The new path will be more level, a boardwalk will span the wetland and stream, and a lot line adjustment will make it legal.
- Applegate residents can use the path to safely walk to jobs, grocery stores and other destinations. Twenty-nine Applegate households and twenty-five Willow Brook households do not own a vehicle.



*The boardwalk sections of the path will be similar to the Paran Path in North Bennington. The Applegate to Willowbrook path will be wider and will have railings.*

# Bennington: Applegate to Willow Brook Path

## PATH PROJECT



*The new path will have scenic views of Mount Anthony and the Bennington Monument.*

### *Creates a valuable public amenity*

- The path will give access to a beautiful natural area with a stream and views of the Bennington Monument and Mt. Anthony. It will have a boardwalk, landings, benches and lighting.
- Willow Brook and Applegate residents, especially the 245 children under the age of 18 who live in the two complexes, will have a beautiful path to use in their backyard.

### *Fosters connections between Applegate and Willow Brook*

- The path will make it easier for residents to get services and attend events at both developments.

### *Serves an economically disadvantaged population*

- Residents of Applegate Housing have an average household income of just \$15,750. The state median household income is \$52,776 (American Community Survey 2011).
- Residents of Willow Brook Apartments have an average household income of just \$19,351.



*The 245 children who live in Applegate and Willow Brook will benefit from the new path.*

### **Project Status**

The Bennington County Regional Commission has produced a Feasibility Study that includes a preliminary design by MSK Engineering. The boards of Applegate Housing and the Bennington Housing Authority (owners of Willowbrook) have tentatively approved the project pending resolution of a maintenance agreement. The project is not yet funded.

### **Cost Estimate**

\$88,000 (MSK Engineering)

# Bennington-North Bennington: Ninja Trail

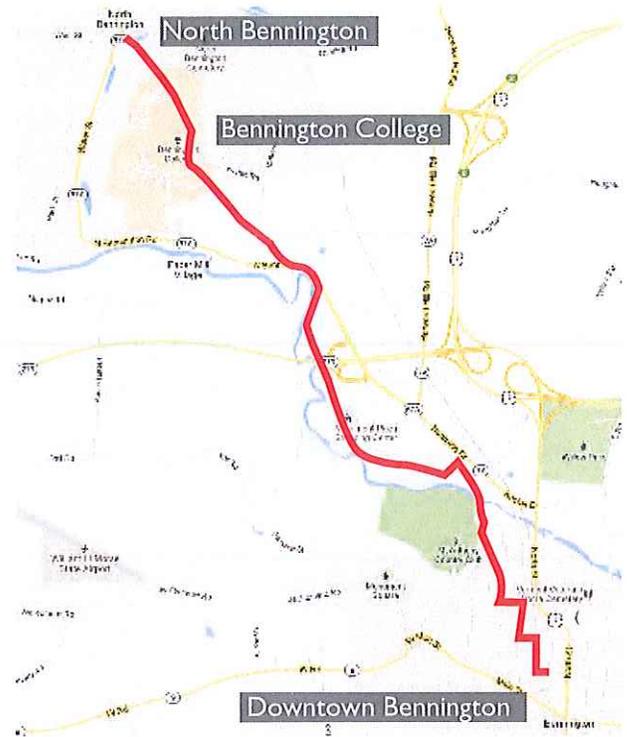
## MULTI-USE PATH PROJECT

### What is the Project?

The Ninja Trail is a multi-use path that will connect Bennington and North Bennington. It is being planned and built by volunteers with the assistance of the Bennington Chamber of Commerce and the Bennington County Regional Commission.

### Why is the Project Needed?

There is no safe or inviting walking or bicycling route between Bennington and North Bennington. The sole connecting road, Northside Drive/VT 67A is a congested commercial corridor with many turning vehicles and parking lot entrances, many of which are excessively wide. The mile-long western end of the road (VT 67A) is a multi-lane highway with typical traffic speeds between 40 and 50 mph and only two short sections of disconnected sidewalk.



Volunteers built the first section of the Ninja Trail last fall.



# Bennington-North Bennington: Ninja Trail

## MULTI-USE PATH PROJECT

---



*The Ninja Trail will offer an alternative to the Northside Drive/VT67A corridor.*



*Volunteers clearing the Ninja Trail.*

### **What will the project accomplish?**

The Ninja Trail will:

- Create a safe and appealing walking, bicycling, running and cross-country skiing route between Bennington and North Bennington
- Improve mobility for children in an area that lacks a local street network
- Encourage active transportation in a county with an eight percent rate of type 2 diabetes
- Provide public access to the beautiful natural environment along the Walloomsac River
- Create a recreational amenity in an area that lacks recreational amenities
- Give Bennington College students a safe bicycle access to downtown Bennington and stores on Northside Drive

*A cleared section of trail awaiting gravel.*



# Bennington-North Bennington: Ninja Trail

MULTI-USE PATH PROJECT

---



*The trail will cross under this VT267 overpass.*

## **Project Status:**

Last fall, the volunteers cleared and graded the southeastern section of the path between Hicks Avenue and Morse Road. A topping of gravel, improved drainage and other improvements are planned for the spring.

The Ninja group is now asking Morse Road landowners for permission to construct the path along the rear property boundaries. The Bennington County Regional Commission is working with VTrans to allow the path to cross under a VT 267 overpass and across State Right-of-Way that buffers the highway. The Ninja group will apply for an I III Permit this spring.

## **Estimated Cost**

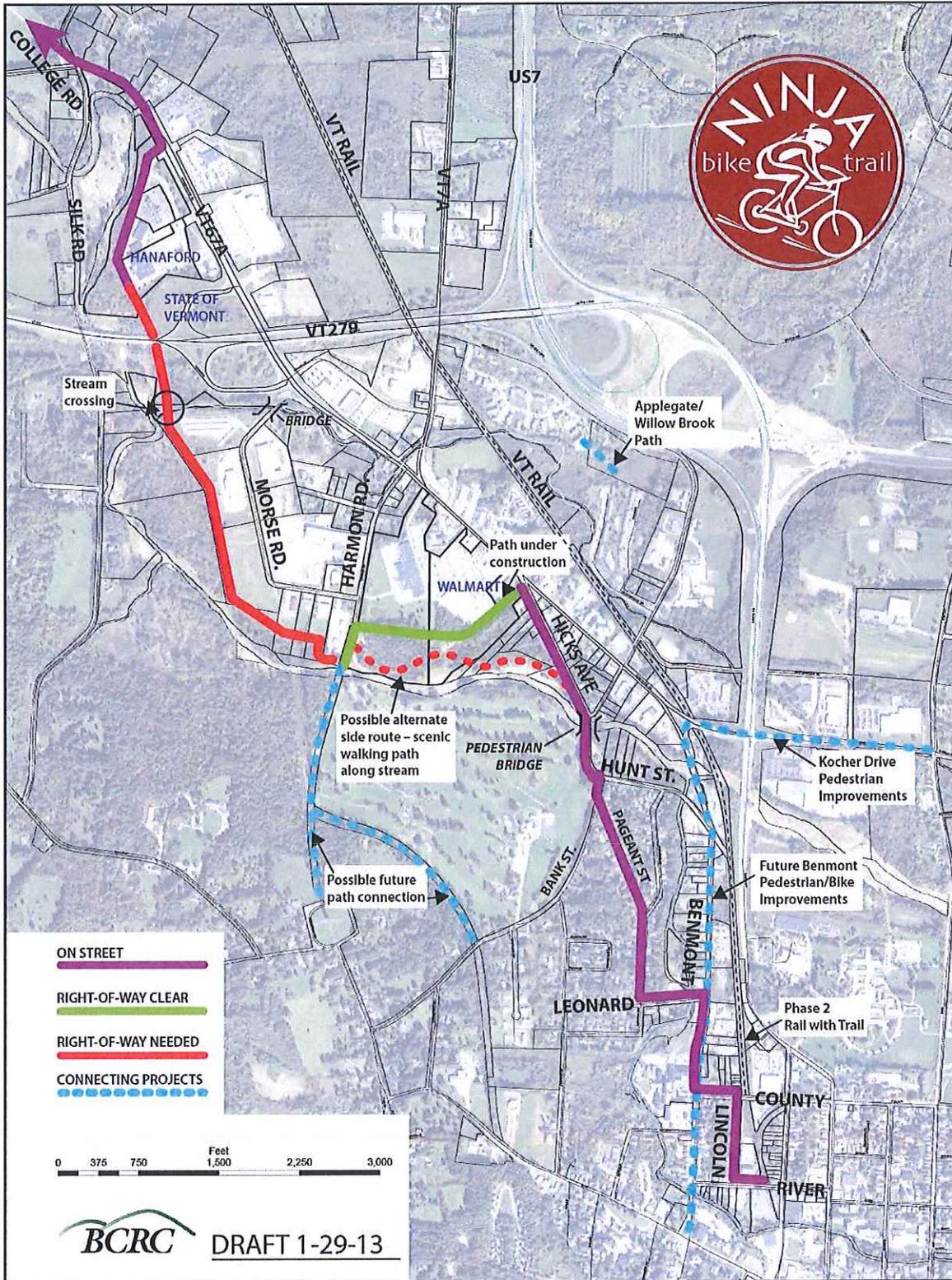
So far, all labor and materials have been donated.

*The Trail will provide access to this Walloomsac River “beach.”*



# Bennington-North Bennington: Ninja Trail

MULTI-USE PATH PROJECT



# Bennington Pathway STP BIKE (26)S

## RAIL TRAIL PROJECT

---

### **What is the Project?**

The project is to convert an unused rail spur into a recreational path. The path will extend a short, existing pathway in downtown Bennington to the Molly Stark School 1.5 miles to the north.

The recreational path is envisioned as the first phase of a longer path that will link downtown Bennington, the Northside Drive commercial corridor, and North Bennington.

*The pathway will transform derelict infrastructure into a valuable amenity.*



# Bennington Pathway STP BIKE (26)S

## RAIL TRAIL PROJECT

---



*The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail in nearby Berkshire County often gets more than 1,500 users per day on summer weekends.*

*The Bennington rail spur has not been used in decades.*

### **What will the project accomplish?**

The project will:

- Provide a direct and safe bicycle and pedestrian route along a busy and important corridor
- Transform derelict infrastructure into a valuable amenity
- Improve transportation options for children
- Promote physical activity

### **Project Status:**

- The project was stalled because Vermont Railway, as a condition of a rail-to-trail conversion, insists that the Town pay for a run-around track to a vacant industrial site. The initial cost estimate for the runaround track was approximately \$1,000,000. Recently, the Town, working with its consultant, has identified a runaround



# Bennington Pathway STP BIKE (26)S

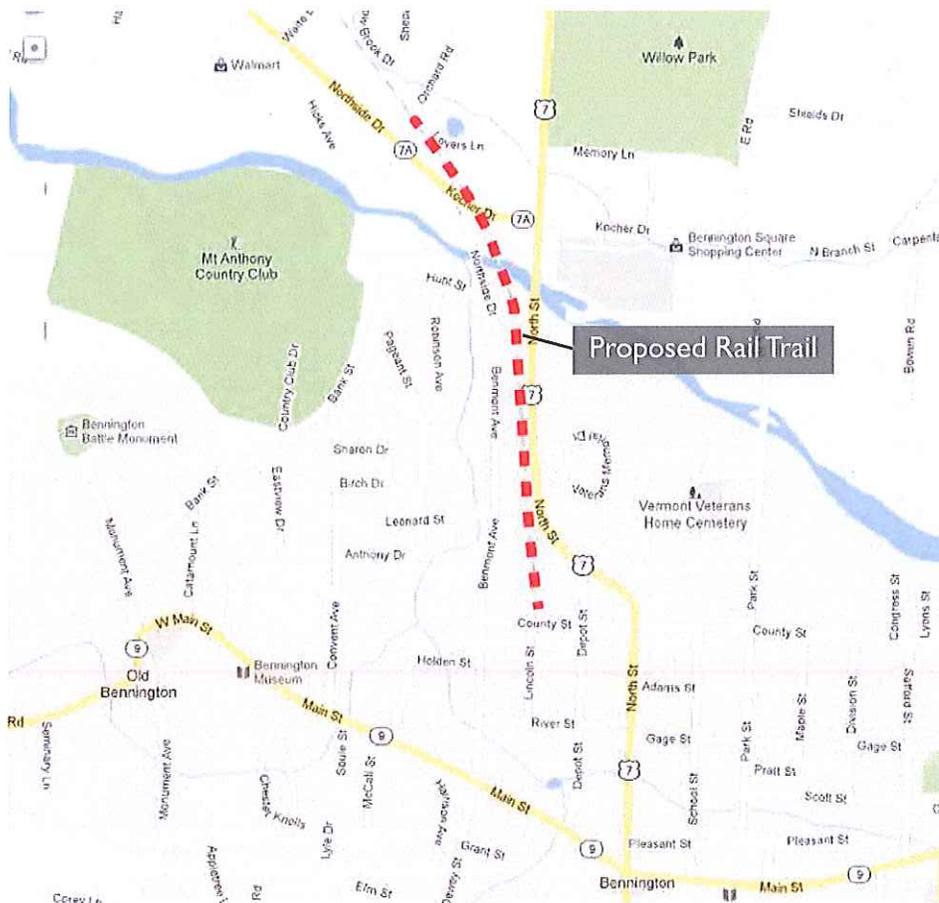
## RAIL TRAIL PROJECT

track design that may reduce the cost to \$300,000. Discussions with Vermont Railway are ongoing. The State legislature has granted the Town authority to ask the Surface Transportation Board for a rail-to-trail conversion.

- A group of local residents has recently organized to advocate for the Bennington Pathway project.
- The Iron Horse Preservation Society has agreed to remove the rails and create a cinder path at no cost.

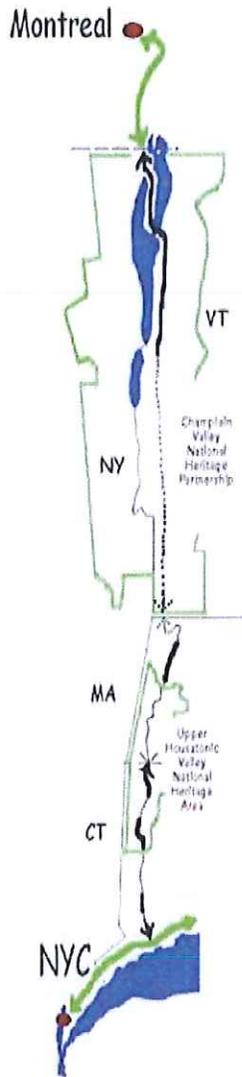
### Estimated Cost

- Rail removal and path construction: no cost (cinder path) to \$200,000 (paved path)
- Traffic and pedestrian signals at VT 7A: \$20,000 to \$30,000
- Runaround track: \$300,000
- Bridge Improvements: \$40,000 to \$60,000
- Total cost: \$400,000 to \$650,000



# Western New England Greenway

## GREENWAY PROJECT



The Western New England Greenway will go from New York City to Montreal via Bennington County.

### What is the project?

The Western New England Greenway is an initiative to create a traffic-free path from New York City to Montreal. Planners envision that it will utilize the existing East Coast Greenway in Connecticut, pass through Berkshire County in Massachusetts and up the west side of Vermont, passing through Bennington County.

### What will the project accomplish?

The Greenway will be a valuable tourism and marketing tool and an amenity for residents.

### Project status

There is a multi-regional initiative to create the Greenway, although there is no formal group yet. The Upper Housatonic Valley Heritage Area organized a conference in November 2012, in Bennington.

The envisioned first phase is to establish a complete route on quiet, low-speed roads with the goal of transitioning to fully separated (Class I) facilities where feasible. There are several complete segments in Connecticut, Berkshire County, Northern Vermont and Quebec.

BCRC will coordinate with the regional commissions in Berkshire and Rutland counties to identify possible routes.

### Estimated cost

Unknown



The 2500-mile East Coast Greenway is the model for the Western New England Greenway.

# Bennington Bicycle Lane Network

## BICYCLE PROJECT



*A cyclist on Kocher Drive in Bennington. Many of Bennington's most important streets are not bicycle-friendly.*



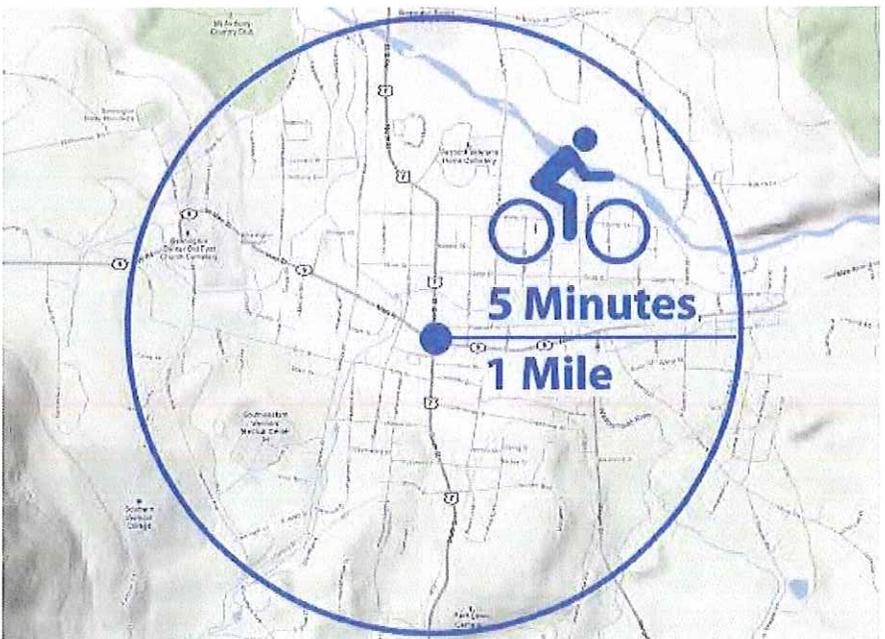
*Elm Street in Bennington is a suitable local street for cycling. There are not enough quiet local streets to form a good cycling network.*

*Many destinations are within easy cycling distance in Bennington.*

### Why is this project needed?

Bennington has excellent potential for cycling. It is densely populated, relatively flat, and has low traffic volume, yet cycling accounts for only a tiny percentage of short trips. Many potential cyclists may be discouraged by lack of facilities. The town has no bike lanes and only one short recreational path, and the design of many important intersections and streets, such as Benmont Avenue and Northside Drive, are intimidating for beginner cyclists.

- Bennington has the population density to support a bike network. Nearly 14,000 people, more than one-third of region's population, live within a three-mile radius.
- A bike network will encourage physical activity. Lack of physical activity is linked to type 2 diabetes. 8% of Bennington County residents have type 2 diabetes.
- Bennington has a 15.5% poverty rate. A bike network will give residents an affordable transportation option.
- Many of Bennington's important destinations are a little too far for most people to comfortably walk, but are within easy cycling distance. For example, Walmart, Home Depot and the area's only two major grocery stores are two miles northwest of downtown.



# Bennington Bicycle Lane Network

## BICYCLE PROJECT

---



*This bike lane in Vancouver invites cycling.*



*New York City has installed a network of bicycle lanes and cycling has increased dramatically.*



*On-street bike lanes are cost effective and relatively easy to install. This green bike lane is made with paint and thermoplastic pavement markings on an existing Right of Way.*

### **What will this project accomplish?**

The network of on-street bicycle lanes in Bennington will make cycling more appealing and more people will use bicycles for short trips within Bennington.

- High quality on-street networks have led to dramatic increases in cycling in many places including Cambridge, Massachusetts and New York City.
- Studies show that cyclists prefer streets with bike lanes to streets without bicycle lanes.
- An increase in cycling is shown to improve cycling safety by creating “safety in numbers.”
- On-street bike lanes can be implemented quickly and at little cost, compared to fully separated Class I pathways.
- On-street bike-lanes will compliment planned separated pathways.
- Bicycle lanes calm traffic by visually narrowing the roadway, which improves safety for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers.
- Bicycle lanes are a valuable amenity that could help attract more young people and businesses to Bennington.

### **Estimated cost**

Unknown

### **Project Status**

RPC identified need

# Bicycle Parking

## BICYCLE PROJECT

---



*Unlocked bike in Bennington*



*Simple bicycle parking in Durham, North Carolina*



*Broken Bicycle rack outside of the Bennington Public Library*

### **Why the project is needed**

Bicycle parking is a low-cost way to encourage cycling, yet most important destinations in Bennington County do not have bicycle racks.

- Cyclists need a safe and secure place to lock their bikes when they reach their destination.
- Fear of theft is a deterrent to bike use. An estimated 1.5 million bicycles are stolen in the US each year. It is easy to steal an unlocked bike—it is a perfect get-away vehicle.
- Bike parking is needed to compliment planned bike lanes and bike paths.

### **What the project will accomplish?**

The project will install safe and secure bicycle racks at important destinations in the region. Possible locations include: schools, libraries, town offices, state offices, stores, cafes, large employers, shopping malls and athletic facilities.

- Will encourage cycling by providing a place to lock up and by sending a message that bicycles are an accepted form of transportation.



*Unlocked bikes outside Price Chopper in Bennington*

# Bennington County Bicycle Parking

## PEDESTRIAN PROJECT

---



*Much land in downtown Bennington is used for parking lots—an unproductive land-use*

- Will provide low-cost parking. Bike racks fit two bikes and cost \$150--\$300. A surface parking space for a car costs up to \$2,200.
- Will provide spatially efficient parking. 10-12 bikes can be parked in one car space. Much land in downtown Bennington is used for parking lots—an unproductive land-use.
- To be well used, the racks must be properly designed, sited and installed.

### **Project Status**

In 2012 The VTrans Bicycle Program gave Bennington and North Bennington bicycle racks for several key locations. More bike parking is needed.

*Bikes locked to stanchions outside the South Street Cafe in Bennington*



# Bennington: Downtown Signal Retiming

## PEDESTRIAN PROJECT



*It's often a long wait to cross the street at the main intersection in Bennington.*



*The majority of pedestrians give up waiting and cross during the "no walk" phase.*



*Crossing against the light.*



### Why is the project needed?

The intersection of US 7 and VT 9 in downtown Bennington is the busiest pedestrian crossing in the region. The downtown commercial district depends on pedestrian traffic, and it is crucial that poor signal timing not discourage pedestrian circulation. Unfortunately, the traffic signal progression makes crossing difficult. In fact, the majority of people waiting to cross give up and cross against the light.

- The signal timing forces pedestrians to wait a long time—up to 90 seconds to cross the street. 80 seconds is the generally accepted maximum.
- An informal study showed that 59% of pedestrians gave up waiting for a pedestrian signal and crossed against the light. (In a 45-minute period, 47 out of 80 pedestrians crossed against the light.)
- Pedestrians must “apply to cross” by pressing a walk button. Many out of town visitors wait for a significant amount of time before realizing they must push a button to cross.
- Often, by the time the pedestrian phase starts, the pedestrians have already crossed and vehicles have to wait for no reason.
- The red flashing pedestrian warning signal does not inform pedestrians how long they have to cross.
- The new leg of VT 279 will divert traffic from downtown and will provide an opportunity to retime the signals to encourage walking.

### What will the project accomplish?

- A simultaneous walk and green traffic signal will significantly reduce pedestrian waiting time and will improve traffic operations.
- A three-second Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) will give pedestrians a head start to reduce crashes.
- Countdown pedestrian signals will tell pedestrians how many seconds they have to cross the street.

# Bennington: Downtown Signal Retiming

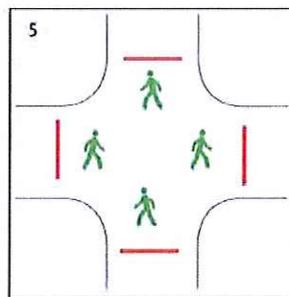
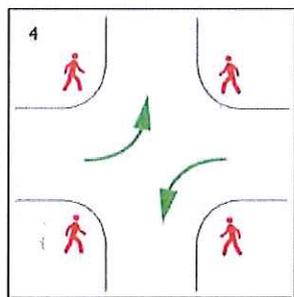
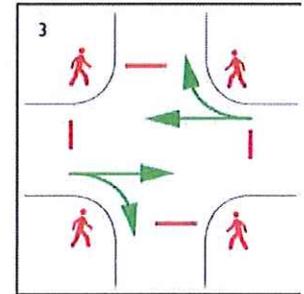
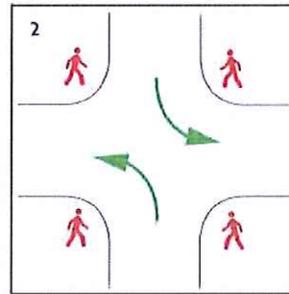
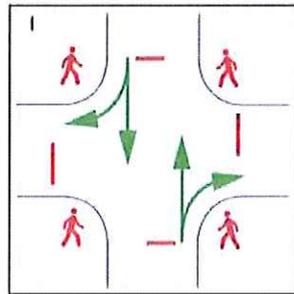
## PEDESTRIAN PROJECT

### Project Status

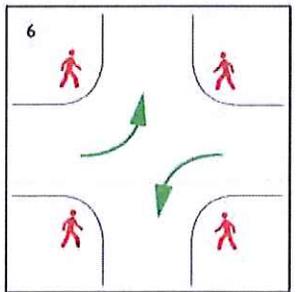
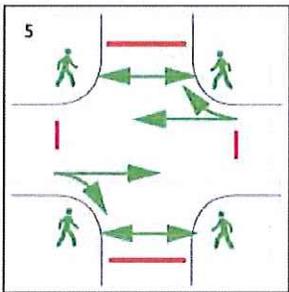
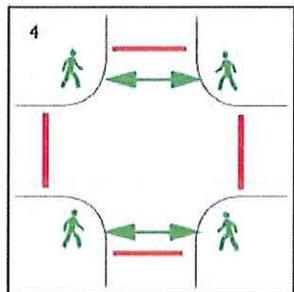
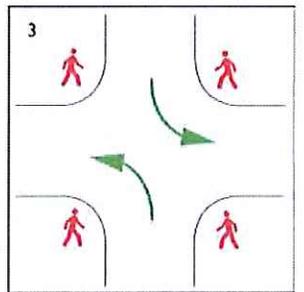
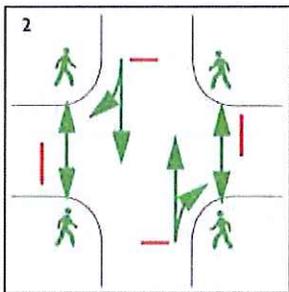
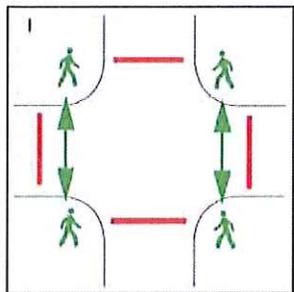
- RPC identified need
- The Town of Bennington supports the project.

### Project Cost

- Unknown



**Current Signal Progression:** Pedestrians must “apply to cross” by pushing a button and often have wait for up to four signal phases before crossing.



**Proposed Signal Progression:** Pedestrians and vehicles get a concurrent green signal. Pedestrians get a 3-second head start (leading pedestrian interval) to prevent being hit by right-turning vehicles.

# Bennington Streetscape Improvement STP SDWK(12)

Bennington County Regional Commission



Children crossing US 7 at Kocher Drive

There is no safe way to cross US 7 for 2.3 miles

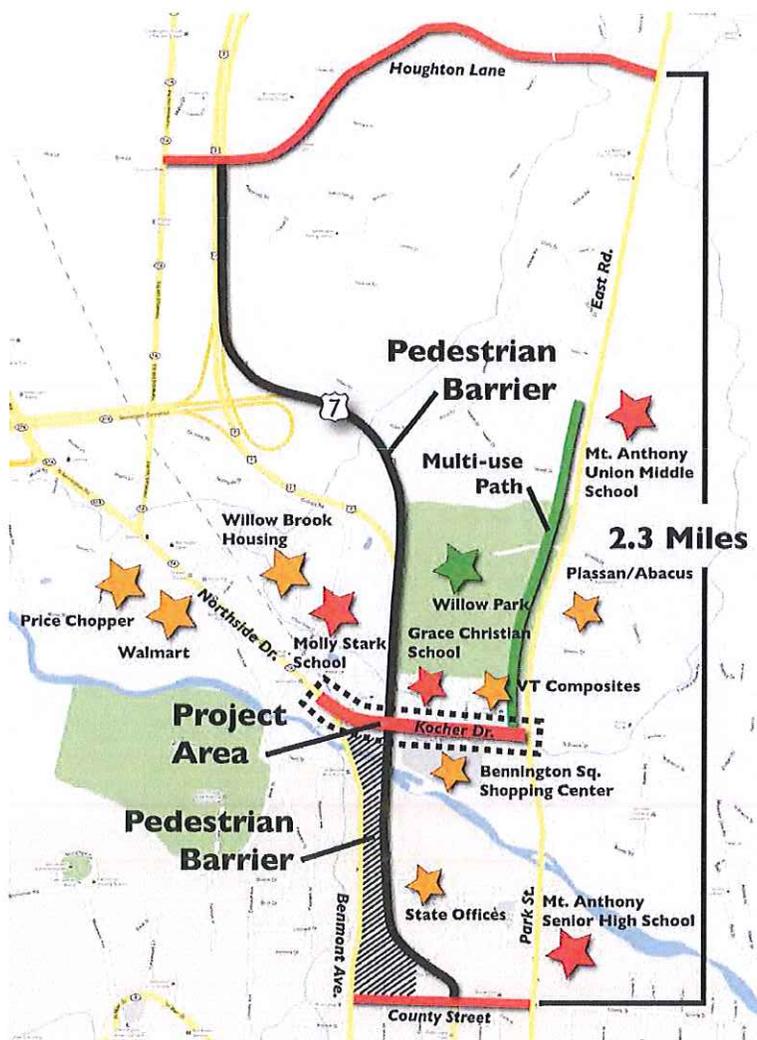
## Why is this project needed?

The project area has high traffic volume but no facilities for pedestrians or cyclists who must tolerate unsafe conditions to use the roadway. Kocher Drive/Northside Drive is the only east-west passage for 2.3 miles between Houghton Lane and County Street and is a key link in the local transportation network.

The route is a developed commercial “strip” with large retail stores, offices, and industrial parks. Route US 7 is a six-lane wide limited-access highway immediately north of the Kocher Drive/US 7 intersection, which has the highest traffic volume in the region. These roadways and intersections are a deterrent, discouraging pedestrian travel between the region’s most populous residential neighborhood to the south and the commercial uses to the north and west.

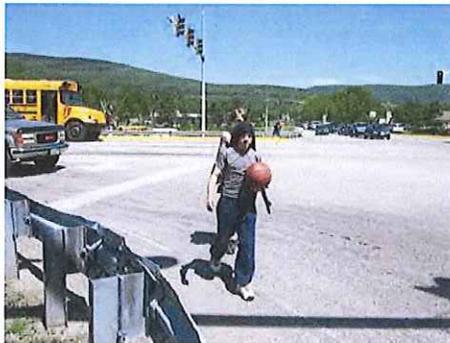
Mount Anthony Union Middle School, Mount Anthony Union High School, Grace Christian School and Molly Stark Elementary School are all nearby, and many children walk along the edge of the roadway and cross the Kocher Drive/US 7 intersection. There is a wide multi-use path used by many students which extends to the eastern edge of the project area, yet does not connect west through the project area to the neighborhoods to the west. It is likely that many other children choose not to walk to school because of the lack of safe and appealing pedestrian facilities. There is growing evidence that infrastructure that promotes driving over “active transportation” have contributed to the public health epidemics of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Many additional concerns and deficiencies with the project area’s intersections and roadways support the purpose including:



# Bennington Streetscape Improvement

Bennington County Regional Commission



- Despite the numerous pedestrians and cyclists who use the roadway, there are no sidewalks (except on Northside Drive west of Benmont Avenue) crosswalks, pedestrian signals, bike lanes, and only limited paved roadway shoulders.

- The lack of pedestrian facilities encourages driving even for short trips and limits transportation options.

- The project area is a High Crash Location (HCL).

- The bridge on Kocher Drive is too narrow to safely accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.

- Roadway hardware (guardrail, signal mast poles and drainage structures) adjacent to the roadway push pedestrians close to motor vehicle traffic.

- Steep slopes at the roadway's edge limit space for pedestrians.

- The lack of street trees or landscaping makes walking less appealing.

- Inadequate lighting makes it difficult to see pedestrians and cyclists at night.



## What will this project accomplish?

The purpose of the project is to create safe and appealing pedestrian access, with accommodations for bicycles where possible, along the Northside Drive/Kocher Drive near the intersection with US Route 7.

## Project Status

Bennington received a \$490,000 earmark for pedestrian improvements at the intersection. Improvements recommended in a 2002 scoping study were never built because the recommended improvements would have cost more than the available funds. The project is now progressing after a decade of delay. URS and Behen Planning and Design were hired last fall to conduct a new scoping study. BCRC is the Municipal Project Manager.



*Children crossing US 7 and walking on Kocher Drive*

# Bennington: Benmont Avenue Active Transportation Corridor

## PEDESTRIAN PROJECT

---



*Pedestrians on Benmont on Avenue*

### **What is the Project?**

The project is to create a safe and inviting travel corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists on Benmont Avenue between the Holden-Leonard Mill and the Hunt Street Bridge.

### **Why is the project needed?**

Many pedestrians and bicyclists use Benmont Avenue to travel between downtown Bennington and Northside Drive's businesses and housing complexes.

There are no sidewalks between the Holden-Leonard Mill and the Hunt Street Bridge, and it is common to see pedestrians, often in groups, using the wide western shoulder as a refuge from the road's heavy traffic volume. Pedestrians must also contend with a succession of broad driveway accesses, which expose them to turning vehicles and create a blighted streetscape of excessive pavement.



# Bennington: Benmont Avenue Active Transportation Corridor

## PEDESTRIAN PROJECT

### What will the project accomplish?

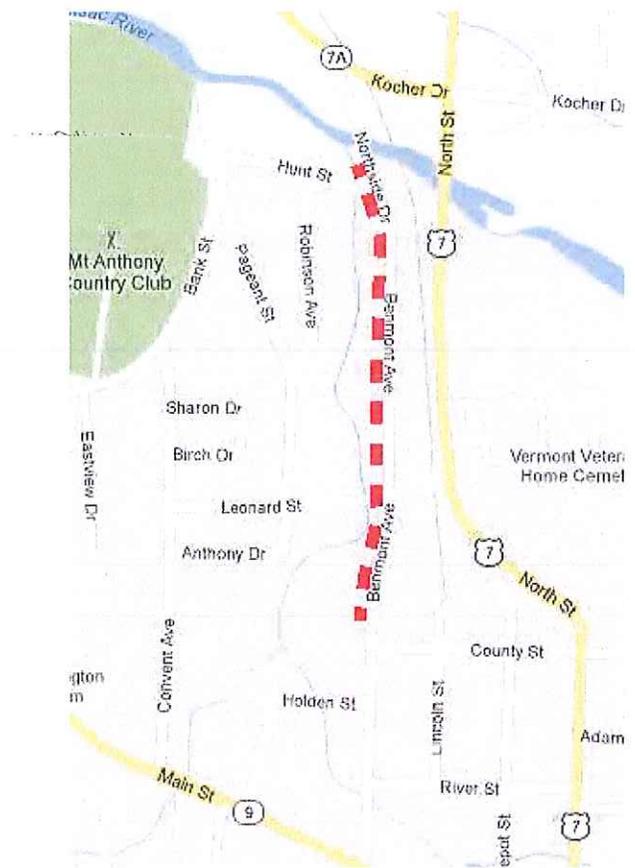
- Improve safety along a heavily travelled pedestrian corridor
- Encourage active transportation in a county with an eight percent type 2 diabetes rate
- Improve mobility for children
- Improve access management and aesthetics along a blighted corridor
- Improve access to the Ninja Trail and the pedestrian bridge on Hicks Avenue

### Project Status:

BCRC is assisting the Town of Bennington design short-term improvements.

### Estimated Cost

Unknown



# Subdivision Activity 2008 – 2013

<b>Development Area</b>	<b>New Lots</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Designated Downtown	0	0%
Growth Center (Not in Downtown)	24 10 Industrial	66.7%
Outside Growth Center & Downtown	12	33.3%
<b>Totals</b>	36	100%

# Subdivision Activity 2008-2013

## Development in Growth Center (not in Downtown)

<u>#</u>	<u>Applicant/Address/# of Lots</u>	<u>Permit #</u>
1	Bennington County Industrial Corp. Shields Drive 10 Lot Subdivision in Industrial Park	10-004
2	RAHC 399 North Branch Street 14 Unit PRD – Affordable Housing	10-215

## Development Outside of Growth Center

<u>#</u>	<u>Applicant/Address/# of Lots</u>	<u>Permit #</u>
3	Roy & Eleanor Girasa 807 Overlea Road 2 Lot Subdivision	10-165
4	Oak Ridge Properties 1213 Gore Road 5 Lot Subdivision	10-166
5	Scott & Andrea Malinowski 518 Sugar Maple Lane 3 Lot Subdivision	12-026
6	Lawrence & Mary Ann Cole 13.5 East Street 2 Lot Subdivision	13-057

# New Dwellings 2008 – 2013

<b>Development Area</b>	<b>New Dwellings</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Designated Downtown	8	12.9%
Growth Center (Not in Downtown)	37	59.7%
Outside Growth Center & Downtown	17	27.4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

# New Dwellings 2008-2013

## Dwellings in Designated Downtown

<u>#</u>	<u>Permit #</u>	<u>Applicant/Address/Dwelling Type</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
1	10-013	<b>Timothy &amp; Lisa Smith</b> 522 Main Street Apartments – convert storage space to 4 dwelling units	\$ 90,000.00
2	10-103	<b>Duane Greenawalt</b> 411 Main Street Apartment - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor Apartment in commercial building	\$ 50,000.00
3	10-146	<b>Claudia Dole</b> 332 Main Street Apartment - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor Apartment in commercial building	\$ 50,000.00
4	12-197	<b>Thomas Bogdan</b> 104 Pleasant Street Duplex - convert single family to duplex	\$ 10,000.00
5	12-132	<b>Charles &amp; Linda Putney</b> 106 School Street Apartment – convert office space to apartment	\$ 20,000.00

## Dwellings in Growth Center (outside of Downtown)

<u>#</u>	<u>Permit #</u>	<u>Applicant/Address/Dwelling Type</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
6	10-012	<b>Jerad Smith</b> 99 John Street Single Family Dwelling	\$ 83,000.00
7	10-053	<b>Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity</b> 310 Silver Street Single Family Dwelling	\$ 90,000.00
8	10-065	<b>Hex Design Inc.</b> 215 Benmont Avenue Apartments - convert storage space to 2 dwelling units	\$ 35,000.00
9	10-109	<b>Brijesh Patel etal</b> 924 Main Street 7 Apartment Units	\$ 150,000.00

10	10-215	<b>Regional Affordable Housing</b> 399 North Branch Street 7 Duplexes - 14 Unit PRD	<b>\$2,500,000.00</b>
11	10-234	<b>Sunjit Chawla</b> 254 Union Street Duplex - Convert single family into 2 family	<b>\$ 50,000.00</b>
12	10-238	<b>Laura Harwood</b> 11 Robinson Avenue Accessory Dwelling - convert garage into apartment	<b>\$ 25,000.00</b>
13	10-241	<b>Janet Groom</b> 322 Weeks Street Duplex - convert single family into 2 family	<b>\$ 20,000.00</b>
14	12-016	<b>AVS Properties Inc.</b> Liza Sparta 248 North Street Apartment - convert office into apartment	<b>\$ 1,950.00</b>
15	12-130	<b>Keith &amp; Francine Jelley</b> 100 Reed Drive Single Family Dwelling	<b>\$ 55,000.00</b>
16	13-056	<b>Hex Design Inc.</b> 215 Benmont Avenue Apartments - convert office space into 2 apartments	<b>\$ 8,000.00</b>
17	13-074	<b>Carpenter &amp; Sons LLC</b> 309 Jenningsbrook Drive 1 Condo Unit of 3	<b>\$ 168,000.00</b>
18	13-075	<b>Carpenter &amp; Sons LLC</b> John Carpenter 310 Jenningsbrook Drive 1 Condo Unit of 3	<b>\$ 168,000.00</b>
19	13-076	<b>Carpenter &amp; Sons LLC</b> 311 Jenningsbrook Drive 1 Condo Unit of 3	<b>\$ 168,000.00</b>
20	13-117	<b>Harry &amp; Nancy Briggs</b> 136 Quiet Acres Road Single Family Dwelling	<b>\$ 60,000.00</b>
21	13-139	<b>Michael Nigro</b> 125 Hillside Street	<b>\$ 34,000.00</b>

Singe Family Dwelling - convert church into dwelling

**Dwellings Outside Growth Center**

<b>#</b>	<b><u>Permit #</u></b>	<b><u>Applicant/Address/Dwelling Type</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated Cost</u></b>
22	08-232	<b>John David Piester</b> 96 Jayne Lane Single Family Dwelling	\$ 78,000.00
23	09-035	<b>Larry &amp; Della Mears</b> 1125 Woodford Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 180,000.00
24	09-159	<b>Michael and Barbara McKamey</b> 818 Silk Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 245,322.56
25	09-209	<b>Morton &amp; Judith Cohen</b> 274 Bard Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 250,000.00
26	09-210	<b>Mark &amp; Joan Spencer</b> 921 US Route 7 South Single Family Dwelling	\$ 60,000.00
27	10-054	<b>William &amp; Lucinda Thomson</b> 159 Garbrook Drive Single Family Dwelling	\$ 150,000.00
28	10-080	<b>Matthew &amp; Jodi Beaudoin</b> 801 Rocky Lane Single Family Dwelling	\$ 109,000.00
29	10-088	<b>Melissa Breese</b> 2 East Street Accessory Dwelling - Basement Apartment	\$ 30,000.00
30	10-164	<b>Roy &amp; Eleanor Girasa</b> 807 Overlea Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 90,000.00
31	11-060	<b>Donald &amp; Charlene Foster</b> 563 Willow Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 80,000.00
32	11-161	<b>Michael Shultz</b> 609 Austin Hill Road	\$ 150,000.00

		Single Family Dwelling	
33	12-150	<b>Kristen Dykes</b> 361 Rice Lane Single Family Dwelling	\$ 60,000.00
34	12-177	<b>Pamela Jean Farr</b> 1292 East Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 141,118.00
35	13-013	<b>Adam Cohen</b> 688 Rice Lane Single Family Dwelling	\$ 325,000.00
36	13-067	<b>Lucinda Thomson</b> 294 Hickory Hill Single Family Dwelling	\$ 149,000.00
37	13-071	<b>Lawrence &amp; Mary Ann Cole</b> 13.5 East Street Single Family Dwelling	\$ 200,000.00
38	13-137	<b>James &amp; Diane Probola</b> 444 Fox Hill Road Single Family Dwelling	\$ 250,000.00

# Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Development 2008 – 2013\*

<b>Development Area</b>	<b># of Permits</b>	<b># of Total Permits</b>	<b>Sq.Ft. of Space</b>	<b>% of Total Sq.Ft.</b>
Designated Downtown	11	31.4	91,522 s.f.	32.7%
Growth Center (Not In Downtown)	18	51.4%	142,769 s.f.	51%
Outside Growth Center & Downtown	6	17.2%	45,480 s.f.	16.3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>279,771 s.f.</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Only permits for new space/structures or renovations of persistently vacant space are included.

# Land Use Permits Issued for New Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Development 2008 – 2013\*

\*Only permits for new space/structures or renovations/conversions of persistent vacant space are included. Substantial investment has been made in existing structures/space that has resulted in improved space and/or conversions from one type of business to another type of business, but permits for these improvements are not included in this table.

## Development in Designated Downtown

<u>#</u>	<u>Permit #</u>	<u>Applicant/Address</u> <u>Type of Development</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
1	09-239	<b>Anytime Fitness</b> 120 Depot Street New Fitness Facility 8,580 s.f.	\$ 60,000.00
2	09-251	<b>Vermont DMV</b> 120 Depot Street Office Space Renovations 3,172 s.f.	\$ 35,000.00
3	10-030	<b>Berkshire Dance Studio</b> 457 Main Street Dance Studio 3,927 s.f.	\$ 25,000.00
4	10-048	<b>Green Mountain Community Network</b> 215 Pleasant Street Multi-Modal Center 37,012 s.f.	\$ 500,000.00
5	10-161	<b>Kirby Wright</b> 204 South Street Office Building 1,293 s.f.	\$ 20,000.00
6	10-208	<b>Nancy Woltman</b> 530 Main Street New Office Space Renovations 1,972 s.f.	\$ 80,000.00
7	11-148	<b>VT Soccer Academy</b> Catamount School	\$ 50,000.00

		230 School Street Interior Renovations - Soccer Facility 11,262 s.f.	
8	12-148	<b>Vermont Technical College</b> 210 South Street Renovations for Nursing Program 6,492 s.f.	\$ 140,548.00
9	12-168	<b>Old Castle Theatre</b> 331 Main Street New Theater 6,752 s.f.	\$ 75,000.00
10	12-230	<b>BCRC</b> 113 South Street New Office Space 1,960 s.f.	\$ 13,320.00
11	13-083	<b>Dollar General</b> 262 Main Street New Commercial Building 130x70 9,100 s.f.	\$1,500,000.00

**Development in Growth Center (outside of Downtown)**

<u>#</u>	<u>Permit #</u>	<u>Property Owner/Applicant/Address</u> <u>Type of Development</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
12	09-116	<b>Bennington Elementary School</b> 128 Park Street Classroom Addition 4,402 s.f.	\$ 400,000.00
13	09-249	<b>Bennington Rescue Squad</b> 120 McKinley Street 3-Bay Garage Addition 1,152 s.f.	\$ 615,000.00
14	09-250	<b>Plasan USA Inc.</b> 139 Shields Drive Dock Addition & 2 Exit Doors 157 s.f.	\$ 37,400.00
15	10-003	<b>Bennington Pool &amp; Spa</b> 126 Hicks Avenue New Retail Store 1,744 s.f.	\$ 77,000.00

16	10-011	<b>Plasan North America Inc.</b> 78 Bowen Road Office Addition 4500 s.f.	\$ 800,000.00
17	10-028	<b>State Office Building</b> 250-275 Veterans Memorial Drive New Office Building & Courthouse 66,622 s.f.	\$13,650,000.00
18	10-111	<b>Plasan North America Inc.</b> 78 Bowen Road Haz-Mat Storage Unit 112 s.f.	\$ 41,000.00
19	11-043	<b>NSK Steering Systems Inc.</b> 110 Shields Drive Industrial Addition 4200 s.f.	\$ 375,000.00
20	11-044	<b>Mountain Mozzarella LLC</b> 453 East Road Cooler Building 247 s.f.	\$ 12,000.00
21	11-059	<b>Elm Street Market</b> 251 Elm Street Renovations 3,540 s.f.	\$ 100,000.00
22	11-166	<b>Applegate Housing</b> 89 Applegate Drive Resident Center 1,456 s.f.	\$ 250,000.00
23	11-181	<b>Southwestern Vermont Health Care</b> 1128 Monument Avenue Office Building 3,100 s.f.	\$ 185,406.00
24	10-178	<b>Southern Vermont College</b> 180 Benmont Avenue Educational Facility Renovations – Nursing School 4,000 s.f.	\$ 120,000.00
25	12-145	<b>Northeastern Baptist College</b> 104 Kocher Drive	\$ 422,000.00

		Renovate 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Floors for Classroom Space 22,420 s.f.	
26	12-153	<b>Northeastern Baptist College</b> 141 Main Street Library & Office Space Renovations 11,614 s.f.	\$ 36,000.00
27	12-157	<b>United Counseling Service</b> 314 Dewey Street Offices/Clinical Space 5,056 s.f.	\$ 900,000.00
28	13-008	<b>John and Sandra Redding</b> 722 Main Street Renovations - Convert SF to BB w/Lounge 5,222 s.f.	\$ 25,000.00
29	13-016	<b>Merchants Bank</b> 210 Northside Drive Conversion to Bank Building 3,225 s.f.	\$ 500,000.00

### Development Outside of Growth Center

<u>#</u>	<u>Permit #</u>	<u>Property Owner/Applicant/Address</u> <u>Type of Development</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
30	08-163	<b>Carbone Auto Dealership</b> 897 North Bennington Road New Car Dealership 17,694 s.f.	\$ 4,000,000.00
31	09-040	<b>Village at Filmore Pond</b> 300 Village Lane Alzheimer Unit Addition 9,953 s.f.	\$ 1,500,000.00
32	10-005	<b>Bank of Bennington</b> 32 Phyllis Land New Commercial Building (Bank) 3,306 s.f.	\$ 800,000.00
33	10-131	<b>Southern Vermont College</b> 982 Mansion Drive Maintenance and Storage Garage 1,536 s.f.	\$ 100,000.00

<b>34</b>	<b>11-058</b>	<b>VT Welcome Center</b> 100 US Route 7 South New Welcome Center 5,383 s.f.	<b>\$ 5,250,000.00</b>
<b>35</b>	<b>12-015</b>	<b>LaFlamme's Inc.</b> 50 Harwood Hill Interior Renovations – Furniture Store 7,608 s.f.	<b>\$ 75,000.00</b>

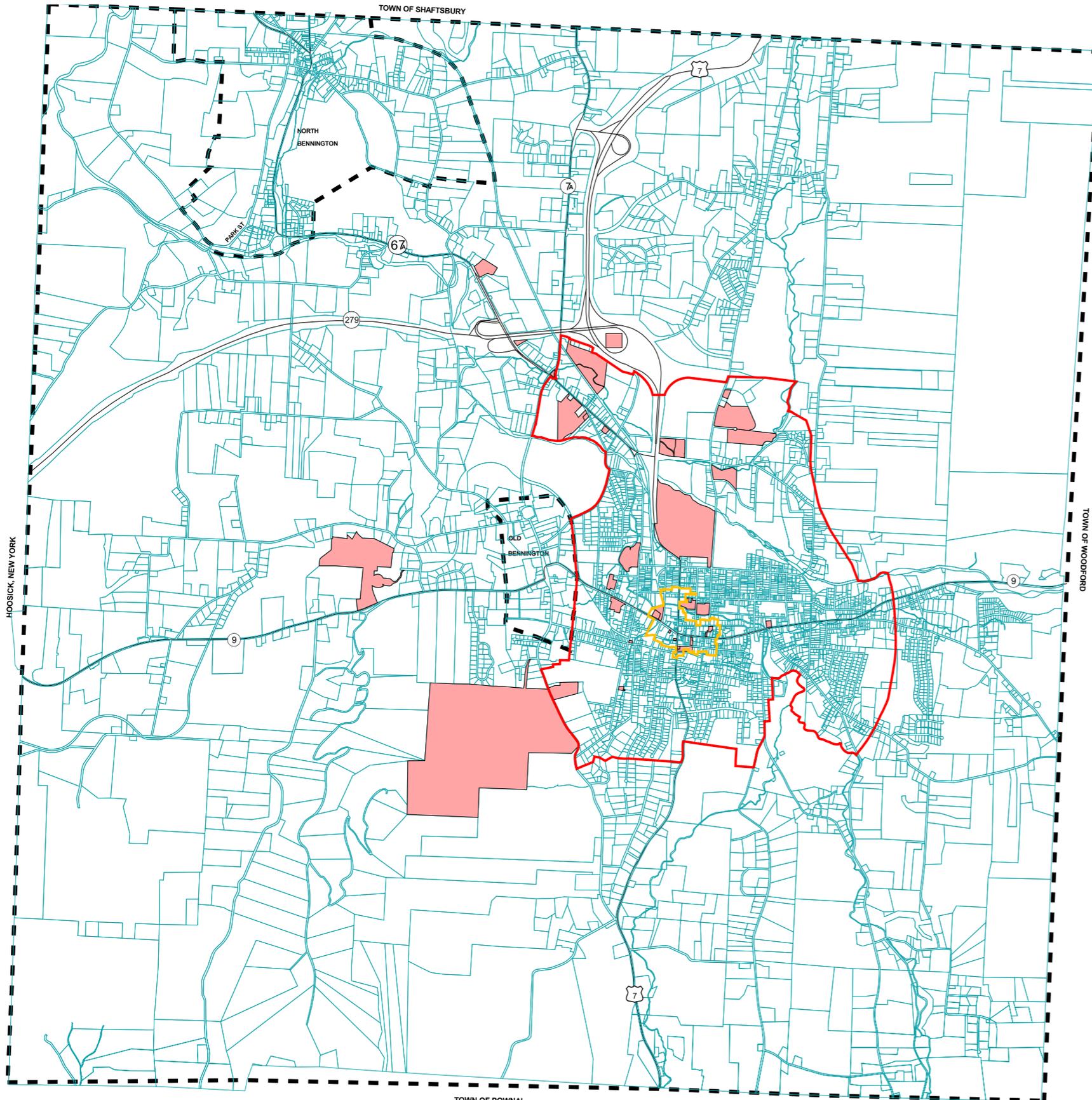
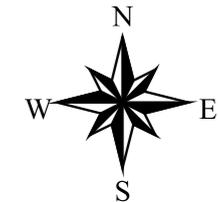
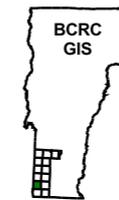
# Town of Bennington, Vermont Permits Issued for New Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Development 2008 - 2013

- Growth Center
- Designated Downtown
- New Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Development
- Parcels

## Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Development 2008 – 2013\*

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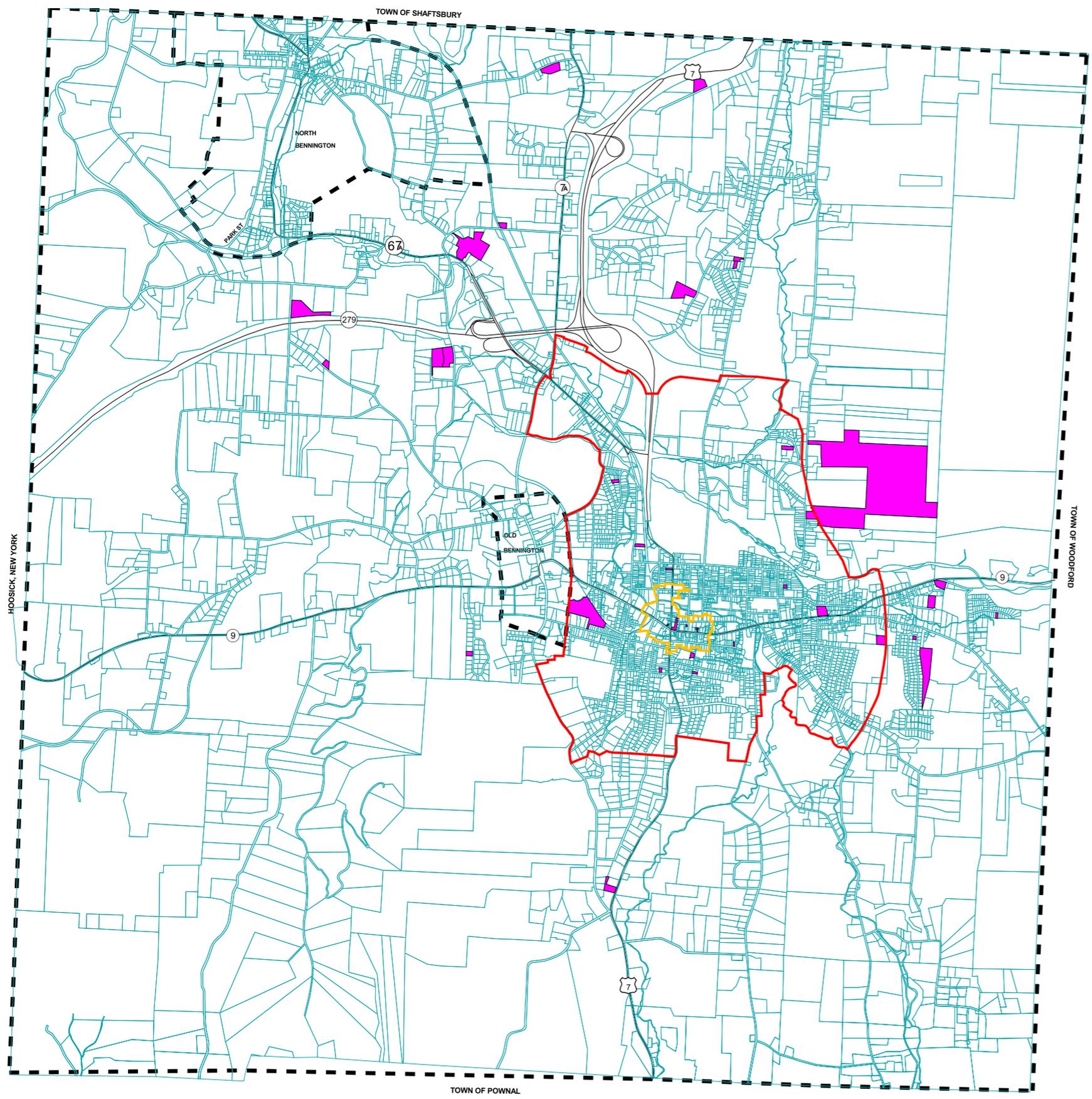
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Bennington County Regional Commission  
111 South Street, Suite 203  
Bennington, Vermont 05201

# Town of Bennington, Vermont New Dwelling Units Permitted 2008 - 2013

- Growth Center
- Designated Downtown
- New Dwellings Permitted 2008-2013
- Parcels

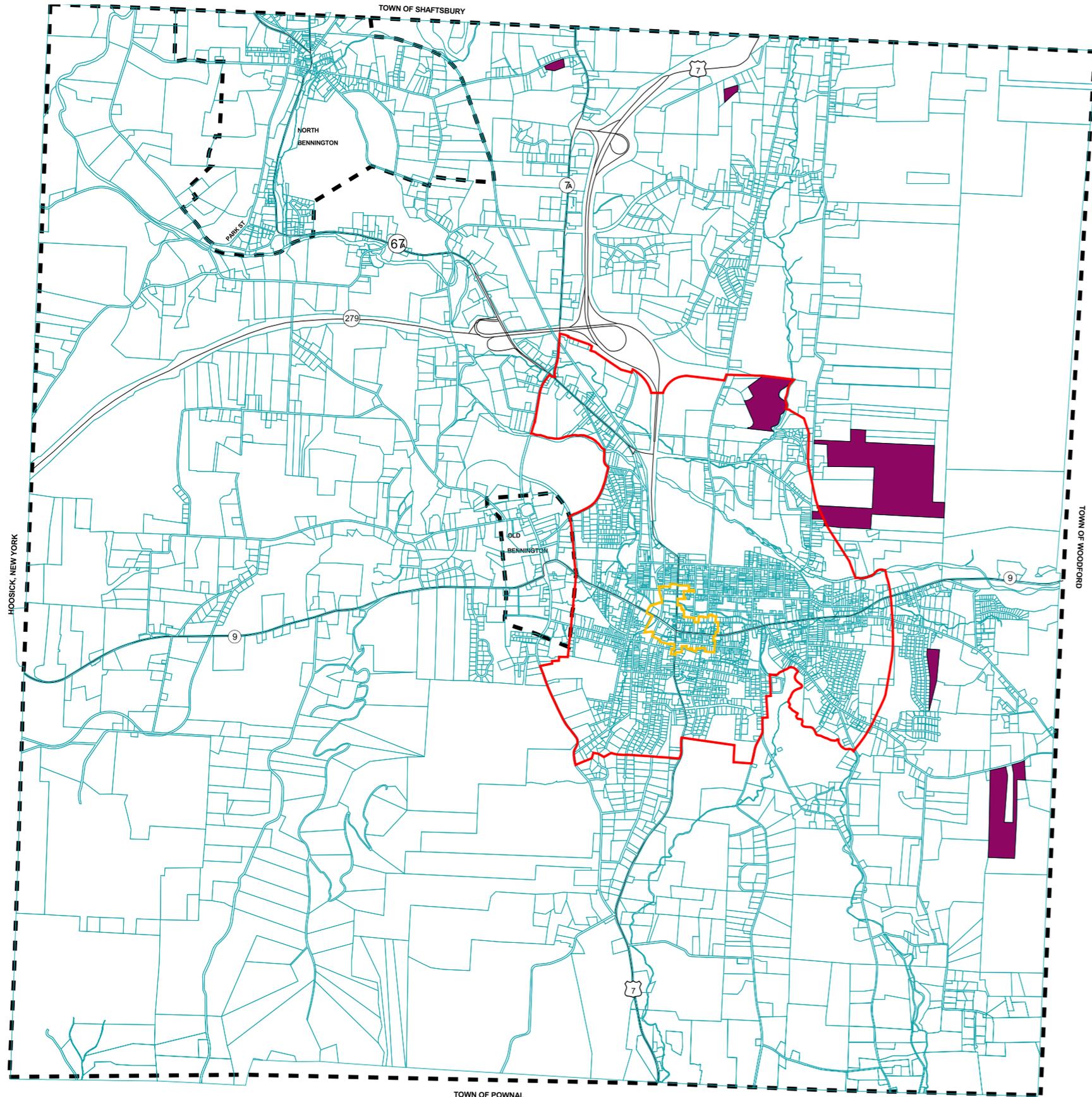
## New Dwellings 2008 - 2013

Development Area	New Dwellings	% of Total
Designated Downtown	8	12.9%
Growth Center (Not in Downtown)	37	59.7%
Outside Growth Center & Downtown	17	27.4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>



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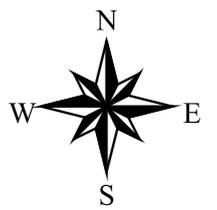
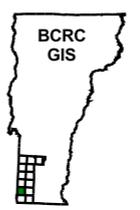


# Town of Bennington, Vermont Subdivision Activity 2008 - 2013

- Growth Center
- Designated Downtown
- Subdivision Activity 2008-2013
- Parcels

**Subdivision Activity  
2008 – 2013**

Development Area	New Lots	% of Total
Designated Downtown	0	0%
Growth Center (Not in Downtown)	24 10 Industrial	66.7%
Outside Growth Center & Downtown	12	33.3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>



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