

The background is a solid green color. Overlaid on this are orange line-art illustrations of buildings and a road. On the left, a road line starts at the top, goes down, then right, then down again, and then right. To the right of this road, there are several building outlines. One building on the left has a gabled roof and three windows. Another building below it has a gabled roof and three windows. A larger building on the right has a gabled roof, a small square window in the center, and three larger windows below it. At the bottom, there are three small square windows. The text is white and positioned in the upper right area.

Vergennes- Ferrisburgh

Transit-Oriented
Development
(TOD) Master Plan

Acknowledgments

Steering Group

Bonnie Barnes

Town of Ferrisburgh, *Planning Commission*

Shannon Haggett

City of Vergennes, *Planning Commission*

Adam Lougee

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Ron Redmond

City of Vergennes, *City Manager*

Jean Richardson

Town of Ferrisburgh, *Clerk of the Planning Commission*

Prepared by:

Toole Design Group and
Sterling Mountain Planning and Design



Information contained in this document is for planning purposes and should not be used for final design of any project. All results, recommendations, concept drawings, cost opinions, and commentary contained herein are based on limited data and information and on existing conditions that are subject to change. Further analysis and engineering design are necessary prior to implementing any of the recommendations contained herein.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary5

INTRODUCTION 7

What is Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)? ...9

A Regional Vision for TOD9

DISCOVER..... 10

Existing Conditions 11

Opportunities11

Challenges14

Community and Stakeholder Engagement.....16

Engagement Activities16

What We Heard.....17

ENVISION 18

IMPLEMENT 21

Land Use22

Zoning Recommendations 24

Other Policy Recommendations37

Multimodal Infrastructure39

Public Realm and Placemaking 42

APPENDIX 45

Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report.....46

Executive Summary

Transit-Oriented Develop (TOD) Recommendations for Vergennes-Ferrisburgh

This list outlines key recommendations from the TOD Master Plan for the City of Vergennes and Town of Ferrisburgh. These recommendations will help Vergennes and Ferrisburgh establish a framework for guiding future development around the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Amtrak Station. By integrating land use, transportation, and community design, these recommendations will help support compact, connected, and walkable development that complements the unique characteristics of south Ferrisburgh and Vergennes.

Look for the corresponding letters throughout this document to read more details about each recommendation.

(A) Implement Zoning Regulations Changes for Discrete Districts

These zoning changes should be organized into five districts around in station area. For each district, the zoning changes should cover the overall purpose and permitted uses for the district, characteristics for future development, and a set of standard dimensions.

(B) Create a Form and Site Design Overlay

This would enable both communities to consistently apply a comprehensive set of form and site standards across the station area. Additionally, this would help provide development standards that facilitate new and more compact development.

(C) Consolidate Vergennes Design Standards into a Single Overlay

The City's several design standards for the Central Business District include elements such as entrances, storefronts, scale, materials, and roof design. These would be consolidated and reorganized into a single overlay that can be applied across multiple districts.

(D) Provide a Discretionary Relief Path for Applicants

This would allow applicants to seek limited relief from specific overlay when site constraints warrant flexibility and fit within the Development Review Board's authority to grant relief upon findings that the request is necessary, minimal, and consistent with district intent.

(E) Expand the Authority of the Zoning Administrator

This expanded authority would allow administrative approval of up to four-unit dwellings and create Minor and Major Site Plan Review categories. Minor projects should qualify for administrative review to support quicker and simpler review of smaller projects.

(F) Seek New Designation for Station Area Under Act 250/181

The Town and City should work with the Regional Planning Commission to incorporate the station area into a "Planned Growth Area" and pursue Tier 1A or 1B designation under Act 181 to help reduce the burden of the regulatory process.

(G) Adopt an Official Map

This would identify future streets, sidewalks, bikeways, and pedestrian facilities. The Official Map would help preserve rights-of-way (ROW), communicate long-term block structure, and guide private redevelopment without requiring immediate public investment to purchase ROW or build infrastructure.

(H) Develop a Comprehensive Set of Standards for Roads

These would update the public works standards for streets, sidewalks, bikeways, lighting, trees, furnishings, and stormwater facilities. It would help create context-sensitive street types that support multimodal travel and walkable mixed-use development in the station area.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.



1

Introduction

The Vergennes-Ferrisburgh Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan establishes a strategic framework for guiding future development around the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Amtrak station in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. Centered on integrating land use, transportation, and community design, the plan supports compact, connected, and walkable development that complements the unique characteristics of south Ferrisburgh and downtown Vergennes.

The study area (Figure 1) includes approximately a half-mile radius around the station and spans the northern portion of the City of Vergennes and the southern portion of the Town of Ferrisburgh. This area, located in the northwestern part of Addison County in Vermont's Champlain Valley, is defined by its historic industrial and agricultural roots, small-town character, and strong regional connectivity via rail, highways, and transit services. With proximity to Otter Creek, Lake Champlain, and destinations such as Middlebury and Burlington, the area plays a key role as a regional hub for commerce, culture, and daily life.

Together, Vergennes and Ferrisburgh are home to over 5,200 residents and more than 2,100 households. Both communities display characteristics that support TOD implementation. Vergennes is a primary growth center for housing and employment within Addison County, with a high demand for a variety of housing types and opportunities for compact, mixed-use development. Ferrisburgh, though more rural in character, also faces increasing housing demand from regional workers, especially those commuting to Chittenden County. These complementary characteristics reinforce the opportunity for coordinated, sustainable growth within the TOD study area.

In addition to strong local conditions, the TOD Master Plan aligns with regional and state planning priorities. Vermont's Homes Act and Act 181, the Addison County Regional Plan, and recent transportation investments position the study area to benefit from planning efforts that promote equitable, multimodal, and resilient communities.

FIGURE 1 Study Area



The plan includes the following sections to outline the vision for Ferrisburgh-Vergennes TOD and recommendations to realize that vision:

- **Discover** chapter presents findings from the existing conditions analysis, summarizing constraints and opportunities that shape the opportunity for TOD.
- **Envision** chapter introduces the master plan with a shared vision for the area informed by local context and stakeholder input.
- **Implement** chapter details proposed land use strategies, zoning tools, and infrastructure recommendations that enable the vision to be realized.

What is Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)?

Transit-Oriented Development or TOD is a land use and transportation planning approach that promotes compact, walkable communities centered around high-quality transit services. The goal of TOD is to make it easier for people to get around without needing a car for every trip. It focuses on creating new developments such as homes and local shops near transit hubs, and encourages walkable communities where it's convenient to live, work, and access daily needs. By focusing compact mixed-use development near transit, TOD can help lower transportation costs for households, reduce traffic and emissions, and create vibrant neighborhoods.

A Regional Vision for TOD

This plan is part of a broader regional effort funded through the federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program. Administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2022, RAISE supports transportation planning and construction projects that improve mobility, promote equity, and strengthen local economies.

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) received a RAISE planning grant to develop the Transit-Oriented Development Plan for Northwest Vermont. This initiative includes twelve communities across five counties (Chittenden, Addison, Franklin, Rutland, and Washington) and aims to support new developments with accessible and convenient public transportation access. This planning process will establish a foundation for offering Vermonters a viable alternative to automobile-dependent living, lower household transportation expenses, promote walkable village centers, and expand employment opportunities for rural communities.

In this document, when referring to the Amtrak station, its proper name, Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Amtrak Station, is used. When referring to the master plan, the study in general, or the study area, Vergennes-Ferrisburgh is used. This decision was made by the Steering Group to distinguish this effort and document from Ferrisburgh TOD Master Plan, a separate effort. The Ferrisburgh TOD Master Plan has been completed as part of the same RAISE planning grant. Both project teams coordinated during the planning processes to ensure compatibility



2

Discover

Existing Conditions

The Vergennes-Ferrisburgh study area features a unique mix of transit assets, underutilized sites, and regional initiatives that make it well-positioned for transit-oriented development (TOD). The study area lies between the City of Burlington and the Town of Middlebury and is expected to see a strong amount of housing and employment growth over the next 25 years.

This section summarizes the key opportunities that can support TOD implementation, followed by challenges that must be addressed to enable compact, walkable, and mixed-use growth.

See Appendix A for more details on the existing conditions within the study area that create opportunities and constraints for TOD.

Opportunities

Regional Transit Access and Multimodal Connectivity

The Vergennes-Ferrisburgh Amtrak Station serves as a central transit hub with daily rail service via the Ethan Allen Express between Burlington and New York City. The station includes a park-and-ride lot and is supported by three regional bus routes: Vermont Translines Route 7, Tri-Valley Transit's Tri-Town Shuttle, and the Tri-Valley LINK to Burlington. These services provide frequent, regional access and offer a strong platform for TOD.

Emerging Infill and Redevelopment Activity

Recent construction near the intersection of Monkton Road and US 7 includes multi-story housing and community uses that demonstrate market demand for walkable development patterns. Underused former industrial sites along VT 22A and adjacent to the rail line represent promising redevelopment opportunities. Some of these sites are already partially occupied by businesses such as a cidery and a physical therapy office, indicating a wider potential for reuse.

Housing Demand

Both Vergennes and Ferrisburgh are experiencing strong housing demand, driven by regional job growth and changing household preferences. Vergennes offers a more diverse housing stock suited to compact development, while Ferrisburgh attracts households seeking affordability near major job centers.

According to the *Northwest Vermont TOD Market Analysis (2024)*, both communities could be expected to attract a meaningful share of Addison County's future housing and employment growth – Vergennes is projected to absorb about 16% of the new home growth in Addison County over the next 25+ years (~1,000-1,600 new homes), and Ferrisburgh is projected to absorb about 12% (~800-1,200 homes).



Housing Demand	2050
Ferrisburgh	+ 800 to 1,200 new units
Vergennes	+ 1,000 to 1,600 new units

(Northwest Vermont TOD Market Analysis)

There is a growing market segment of younger households, downsizing seniors, and regional commuters who are seeking diverse, low-maintenance housing options near jobs, services, and transit. The demand for housing of all types and all income levels would support retention and growth of local businesses and accommodate households unable to pay higher prices in Chittenden County. These trends create timely market opportunities for a broader mix of housing types in walkable, mixed-use areas near the station.

These trends are further defined in the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) housing targets. As part of the requirements under Vermont’s new Act 181, the ACRPC has created aspirational housing targets for each of its municipalities. The ACRPC housing targets proportionally distribute a regional median housing target developed by the VT Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) across each municipality based on the number of existing households and homes in each community in 2020.

Housing Targets	2025-2030	2025-2050
Ferrisburgh	+124 new units	+461 new units
Vergennes	+124 new units	+462 new units

(ACRPC)

The fact that the housing demand analysis is much greater than the housing targets assessment bodes well for Vergennes and Ferrisburgh’s ability to attract and support a substantial number of new households within the study area.

The differences between **housing demand** and **housing targets** can be attributed to a difference in methodology, and perhaps more importantly, the purpose of each. **Housing demand** estimates the potential demand for housing within the northwestern side of Vermont. **Housing targets** estimate a housing need statewide. According to the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development at Toronto Metropolitan University:

Housing need reflects the fundamental requirement for adequate, affordable, and suitable shelter, encompassing those in core housing need due to substandard or unaffordable housing. Housing demand is a market-driven concept defined by the number and types of housing units households choose and are willing to pay for in a given period, influenced by factors like income, interest rates, and preferences. The gap between housing need and market demand highlights a crucial challenge in the housing sector, as supply may not meet the quantity or quality of housing necessary to address the needs of all residents.

Local Retail and Industrial Demand

The demand for retail and services in the study area is primarily local, supported by residents and visitors seeking day-to-day amenities. While large-scale retail expansion is not anticipated, opportunities exist for small-scale storefronts and service uses that support walkable neighborhoods and transit access. At the same time, there is a steady demand for small and flexible industrial spaces (particularly units ranging from 2,500 to 5,000 square feet). Interviews with local real estate professionals highlight interest in artisan manufacturing, food production, and light fabrication, especially when combined with housing or work-live formats.

Planned Wastewater System Expansion

The City of Vergennes has planned a major investment in its wastewater system, with a \$30 million upgrade anticipated in 2026. This project is expected to expand capacity and address current system deficiencies. Informal discussions are underway to explore a potential agreement with the Town of Ferrisburgh to allow limited wastewater service just beyond the city boundary. Such coordination would enable more development on both sides of the municipal border.

Supportive Policy and Regional Planning Context

Recent state policy updates, including the Homes Act and Act 181, offer tools to reduce regulatory barriers and promote housing development in targeted growth areas. The Vermont Agency of Transportation designates both VT 22A and US 7 as high-priority corridors for bicycle travel, creating opportunities for future multimodal improvements. The proposed Addison County Triangle Bike Loop would further enhance bicycle connectivity between Vergennes, Middlebury, and Bristol, supporting recreation and transportation.



Challenges

Regulatory Barriers to Compact, Mixed-Use Development

In both Vergennes and Ferrisburgh, existing zoning regulations present challenges to compact development. Figure 2 below illustrates the current zoning in the study area. See Appendix A for a summary of existing zoning in the study area.

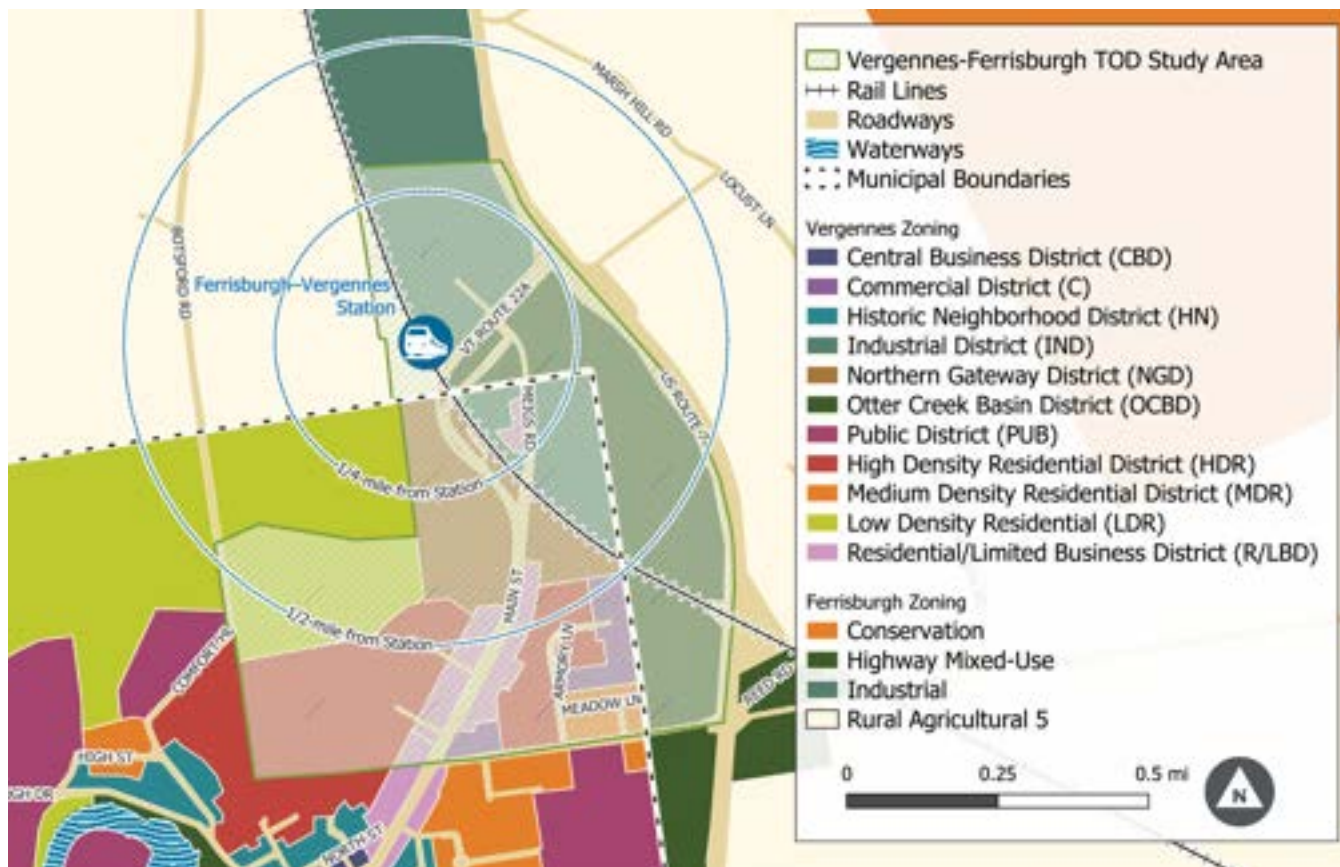
- In **Vergennes**, five zoning districts apply to the study area, but most lack clear design standards for building placement, sidewalk orientation, or mixed-use form – all essential to creating a walkable place. Residential uses are often excluded from commercial areas. Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Conditional Use processes are available, but rely heavily on discretionary review, creating uncertainty, delay, and additional costs for applicants.

- In **Ferrisburgh**, zoning standards emphasize large setbacks and parking requirements. Most new residential or non-residential development requires Conditional Use approval, and there are few objective criteria to guide site design. Development flexibility is limited, especially for multi-family or mixed-use proposals.

Gaps in Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure

Sidewalk coverage is inconsistent across the study area, with only partial sidewalk facilities along Monkton Road, Armory Lane, and some sections of VT 22A. Dedicated bicycle facilities are absent, although some road shoulders are used informally by cyclists. The lack of protected or continuous infrastructure for people walking and biking diminishes the area’s connectivity and multimodal viability.

FIGURE 2 Existing Zoning in Ferrisburgh and Vergennes



(Source: State of Vermont Open Geodata Portal, accessed January 2025)

High Truck Volumes and Freight Conflicts

VT 22A and US 7 carry significant freight traffic and function as primary corridors for north-south travel in western Vermont. On VT 22A, 16 percent of daily traffic consists of trucks. This high volume affects quality of life, increases safety risks, and discourages walking and biking. While the Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study is exploring bypass alternatives, the most favored routes under consideration would continue to direct trucks through the TOD area.

Traffic Safety Risks

Three segments within the study area have been identified as high-crash locations between 2016 and 2021. These include:

- Monkton Road between VT 22A and Crescent Drive (six crashes with one injury),
- US 7 near Monkton Road (10 crashes with seven injuries),
- VT 22A between East Street and Coventry Lane (13 crashes with one injury).

Vergennes has the highest crash rate along the VT 22A corridor, including the highest rate of truck-related crashes among comparable towns. These trends reinforce the importance of traffic calming and infrastructure improvements to enhance safety for all modes.

Limited Municipal Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

Although Vergennes has a municipal wastewater system undergoing planned upgrades, the Town of Ferrisburgh lacks municipal wastewater service. All development in Ferrisburgh depends on-site septic systems. This infrastructure limitation significantly restricts the feasibility of new compact and mixed-use development and underscores the need for inter-municipal collaboration. Informal discussions have begun about a potential inter-municipal agreement that would allow limited wastewater connections in Ferrisburgh, particularly near the Vergennes border. Such an

agreement would be instrumental in enabling compact, mixed-use development on both sides of the municipal line and is essential to supporting the long-term economic and land use vision of this TOD Master Plan. Shared or investor-built systems, potentially supported by tools like Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the state's new Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), also present viable opportunities to expand wastewater capacity in the area.

While both the City of Vergennes and parts of the Town of Ferrisburgh are served by the Vergennes-Panton Water District (VPWD), water infrastructure presents additional challenges. In Ferrisburgh, water is delivered through privately owned water lines, many of which are aging and limited in capacity. These lines are not municipally owned or managed and do not guarantee new connections, making it difficult for new development to access water service. Linking Ferrisburgh more fully into the VPWD system would require the Town to formally (by townwide vote) join the VPWD and join in any debt for which the VPWD may be responsible. The northern portion of the study area is served by the Ferrisburgh Fire District #1 (a customer to the VPWD) and there may be opportunities to add to this service network. Meanwhile, the City of Vergennes' public water system is aging and in need of substantial investment to support the scale of future growth projected in regional housing forecasts. Expanding water service will require careful coordination, funding, and long-term planning to support new development in both communities.

This plan outlines a series of recommendations and implementation strategies designed to address these constraints and build on existing opportunities to support more efficient land use, improved multi-modal access, and stronger overall connectivity throughout the study area.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

A collaborative and inclusive planning process shaped the TOD Master Plan and deepened understanding of the opportunities and constraints in the study area. The project team designed engagement efforts to reflect local priorities, identify implementation challenges, and build support for a shared vision of compact, connected growth near the train station. Throughout the process, the team engaged:

- Local residents and business owners
- Municipal officials and planning commissioners from Vergennes and Ferrisburgh
- Representatives from the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC)
- Housing advocates and developers, including representatives from Vermont Housing Finance Agency and Addison Housing Works
- Tri-Valley Transit and other regional service providers

Engagement Activities

Steering Group Meetings

The project team convened a Steering Group with representatives from the Vergennes Planning Commission, the Town of Ferrisburgh, the ACRPC, and other community stakeholders. The Steering Group met regularly, participated in the site visit and design charrette (described below) and in January 2025, the group reviewed draft recommendations and provided feedback on infrastructure coordination, zoning strategies, and alignment with Act 181 and growth center policies. Members highlighted the need for realistic phasing, identified political and financial barriers, and emphasized the importance of clear short-term implementation actions.



Participants in the Design Charrette (December 2024)

Design Charrette

The team hosted a four-day design charrette that included a site visit and tour, a public visioning session, open studio hours, and a public open house. These events provided opportunities for community members to directly engage with the plan as it evolved, shaping concepts for land use, zoning, mobility, and public realm improvements.

Developer Roundtable and Developer Interviews

The project team organized a Developer Roundtable and conducted individual interviews to gather insight from local and regional housing developers, municipal officials, and nonprofit housing providers. Participants emphasized that zoning must support at least 20 dwelling units per acre to make projects financially viable. They pointed out challenges for development, such as the need for more flexibility in permitted uses and site design standards, water and sewer uncertainties, and the need for performance-based design standards.

What We Heard

Across all engagement efforts, several key themes emerged. These insights helped shape the plan's district framework, regulatory recommendations, and implementation priorities.

Multimodal Access and Walkability

There was consistent support for safer, multi-modal, and walkable streets, with stronger physical and visual connections between the train station, new development, and downtown Vergennes. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of improving pedestrian infrastructure, reactivating the old rail underpass near Fields Auto, and providing alternative access strategies that avoid complex coordination with the rail operator.

Complement Downtown

Participants shared a clear desire to maintain the unique character and role of downtown Vergennes and make the role of the new TOD area distinct from downtown. The new station-area development should serve as a complement to downtown Vergennes by offering new housing and small-scale services without draining economic activity from downtown.

Diverse and Attainable Housing

Participants across all sessions emphasized the need for a wider variety of housing types and formats, especially smaller, more affordable units. Developers noted that densities of at least 20 units per acre are often needed to make projects viable. Stakeholders see strong interest in townhomes, duplexes, work-live units, and missing middle forms that can integrate into the existing context.

Infrastructure Challenges and Coordination Needs

Infrastructure, particularly the lack of a clear understanding of the capacity in the Vergennes-Panton Water District, was identified as a major implementation barrier. Stakeholders raised

concerns about insufficient mapping, limited intermunicipal coordination, and uncertainty around Ferrisburgh relying on Vergennes sewer service in the near term. Participants stressed the need for a clear phasing and infrastructure strategy that reflects these realities while still advancing key goals.

Zoning Predictability and Flexibility

Participants emphasized that current land use and zoning rules are often too narrow or overly specific, making it difficult to pursue mixed-use or innovative development. They called for zoning that allows a broader range of permitted uses by-right, particularly for small-scale commercial, residential, and artisan industrial spaces. Participants also recommended replacing outdated conditional use processes with clear, performance-based, and design standards to guide development and reduce uncertainty.

Feasibility and Phasing

Many participants urged the project team to identify near-term actions that can be realistically implemented without full utility buildout. These include incremental zoning updates, exploring interim wastewater solutions, and leveraging existing public parcels near the station. Suggestions included securing grants to digitize utility maps and developing a shared zoning administrator to coordinate cross-jurisdictional permitting.



3

Envision

This section introduces a shared vision for the Vergennes-Ferrisburgh study area, shaped by community aspirations, stakeholder priorities, and existing conditions. Building on strong regional connectivity, shifting housing demand, and development momentum, the vision supports a compact, connected, and vibrant station area that reflects local character and values. The accompanying map expresses this vision spatially,

identifying five key districts with areas for infill, public space, mobility improvements, and redevelopment. The five districts are:

District 1: Depot Quarter/Northern Gateway

District 2: Enterprise

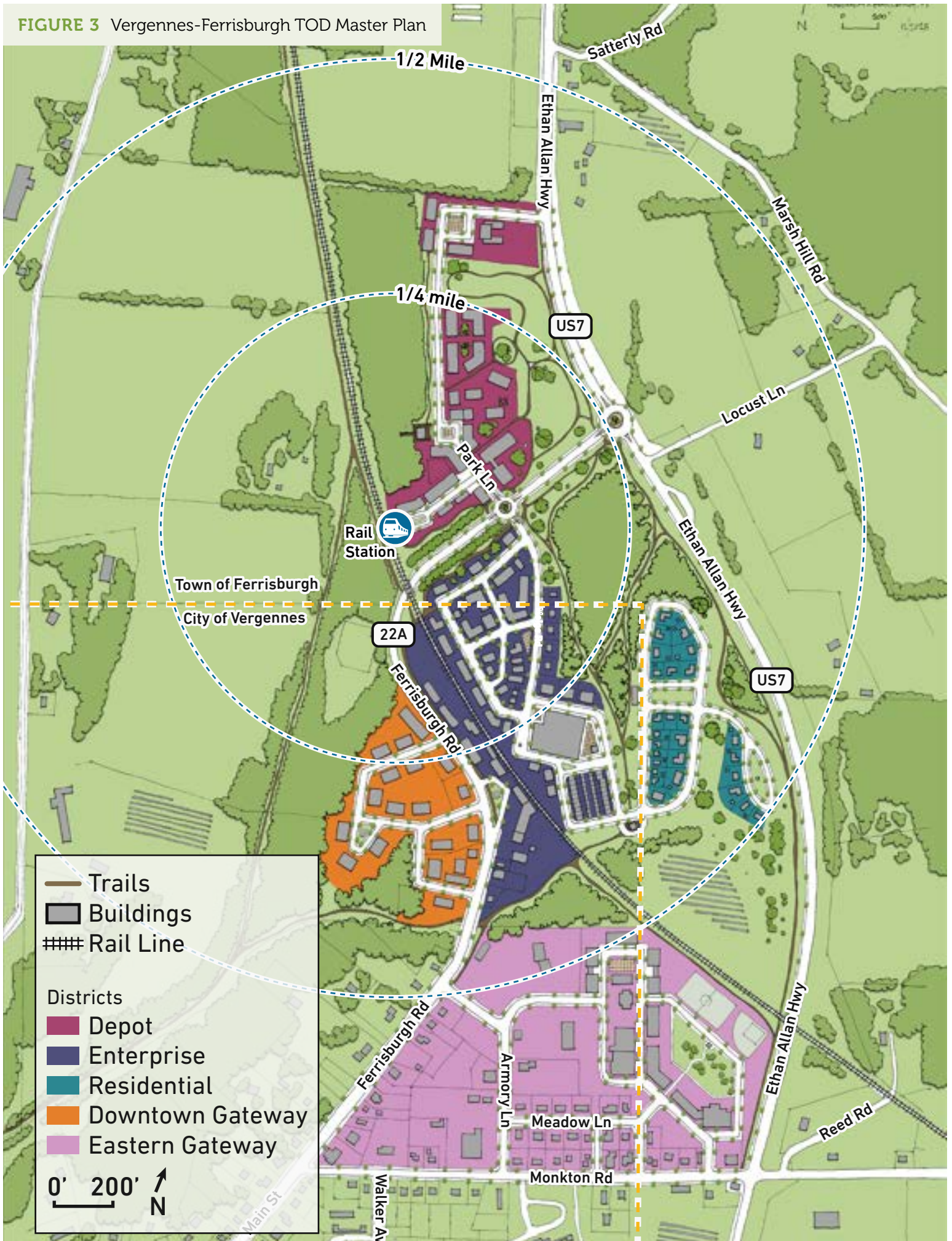
District 3: Residential









District 4: Downtown Gateway


District 5: Eastern Gateway

	Land Use	Multimodal Infrastructure	Public Realm and Placemaking
District 1 Depot Quarter/ Northern Gateway	Compact, transit-supportive mixed-use district anchored by the Amtrak station. Includes residential, retail, civic, and commercial uses with building heights up to five stories. Emphasizes storefront design.	Integrated with regional bus and rail transit. Prioritizes pedestrian and bike circulation, transit access, and public streetscape amenities. Supports parking and multimodal intersections.	Creates a sense of arrival with civic spaces, active storefronts, and coordinated design elements such as street trees, lighting, and signage. Reinforces identity as a gateway to the community.
District 2 Enterprise	Flexible employment-focused district for small-scale manufacturing, makerspaces, and work-live uses. Retains and reuses existing buildings where feasible and allows a mix of artisan, fabrication, housing, and light industrial uses.	Supports goods movement and service access while ensuring safe pedestrian routes and bikeways. Includes internal drives, shared streets, and trail connections to Depot Quarter and Residential districts.	Supports placemaking through informal gathering spaces, outdoor work areas, and artist-friendly public realm design. Reflects the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of the district and the greater region.
District 3 Residential	Residential neighborhood that supports adjacent mixed-use areas. Encourages missing middle housing types and block structure with porches, stoops, and scaled-down footprints to reinforce neighborhood character.	Designed for walkability with narrow, well-connected streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian-scaled intersections. Emphasizes internal neighborhood connectivity and transitions to adjacent districts.	Neighborhood greens, porches, and stoops foster interaction and community. Reinforces neighborhood character and sociability through shared spaces.
District 4 Downtown Gateway	Connect the districts to the north to downtown Vergennes. Follows the existing residential form. Supports duplexes, townhomes, small multifamily, mixed-use, and small commercial.	Extends the existing neighborhood street grid with added amenities for walkability. Improves connections between the station area and downtown Vergennes with pedestrian crossings, and sidewalk and bikeway continuity.	Maintains historic scale and character to reinforce continuity with downtown. Allows for enhancement of streetscape with landscaping, porches, and civic-scale frontages.
District 5 Eastern Gateway	Mixed-use district for larger format buildings serving community-wide needs. Combines higher-density housing, office, retail, and civic uses. Prioritizes redevelopment and infill with clear frontage and multi-story structures with active ground floors/storefronts.	Handles higher traffic volumes and accommodates commercial delivery, regional bus circulation, and enhanced bus stop amenities. The trail and bike network supports multimodal access to the station and nearby districts.	Public spaces include plazas, parks, and trailheads that organize access and movement. Supports visibility and orientation at key corridors and intersections.

FIGURE 3 Vergennes-Ferrisburgh TOD Master Plan



-  Trails
-  Buildings
-  Rail Line
- Districts**
-  Depot
-  Enterprise
-  Residential
-  Downtown Gateway
-  Eastern Gateway

0' 200' 



4

Implement

Land Use

Key Assumptions

The Plan assumes that all of these areas in both Vergennes and Ferrisburgh can be served by both water and wastewater. This process is underway at the time of this plan's development, however the timing of water and wastewater service in both Vergennes and Ferrisburgh is not yet known. An interconnected network of streets and sidewalks with streetlights and shade trees on both sides is recommended through the study area to improve and encourage walkability.

Key goals to be achieved through zoning:

- Create diverse housing opportunities
- Foster a vibrant and diverse economy
- Enable more compact and mixed-use development
- Improve walkability and connectivity

Enabling new opportunities for the creation and expansion of residential and non-residential uses are fairly self-explanatory when reviewing recommended changes to the zoning. But how we use zoning to improve walkability and connectivity may be less obvious.

For a place to truly be “walkable,” it needs to:

- Give people a **PLACE** to walk.
- Give people a **REASON** to walk.
- Make the walk **ENJOYABLE**.



Existing vibrant street and storefront in downtown Vergennes

The physical characteristics of a “walkable” place include:

- an interconnected network of streets with sidewalks that invite “window shopping” and discovery (a **PLACE** to walk)
- a diverse array of residential, commercial, and community uses all within walking distance (~ 0.5 mile) of one another (a **REASON** to walk)
- diverse building and streetscape features that provide visual interest, and invite visitors to linger and socialize (*make the walk* **ENJOYABLE**)
- buildings that (*also make the walk* **ENJOYABLE**):
 - are set close to the street and sidewalk
 - are set close to one another
 - have entrances facing the street and sidewalk that are closely spaced
 - have transparent first-floor windows facing the street

Development Review Objectives:

In order to effectively attract and facilitate compact and mixed-use development, development regulations and processes must be clear, efficient, and predictable. The land use and development regulations and standards should be:

- **Clear** – plain language and highly graphical
- **Objective** – more numbers and fewer words, measurable
- **Sensible** – focused on what is most important to facilitating high-quality pedestrian-oriented design rather than architectural details and subjective aesthetics

And the land use and development processes should be:

- Fair
- Predictable – less discretionary and more by-right
- Timely and affordable

Permitted Uses:

Part of the “secret sauce” for successful mixed-use developments is **diversity** – diverse housing choices; diverse shops and businesses; diverse household types, incomes, and ages; and diverse experiences. Overly restrictive and constrained land use options will unnecessarily stifle new opportunities and are unable to easily anticipate and respond to changing demographics, markets, and economic trends. Additionally, an over-reliance on a discretionary “Conditional Use Review” process unnecessarily adds delay, costs, and uncertainty that can be an obstacle to new development.

Instead, zoning regulations should allow a wide range and array of residential and non-residential uses in the Growth Areas as “Permitted Uses” that can be permitted “by-right” and without a discretionary review process. Examples include allowing all types of attached and detached residential uses, most small to medium-sized retail and services, hospitality and entertainment, bed and breakfasts and hotels, schools and daycare, and many small-scale manufacturing and processing. In cases where the scale of use may be an important factor, distinctions between small and larger versions of a given use can be made (i.e. Retail up to 5,000 sq.ft. and Retail over 5,000 sq.ft.) and as a result allow the smaller be permitted by-right and the larger be treated as a Conditional Use. Rather than relying on an unpredictable Conditional Use review process, regulatory tools like form standards can be used to address building placement, scale and massing; Site Plan Review can address lighting, parking, and circulation; and, performance standards can be used to manage potential offsite impacts. When the regulations are written clearly and with objective standards, there is little need for discretion – the application either meets the requirements, or it doesn’t.

Dimensional Standards

Often, the dimensional standards found in zoning governing lot size and width, density limitations, and yard setbacks will result in a suburban and very land-consuming development pattern because they typically do not allow for smaller and compact development. Instead, they require large lots with buildings widely separated – just the opposite of a compact and mixed-use growth center.

As noted above, however, it is the closeness of buildings and uses to one another and the street that is an essential characteristic of a “walkable place.” To facilitate this compact pattern, the City and Town are encouraged to make the following types of changes to their zoning within the study area:

- Eliminate maximum density limits and minimum lot sizes to enable more compact development and facilitate more mixed-use, and instead use maximum limits on building placement, setbacks, and height to manage the scale and pattern of new development.
- Reduce minimum lot setbacks and street frontage to enable more compact development, bring buildings closer to the street/sidewalk and closer together, and enable narrow-lot detached houses and attached housing forms like townhouses
- Add maximum lot and building width and front setbacks to bring buildings closer together
- Reduce on-site parking requirements for multi-family and consider eliminating it entirely for affordable housing, and allow shared parking by-right

Zoning Recommendations

(A)

The following are a series of recommended changes to the zoning regulations for consideration by the City of Vergennes and Town of Ferrisburgh. They are organized into a collection of five proposed underlying zoning districts as illustrated on in Figure 4.

District 1: Depot Quarter/Northern

Gateway (purple)

District 2: Enterprise (blue)

District 3: Residential (teal)

District 4: Downtown Gateway (orange)

District 5: Eastern Gateway (pink)

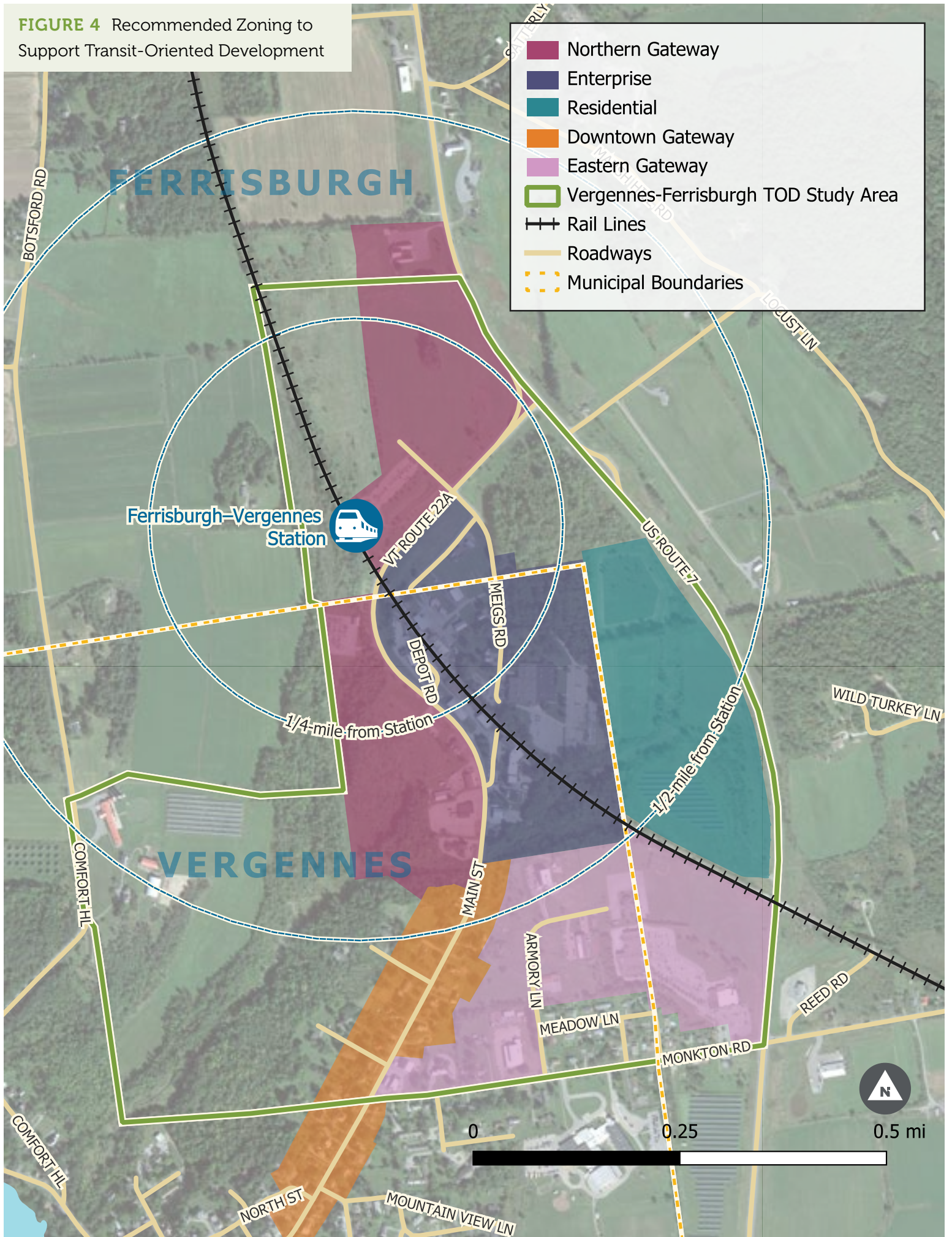
Additionally, the wooded knoll at the south-western corner of the VT 22A and US 7 intersection in Ferrisburgh is recommended to be rezoned to a form of Conservation District/Overlay that would restrict new residential and commercial development and maintain the site as important open space/habitat/recreation.

Three of the five proposed districts are intended to apply in both the City of Vergennes and the Town of Ferrisburgh. The proposed Residential district applies only in the Town of Ferrisburgh, while the Downtown Gateway district applies only within the City of Vergennes. For districts that are found in both communities, it is very important that the regulations mirror one another and are consistently applied. One possible approach to achieving this would be for the communities to agree to share a Zoning Administrator in these limited cases.

For each of the proposed districts, the recommendations cover the overall purpose and intent of the district, offer overall characteristics of future development, propose a set of recommended dimensional standards, and a set of recommended land uses. While they may appear quite detailed, they are intended to help advance the important concepts discussed in the previous section, and illustrate possibilities for the communities to consider. To actually incorporate them into the current regulations will require additional refinement and discussion beyond the completion of this plan.

In addition to the proposed changes to the underlying zoning, the creation of a Form and Site Design Overlay to encompass the entire study area is also recommended. This will enable the communities to apply a comprehensive set of form and site standards across the study area, and possibly beyond.

FIGURE 4 Recommended Zoning to Support Transit-Oriented Development



- Northern Gateway
- Enterprise
- Residential
- Downtown Gateway
- Eastern Gateway
- Vergennes-Ferrisburgh TOD Study Area
- Rail Lines
- Roadways
- Municipal Boundaries

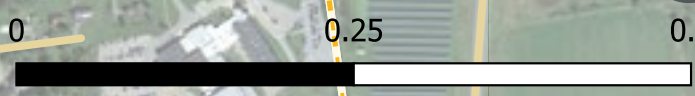
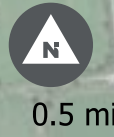


FIGURE 5 Depot Quarter/Northern Gateway Zoning District



District 1: Depot Quarter/ Northern Gateway

This proposed zoning district includes portions of the current Vergennes “Northern Gateway District” concentrated along the west side of 22-A in Vergennes, and which is replicated in south Ferrisburgh on the Amtrak station property in an area currently zoned “Industrial.”

Purpose/Intent

A place to support the multi-modal transportation hub with nearby compact mixed-use development and services/uses that help to create a destination for visitors and new opportunities for expanded residential and commercial uses.

Overall Characteristics

- Buildings are 2 to 5 stories, close to the street and one another
- Building footprint max of ~20,000 sq. ft.
- Common building types: townhouse, duplex, triplex, quadplex, cottage courts, small multi-family, medium multi-family, mixed-use, work-live, small commercial, civic
- “Storefront” characteristics required for ground floor of mixed-use buildings (larger windows, transparency, etc.) with frontage along 22-A
- Multiple principal buildings and uses are permitted on a lot
- Expanded list of uses includes several that can be permitted by-right (i.e., office, service, bank, retail, residential, etc.)

Dimensional Standards

Lot Area (square feet)	NA
Density (dwelling units per acre)	NA
Street Frontage (feet) (lot width at the frontage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min • 120' max
Frontage Occupation (% of linear street frontage occupied by a principal building facade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% min
Front Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min • 25' max
Side Yards Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min; 10' min where directly abutting a residential zoning district • 25' max (either side) • 35' max combined (both sides)
Rear Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min; 10' min where directly abutting a residential zoning district
Lot Coverage (% of lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% max
Building Height (stories and feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 stories and 24' min • 5 stories not to exceed 62' max
Building Height Bonus*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 stories not to exceed 74' max

*as permitted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4412 for affordable housing.

Land Uses

Permitted Uses	Conditional Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Hospital/ Veterinary Clinic • Bank • Bed and Breakfast • Child Care Facility • Dwelling (ADU to non-residential Principal Use, Multiple-household) • Food Processing • Hotel • Inn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Center • Drive-through Businesses • Enclosed Manufacturing Industries • Motor Vehicle Sales and Service • Recreation, Indoor • Recreation, Outdoor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Facility • Medical Services Facility • Multi-modal Transit Facility • Municipal Facility • Office • Personal Service • Professional Service • Professional Studio • Restaurant • Retail 	

FIGURE 6 Enterprise Zoning District



District 2: Enterprise

This proposed zoning district includes the current “Industrial District” in Vergennes renamed to “Enterprise” to better reflect the intended diversity of “making” uses. Concentrated along the east side of 22-A on both sides of the rail line in Vergennes, and replicated in south Ferrisburgh west of Meigs Rd, currently zoned “Highway/Mixed-use.”

Note that the wooded knoll at the south-western corner of the VT 22A and US 7 intersection is recommended to be rezoned to a form of Conservation District/Overlay that would restrict new residential and commercial development and maintained as an important habitat/recreational/open space

Purpose/Intent

A place to accommodate small/artisan-scale assembly, manufacturing, processing and fabrication (i.e., food and beverage, woodworking, ceramics, metalworks, vehicle repair, etc.) along with complementary retail and workforce housing.

Overall Characteristics

- An emphasis on retaining existing buildings where practical to provide affordable space for emerging entrepreneurs
- Multiple principal buildings and uses are permitted on a lot
- Buildings 1 to 3 stories
- Building footprint max of 50,000 sq. ft.
- Common building types: townhouse, duplex, triplex, quadplex, work-live, mixed-use, small commercial, fabrication/warehouse
- Residential uses are permitted, either attached or detached, especially including work-live units
- Performance standards are used as the primary tool to provide objective limits on impacts (noise, smoke, vibration, etc.) not to extend beyond property boundary rather than Conditional Use Review

Dimensional Standards

Lot Area (square feet)	NA
Density (dwelling units per acre)	NA
Street Frontage (feet) (lot width at the frontage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min • 120' max
Frontage Occupation (% of linear street frontage occupied by a principal building facade)	NA
Front Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min • 20' max
Side Yards Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min; 10' min where directly abutting a residential zoning district • 25' max (either side) • 35' max combined (both sides)
Rear Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min; 10' min where directly abutting a residential zoning district
Lot Coverage (% of lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% max
Building Height (stories and feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 story min • 3 stories not to exceed 38' max
Building Height Bonus*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 stories not to exceed 50' max

*as permitted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4412 for affordable housing.

Land Uses

Permitted Uses	Conditional Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Hospital/ Veterinary Clinic • Child Care Facility • Dwelling (ADU, One Household, Two Household, Multiple-household) • Enclosed Manufacturing Industries • Enclosed Service and Repair • Food Processing • Artisan/Light Industry. • Instructional Facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Services Facility • Motor Vehicle Sales and Service • Municipal Facility • Office • Personal Service • Professional Service • Professional Studio • Restaurant • Retail • Warehouse
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Center • Drive-through Businesses • Recreation, Indoor • Recreation, Outdoor • Other Commercial and/or Industrial Uses—upon findings by the Development Review Board that such use is of the same general character as those permitted and which will not be detrimental to the other uses within the district or to the adjoining land uses.

FIGURE 7 Residential Zoning District



District 3: Residential

A new district east of the new Enterprise District that is located entirely in south Ferrisburgh and currently zoned "Highway Mixed-Use."

Note that the wooded knoll at the south-western corner of the VT 22A and US 7 intersection is recommended to be rezoned to a form of Conservation District/Overlay that would restrict new residential and commercial development and maintained as an important habitat/recreational/open space

Purpose/Intent

Provide residential opportunities that offer a diversity of smaller residential building types serving a wide range of incomes and support the nearby mixed-use districts.

Overall Characteristics

- A walkable and compact neighborhood with a range of predominantly missing middle residential building types (i.e., duplex, triplex, quad, townhouse).
- Buildings 1-2.5 stories
- All access via Meigs Rd - no access to US 7
- Frontage width max of 80' or 150' except in the case of attached townhouses
- Building footprint max of 4,000 sq. ft.
- Common building types: single, duplex, townhouse, triplex, quadplex, cottage courts, mixed-use, work-live
- Additional principal buildings are permitted on a lot either at the frontage, behind a principal building at the frontage, or as part of a cottage court. Porches and stoops are expected at the frontage to define the primary entrance and engage the buildings with the street and sidewalk

Dimensional Standards

Lot Area (square feet)	NA
Density (dwelling units per acre)	NA
Street Frontage (feet) (lot width at the frontage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min • 80' max
Frontage Occupation (% of linear street frontage occupied by a principal building facade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% min
Front Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min • 20' max
Side Yards Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5' min • 20' max (either side) • 30' max combined (both sides)
Rear Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min
Lot Coverage (% of lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% max
Building Height (stories and feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 story min • 2 stories not to exceed 30' max
Building Height Bonus*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 stories not to exceed 38' max

*as permitted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4412 for affordable housing.

Land Uses

Permitted Uses	Conditional Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care Facility • Dwelling (ADU, One Household, Two Household, Multiple-household) • Office • Personal Service • Professional Service • Professional Studio • Retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Center • Municipal Facility • Recreation, Indoor • Recreation, Outdoor

FIGURE 8 Downtown Gateway Zoning District



District 4: Downtown Gateway

The current “Residential/Limited Business District” along both sides of VT 22-A in Vergennes connects the Northern Gateway and Enterprise districts to the Central Business District.

Purpose/Intent

Provide connectivity to the downtown area with a residential character and scale that closely follows the existing patterns.

Overall Characteristics

- Buildings 1.5-2.5 stories
- Frontage width max of 80-100’, depending on existing pattern
- Building footprint max of 4,000 sq. ft.
- Common building types: townhouse, duplex, triplex, quadplex, cottage courts, small multi-family, medium multi-family, mixed-use, work-live, small commercial, civic
- Additional principal buildings are permitted on a lot either at the frontage, behind a principal building at the frontage, or as part of a cottage court.
- Porches and stoops are expected at the frontage to define the primary entrance and engage the buildings with the street and sidewalk

Dimensional Standards

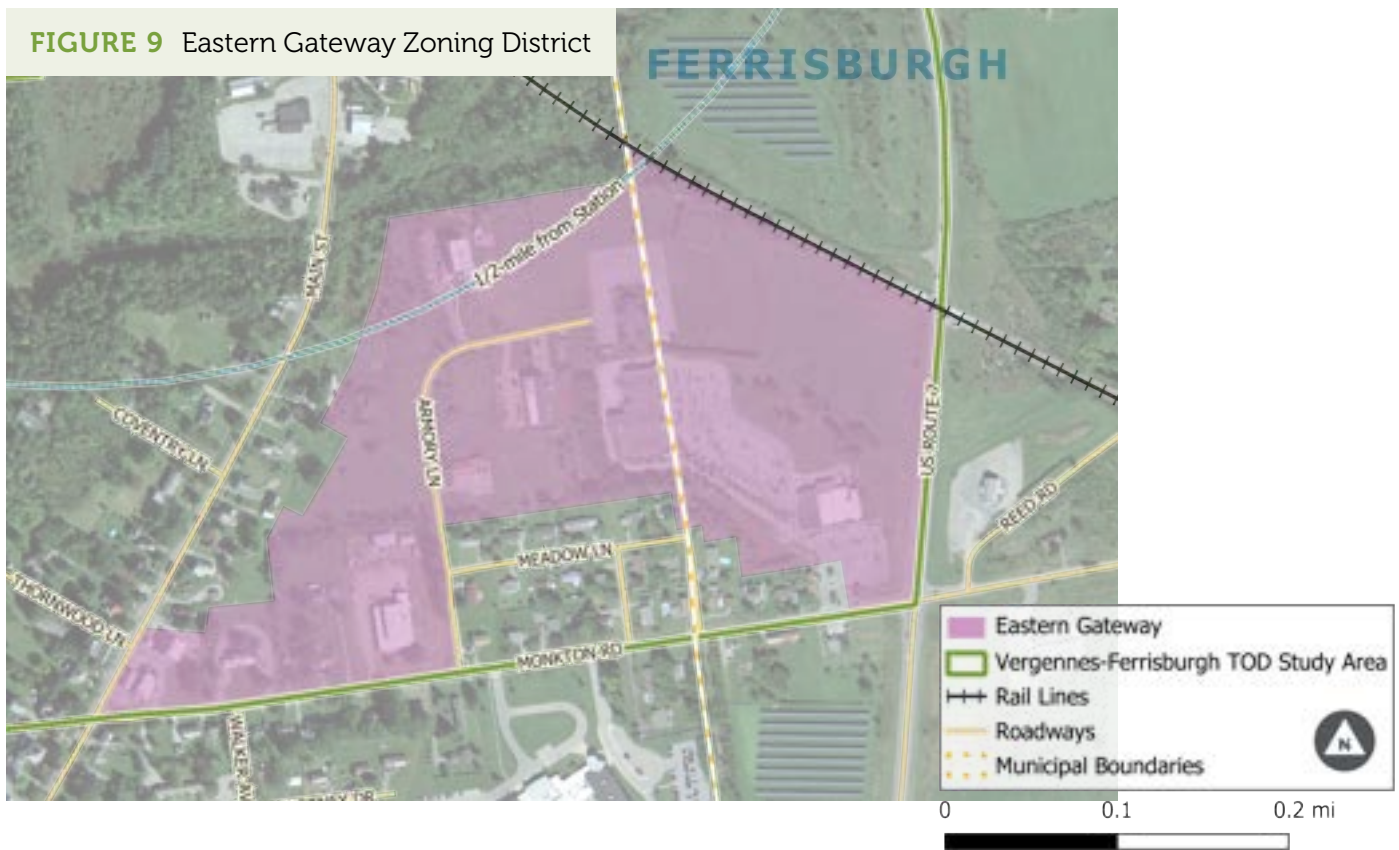
Lot Area (square feet)	NA
Density (dwelling units per acre)	NA
Street Frontage (feet) (lot width at the frontage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min • 80' max
Frontage Occupation (% of linear street frontage occupied by a principal building facade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% min
Front Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min • 20' max
Side Yards Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5' min • 20' max (either side) • 30' max combined (both sides)
Rear Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min
Lot Coverage (% of lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% max
Building Height (stories and feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 stories and 24' min • 3 stories not to exceed 38' max
Building Height Bonus*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 stories not to exceed 50' max

*as permitted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4412 for affordable housing.

Land Uses

Permitted Uses	Conditional Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Hospital/Veterinary Clinic • Child Care Facility • Dwelling (One Household, Two Household, Multiple-household) • Artisan/Light Industry. • Instructional Facility • Medical Services Facility • Municipal Facility • Office • Personal Service • Professional Service • Professional Studio • Restaurant • Retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Center • Drive-through Businesses • Enclosed Manufacturing Industries • Enclosed Service and Repair. • Motor Vehicle Sales and Service • Recreation, Indoor • Recreation, Outdoor • Warehouse • Other Commercial Uses—upon findings by the Development Review Board that such use is of the same general character as those permitted and which will not be detrimental to the other uses within the district or to the adjoining land uses.

FIGURE 9 Eastern Gateway Zoning District



District 5: Eastern Gateway

This proposed zoning district combines the portion of the Vergennes High Density Residential District east of VT 22-A with the portion of the Commercial District north of Monkton Road into one mixed-use district and duplicates the adjacent Highway-Mixed-use district in south Ferrisburgh south of the railroad.

Purpose/Intent

A place to accommodate residential and non-residential buildings and uses that typically require a larger scale and footprint that can be accommodated in the central business district, and provide important community-wide benefits/services.

Overall Characteristics

- Attached multi-unit residential, larger format retail with complimentary civic, service and office uses
- Multiple principal buildings and uses are permitted on a lot
- Buildings 2 to 5 stories
- Building width max or mixed-use buildings with spacing requirements for primary entrances
- Building footprint max of 50,000 sq. ft.
- Common building types: townhouse, duplex, triplex, quadplex, small multi-family, medium multi-family, mixed-use, work-live, small commercial, large commercial, civic
- “Storefront” characteristics required for ground floor of mixed-use buildings (larger windows, transparency, etc.)

Dimensional Standards

Lot Area (square feet)	NA
Density (dwelling units per acre)	NA
Street Frontage (feet) (lot width at the frontage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10' min • 120' max
Frontage Occupation (% of linear street frontage occupied by a principal building facade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% min
Front Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min • 20' max
Side Yards Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min; 10' min where directly abutting a residential zoning district • 25' max (either side) • 35' max combined (both sides)
Rear Yard Setback (feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0' min; 10' min where directly abutting a residential zoning district
Lot Coverage (% of lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% max
Building Height (stories and feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 stories and 24' min • 5 stories not to exceed 62' max
Building Height Bonus*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 stories not to exceed 74' max

*as permitted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4412 for affordable housing.

Land Uses

Permitted Uses	Conditional Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Hospital/Veterinary Clinic • Child Care Facility • Dwelling (One Household, Two Household, Multiple-household) • Food Processing • Artisan/Light Industry. • Instructional Facility • Medical Services Facility • Municipal Facility • Office • Personal Service • Professional Service • Professional Studio • Restaurant • Retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Center • Drive-through Businesses • Enclosed Manufacturing Industries • Enclosed Service and Repair • Motor Vehicle Sales and Service • Recreation, Indoor • Recreation, Outdoor • Warehouse • Other Commercial and/or Industrial Uses—upon findings by the Development Review Board that such use is of the same general character as those permitted and which will not be detrimental to the other uses within the district or to the adjoining land uses.

Form and Site Design Overlay

(B) In addition to the changes to the underlying zoning districts proposed above, the creation of a “Form and Site Design Overlay” is also recommended to enable the communities to apply a comprehensive set of form and site standards across the study area, and possibly beyond.

A Form and Site Design Overlay is intended to apply in both the City of Vergennes and Town of Ferrisburgh, and it is very important that the regulations are consistently applied. One possible approach to achieving this would be for the communities to agree to share a Zoning Administrator in these limited cases.

The purpose of a Form and Site Design Overlay is to provide a comprehensive set of objective development standards to facilitate new and more compact development that emphasize a more efficient arrangement of lots and buildings thereby recognizing and enhancing the economic importance and unique historic qualities of the existing buildings and neighborhoods.

Unlike conventional design and development regulations, form-based standards use the intended built form and physical characteristics of a place as the organizing principle or framework, rather than separating or concentrating land uses.

While form-based standards primarily focus on the intended physical form and character of a place, it is not to say they ignore uses. Form-based regulations carefully encourage a range of uses and building scales to maximize compatibility with the intended physical form of the area. Form-based standards are also typically focused on creating and supporting a compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly and engaging environment. In many cases, the defined physical form and characteristics of a place or building will greatly influence the type or scale of a given use.

A form-based approach helps to explain how buildings and structures relate to their lots, surrounding buildings and structures, and the street and other public rights-of-way. This is accomplished by providing a range of objective standards for the elements of developments and buildings that define a place, such as:

- The relationships between principal buildings and accessory buildings
- Building placement on the lot
- Principal building orientation and location of the primary entrance
- The proportion of voids on a façade and degree of transparency
- The location and configuration of access and parking areas
- The use and amount of landscaping
- The location and configuration of loading and service areas

A form-based approach is intended to provide for a more certain “By-Right” approval by the Zoning Administrative Officer whenever a proposed development conforms with the objective and prescriptive requirements. As such, the standards are quite detailed to ensure a consistent and predictable result for both the applicant and the community.

The City of Vergennes has a number of design standards in the Specific Standards applicable to the Central Business District, and throughout the Illustrated Guidelines found in Sec 1617 of Art. XVI of the current ordinance. The project team recommends they be consolidated and reorganized into a single Overlay that can be applied across multiple zoning districts. Examples include the standards and guidelines for Entrances and Storefronts, Massing, Scale and Rhythm, Materials, Roof Design, and Mechanical Equipment Screening.

(D)

In addition to applying a set of more prescriptive form-based standards, the project team also recommends offering applicants an opportunity to seek relief from strict conformance with one or more standards through a parallel discretionary review process that an applicant could utilize in situations where site and design constraints require greater flexibility, but where seeking a Variance may not be appropriate.

In these types of processes, the Development Review Board (DRB) is typically authorized to grant relief from any non-numerical standard, and any numerical standard by no more than 20%, after review and a Public Hearing. Decisions by the DRB are then made in writing, and upon affirmative findings that:

- the relief sought is necessary in order to accommodate unique site and/or Building circumstances or opportunities;
- the relief if granted, is the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result;
- the property will otherwise be developed consistent the purpose of this ordinance, the intent of the District, the intent and purpose of the section that the relief is being sought, and all other applicable standards;
- the relief if granted will not impose an undue adverse burden on existing or future development of adjacent properties; and,
- the relief if granted will yield a result equal to or better than strict compliance with the standard being relieved.

Regulatory Process Changes

(E)

Consider expanding the authority of the Zoning Administrator under Article IV to include up to four-household dwellings, and dividing Site Plan Review process under Article VII into a "Minor" and "Major" Site Plan Review and allowing the Zoning Administrator to review and approve all "Minor" Site Plans. The purpose is to allow for a quicker

and simpler review of smaller projects and make it very easy to do the "small stuff."

Minor Site Plans can be those projects that meet all the following:

- Involve a Permitted Use;
- Creates a new structure, or an expansion to an existing structure, totaling less than 10,000 gross square feet;
- Does not involve the creation of a new public or private Road; and,
- Does not otherwise require review and approval by the Development Review Board.

Other Policy Recommendations

Act 250 Jurisdiction

With the passage of Act 181 in 2024, there is an opportunity for one or both communities to partially, if not fully, exempt all new development in the study area from Act 250 jurisdiction.

Vergennes currently has a state designated Downtown that encompasses the City's Central Business District, and a Neighborhood Development Area that encompasses the neighborhoods adjacent to the Central Business District but excludes the portion of Main St/ 22-A that connects the Amtrak station to the Downtown and the Commercial area off Monkton Rd.

Under the new Tier system created by Act 181, the existing Designated Downtown will likely become a "Downtown Center" with some adjustments to the boundary possible. Along with the current Neighborhood Development Area, the Downtown will also become the center of a new "Planned Growth Area" with some adjustments to the boundary possible that should fill current gaps and capture the schools and Monkton Rd commercial area.

South Ferrisburgh is not included in any state designations, however the Ferrisburgh Village Center (~1.5 miles north of the Amtrak station) is a designated Village, and likely to continue at least as a “Village Center” if not a “Village Area” with limited on-site wastewater with some adjustments to the boundary possible.

Working with neighboring communities and the Regional Planning Commission, the Town of Ferrisburgh and City of Vergennes should be seeking to have the study area incorporated into a “Planned Growth Area,” and pursue Tier 1B - or even Tier 1A – designation to eliminate unnecessary duplication, cost, and uncertainty in the regulatory process.

Official Map

The Envision section presented previously describes a proposed interconnected network of roads, sidewalks, bikeways, and pedestrian paths within the study area to improve connectivity, reduce congestion, and provide greater mode choice and opportunity. By creating new blocks, this network forms the critical framework for the organization and placement of future development.

Creating and adopting an “Official Map” by the City and Town would serve to articulate and illustrate the community’s intent for how new development is to be organized, and preserve proposed Rights-of-Way (ROW) as development progresses. The use of an Official Map does not immediately obligate the City or Town to purchase the ROW and build the new infrastructure, but does provide for a type of “right of first refusal” that preserves the option where necessary. By communicating the desired network in map form and declaring the community’s desires, private development will often use it as a template and incorporate the new infrastructure into their development plans.

Art. IX of the Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations makes reference to an “Official Map,” however it is not found within the ordinance nor

on the City’s website and therefore it is not readily apparent to an applicant what areas of the City may be affected.

Public Works Standards

When creating new roads, sidewalks, bikeways, and paths, the standards that detail the desired amenities, widths, and configurations of new infrastructure are a very important part of what makes for a successful mixed-use center. Typical rural roadway standards will not be sufficient or nuanced enough to ensure traffic moves slowly yet efficiently; narrow rights of way can accommodate cars, bikes and parking; sidewalks are wide enough for two strollers to pass and smooth enough for pedestrians in heels or with a walker; and, shaded during the mid-day sun and well-lit in the evening.

The City and Town are encouraged to develop a comprehensive set of public works standards to cover both rural and urban roadways, sidewalks and pedestrian paths, bike lanes and bike paths, streetlights, street trees, furniture, and stormwater facilities. Often these include a range of street “types” to cover ROW configurations in mixed-use, residential, high-traffic through streets, and low-volume connectors. Having a current set of modern standards will be increasingly important should the communities want to participate in the state’s new Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), and private developers may be asked to design and build the new infrastructure serving their developments.

Art. IX of the Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations refers to a City ordinance regarding streets, sidewalks, curbs, drainage, and lighting. However, such development standards are not available on the City’s website, and therefore, it is not readily apparent to an applicant what requirements may be applicable or if the Official Map even exists at all.

(F)

(H)

(G)

Multimodal Infrastructure

A cohesive multimodal network is essential to realizing a walkable, compact, and connected district centered around the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Amtrak Station. The vision for infrastructure in this area is not only about moving people safely and efficiently, but also about supporting a vibrant place where walking, biking, transit, and driving all work together seamlessly.

Key elements of the multimodal infrastructure strategies in the plan include:

- **Street Network and Block Structure**

The proposed street network introduces a finer-grained block structure that enhances walkability and development flexibility (Figure 10). Smaller blocks (400 to 600 feet) that provide pedestrian crossings encourage local access, distribute traffic more evenly, and create more engaging, human-scaled environments. Streets are framed by sidewalks, shade trees, and street lighting, making them safe and appealing for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.

- **Transit Circulation and Access**

The Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Amtrak station anchors the community's regional transit network, offering daily rail service via the Ethan Allen Express. Bus routes, including Vermont Translines, the Tri-Town Shuttle, and the LINK to Burlington provide critical regional access. Future enhancements, such as upgraded stops, signage, and pedestrian improvements will better connect these services and improve user experience.

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity**

A continuous system of sidewalks, trails, and shared-use paths enables safe, convenient non-vehicular access throughout the community (Figure 11). Trail corridors link neighborhoods to the train station and commercial centers, while internal sidewalks and crossings prioritize short walking distances and safe travel

for all users. Infill development is paired with pedestrian-scaled infrastructure to create walkable environments that support daily life without reliance on a car.

- **Typical Street and Trail Sections**

Typical street types should respond to the context of the districts but share a common emphasis on multimodal design. For example, primary streets in the Depot Quarter and Downtown Gateway include travel lanes, on-street parking, wide sidewalks, and space for trees, lighting, and street furnishings. Residential and enterprise areas feature narrower rights-of-way with shared streets, traffic calming, and strong pedestrian orientation. Trail corridors and side paths offer an alternative travel network for people walking and biking, while also serving as green infrastructure and public space.

Key multimodal strategies should include:

- Establish a connected street grid that supports walkability and development flexibility.
- Expand the pedestrian network through continuous sidewalks, crossings, and traffic calming.
- Build out a trail and side path network that links key destinations and provides recreational value.
- Design street types that reflect surrounding land use and support all modes of travel.



Trail and wayfinding in Chapel Hill, North Carolina

FIGURE 10 Street Network

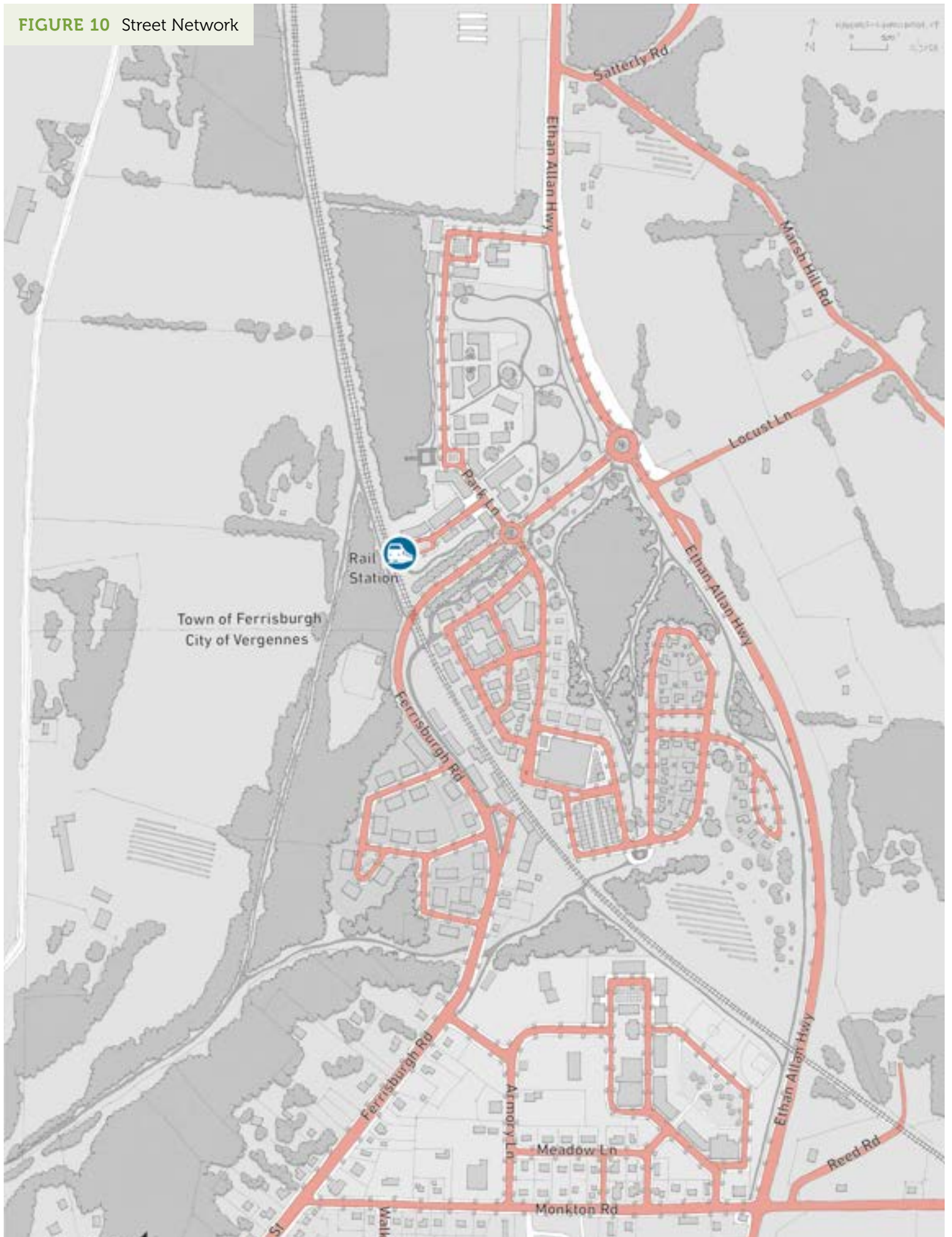
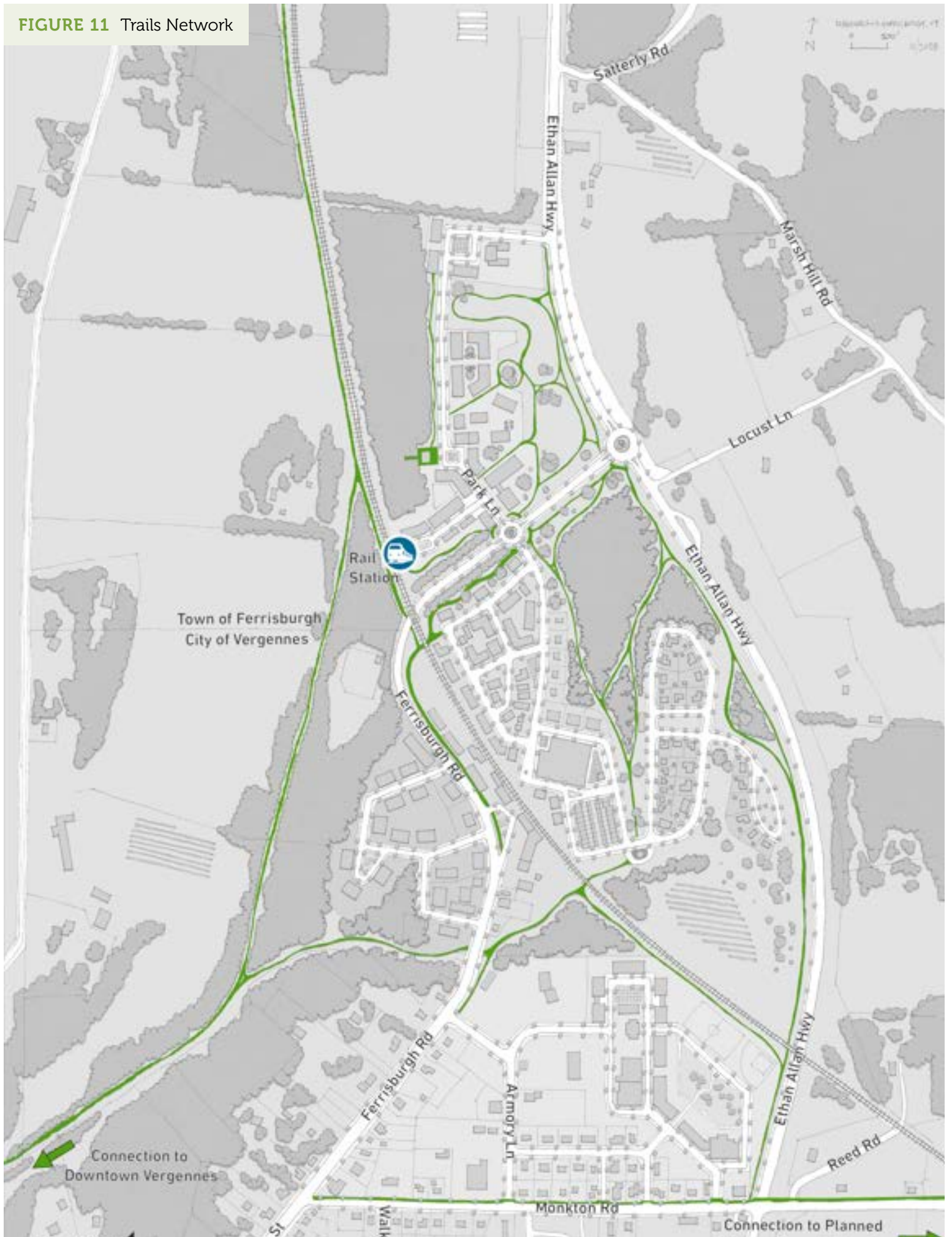


FIGURE 11 Trails Network



Public Realm and Placemaking

Rooted in a rich rail history and surrounded by small-town charm, the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes station area is uniquely positioned to become a welcoming and connected community hub. Placemaking in this effort should focus on bringing cohesion to experiences throughout the district by celebrating and amplifying local identity while supporting future transit-oriented development. From neighborhood greens and civic plazas to tree-lined streets and shared-use paths, the public realm forms the connective tissue that binds this district together.

Key placemaking elements should include:

- **Active Frontages**

In areas anticipated to have high levels of pedestrian activity, such as the Depot Quarter/ Northern Gateway and Downtown Gateway districts, development should include store-fronts, frequent entrances, and transparent facades to create “active edges” that animate the sidewalk and foster vibrant street life throughout the day.

- **Wayfinding**

A system of signage should guide residents and visitors throughout the district, whether by foot, bicycle, or automobile, and connect them to destinations such as the train station, civic spaces, trails, and downtown Vergennes with clear, consistent visual cues.

- **Gateway Features and District Identity**

Roundabouts, major intersections, and primary entries into the districts should incorporate coordinated gateway treatments such as signage, landscaping, and public art to clearly signal arrival and reflect a unified visual identity. Figure 12 illustrates potential locations for gateway features.

At the heart of this effort is the historic Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Depot, a rare surviving example of early rail architecture that anchors the district both physically and symbolically. The plan honors this legacy by making the depot a centerpiece of civic life – framing it with complementary public spaces, prioritizing pedestrian access, and ensuring new development enhances rather than overshadows its significance. Together these placemaking elements can create a layered and inclusive public realm that reflects community values while reinforcing the area’s function as a multimodal hub.



Frontages on Main Street in Norway, ME



Wayfinding signage in Montpelier, VT
(source: surfacematterdesign.com)

• **Civic Spaces and Plazas**

Public gathering places like small greens, trailheads, and shared community spaces, play an important role in bringing people together. These spaces do not need to be large or formal to be meaningful. The historic train station, pocket parks, monuments, and neighborhood greens can all offer opportunities for casual interaction, community events, or simply a place to rest. Future development in the study area, should incorporate these kinds of places to create a welcoming atmosphere and reinforce a sense of local identity. Figure 12 illustrates potential locations for civic spaces.

• **Pedestrian-Scaled Streetscape Amenities**

Across all districts, the public realm should include elements such as street trees, lighting, and furnishings to enhance safety, comfort, and visual cohesion.

Key placemaking strategies should include:

- Develop a cohesive wayfinding system for all travel modes that connects key destinations.
- Require active ground-floor frontages in mixed-use areas to enhance sidewalk experience.
- Include consistent street furnishings and lighting in all new infrastructure projects.
- Preserve and enhance the Depot's role as a historic and civic focal point.
- Design and implement gateway treatments at key arrival points to establish district identity. Gateway treatments can include facilities such as landscaped roundabouts, or monument signage that give a sense of arrival. Figure 12 illustrates potential locations for gateway treatments.
- Prioritize locating civic spaces such as public structures, art, landmarks, public gathering spaces, seating, small plazas, or important public service and social services buildings at focal and visible locations. Figure 12 illustrates potential locations where these civic spaces could be located.



Elm Cort Park in Montpelier, VT
(source: montpelier-vt.org)

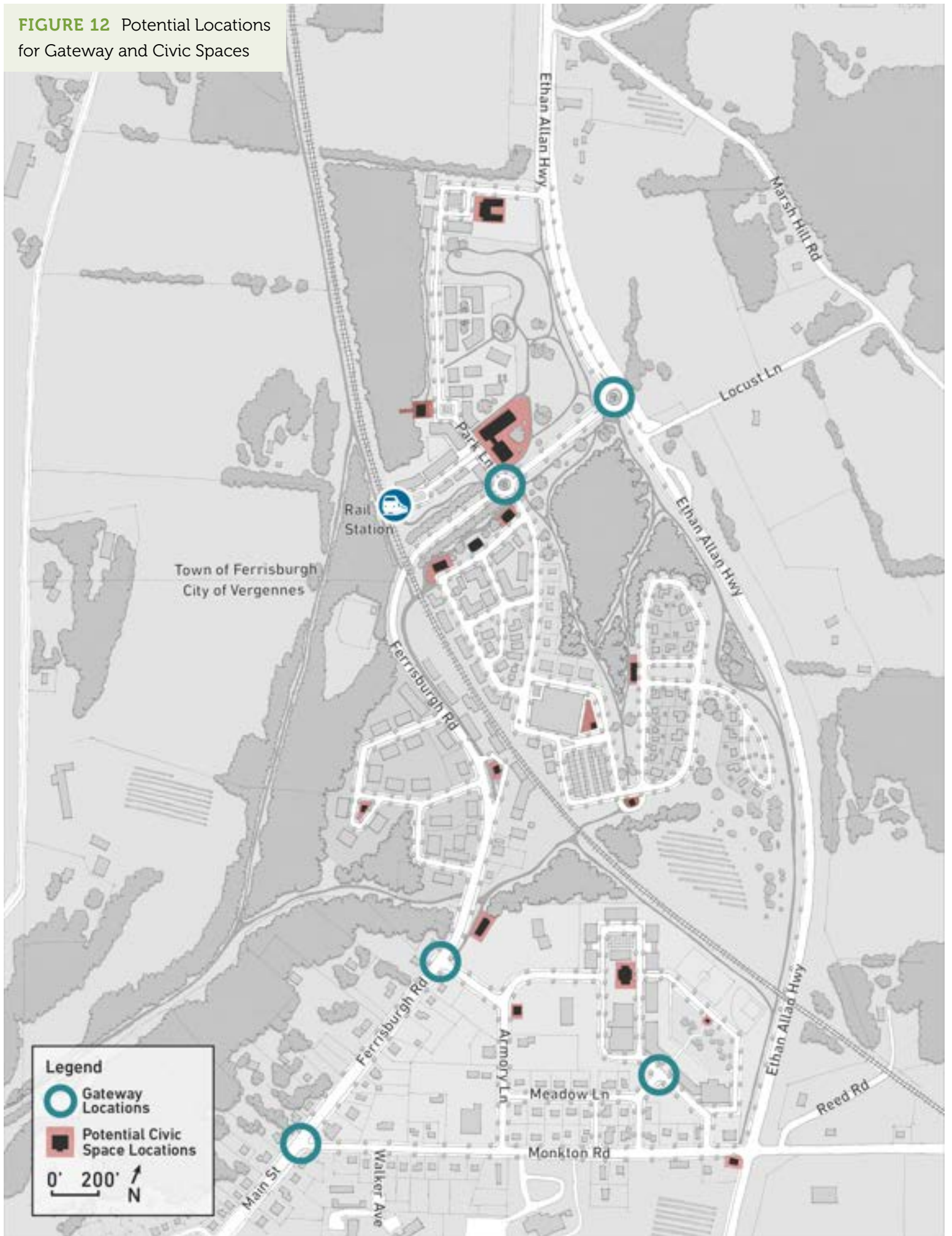


Pedestrian-scaled lighting, seating, landscaping, and trees on West Main Street in Denison, TX



Pedestrian amenities, crossing, and landscaping in downtown Vergennes

FIGURE 12 Potential Locations for Gateway and Civic Spaces



The background is a solid green color. There are two large, abstract orange shapes. One is in the top right corner, pointing downwards and to the left. The other is in the bottom left corner, pointing upwards and to the right. The word "Appendix" is centered in white text.

Appendix



VERGENNES-FERRISBURGH TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) MASTER PLAN

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

April 29, 2025

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Land Use and Development	5
Transportation and Mobility	8
Planning and Regulatory Context	13
Utilities and Infrastructure	14
Key Takeaways and Next Steps	14

INTRODUCTION

The Vergennes-Ferrisburgh-Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan will create a strategic framework to foster future development in the vicinity of the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes train station in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. By integrating transportation, land use, and community planning, the plan aims to enhance connectivity, promote sustainable growth, and support vibrant, livable neighborhoods that complement the existing activities in south Ferrisburgh and nearby downtown Vergennes.

The study area encompasses approximately a half-mile radius around the station in southern portions of the Town of Ferrisburgh and northern City of Vergennes (Figure 1).

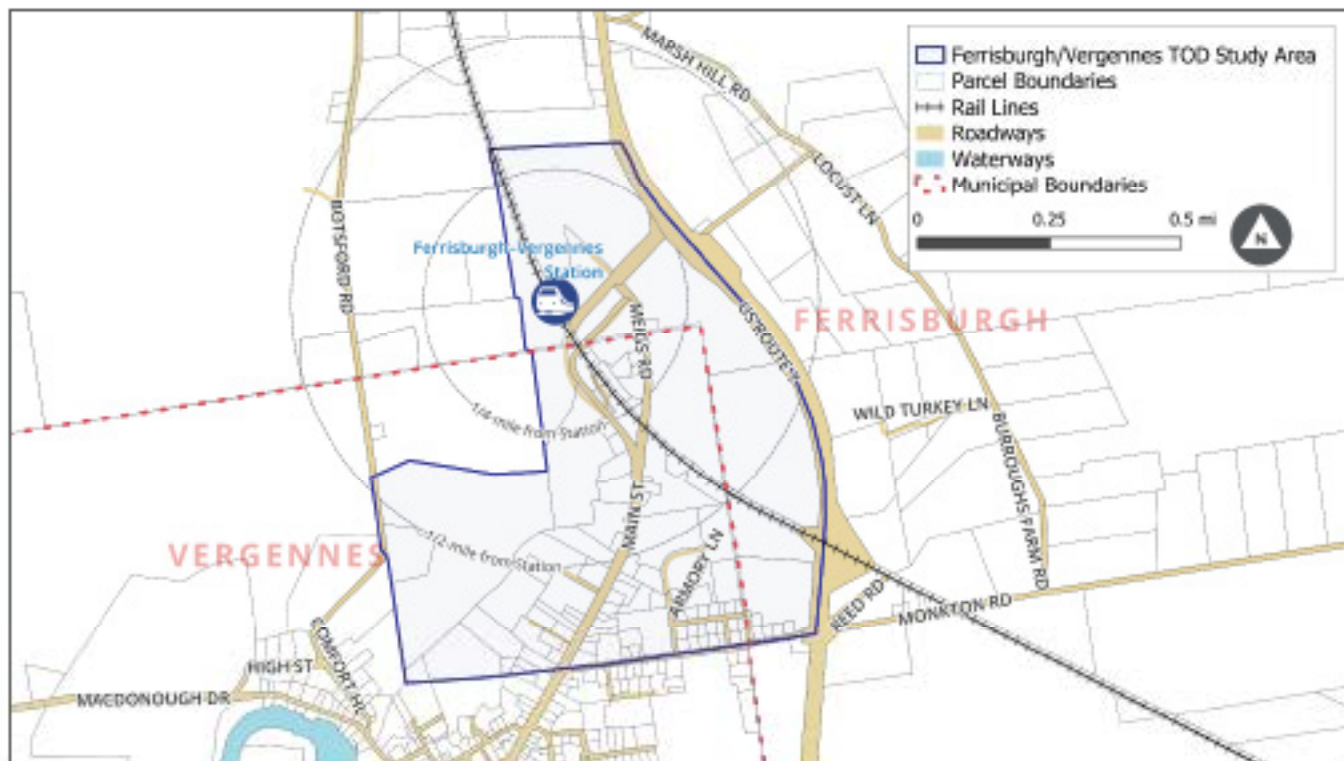


Figure 1: Study Area

The study area is in the northwest quadrant of Addison County in Vermont’s Champlain Valley and includes portions of the City of Vergennes and the Town of Ferrisburgh. This area is characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, and agricultural uses, and is well-connected by rail, regional highways, and transit services. The region’s historic roots in manufacturing, proximity to Otter Creek and Lake Champlain, and strong civic and cultural assets, including retail, dining, and community venues, contribute to its role as a regional hub. Situated less than an hour’s drive from Burlington and 20 minutes’ drive from Middlebury, the area remains an important regional economic hub, thriving community center, and destination for visitors.

The City of Vergennes has a population of approximately 2,570 individuals and 1,080 households. Similarly, Ferrisburgh has a population of around 2,850 individuals and also 1,080 households. According to the *Northwest Vermont TOD Market Analysis (2024)*, Vergennes and Ferrisburgh are both well-positioned to support future TOD-related growth. Vergennes is expected to accommodate a significant share of Addison County’s population, employment, and housing growth, with strong demand across housing types and few development barriers in the

TOD area.¹ Retail and service demand is projected to remain steady, focused on local needs. In Ferrisburgh, housing demand remains high, driven in part by workers from Chittenden County seeking more affordable options. Table 1 compares the socioeconomic information from Vergennes and Ferrisburgh to the county, state, and United States. Ferrisburgh and Vergennes both vary from state and national averages in key demographic and economic indicators. Vergennes varies from national averages in income (\$85,417), employment (64.5%), and education (83.8% with a high school diploma or higher), though it has a higher poverty rate (11.4%) and a more diverse housing stock, with only 62.1% single-family homes. These characteristics align with TOD goals for a compact, mixed-use community. Ferrisburgh shows strong suburban indicators, including a higher median income (\$111,408), lower poverty rate (3.0%), higher drive-alone rate (75.2%), and a higher share of single-family housing (82.2%).

Table 1: Socioeconomic Comparison Summary (2010-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

	Vergennes	Ferrisburgh	Addison County	Vermont	United States
Median Age	45	46	44	43	39
Average Household Size	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.5
High School Graduate or Higher	83.8%	98.7%	95.1%	94.5%	89.4%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	35.1%	48.5%	43.50%	42.8%	35.0%
Employed Population 16+	64.5%	63.4%	61.8%	62.1%	59.8%
Top 3 Industries	Manufacturing; Educational Services/ Healthcare; Professional/ Scientific	Construction; Educational Services/ Healthcare; Retail Trade	Educational Services/ Healthcare; Manufacturing; Retail Trade	Educational Services/ Healthcare; Retail Trade; Manufacturing	Educational Services/ Healthcare; Professional/ Scientific; Retail Trade
Median Household Income	\$85,417	\$111,408	\$88,478	\$78,024	\$78,538
Poverty Rate	11.4%	3.0%	7.4%	10.3%	12.4%
Single-Family Housing	62.1%	82.2%	78.9%	71.5%	67.5%
Drive to Work Alone	67.8%	75.20%	67.8%	70.1%	70.2%

¹ Northeast Vermont Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Market Analysis Project (2024): <https://www.co.vermont.gov/files/transport/2025/04/NNV-VT-TOD-FE-Market-Assessment-Summary-Report-08-13-24.pdf>

The purpose of this memo is to present the findings of the existing conditions analysis of the study area. This analysis focuses on identifying challenges and opportunities for developing thriving and sustainable land uses in the study area. Information summarized in this memo will assess recent plans, land use patterns, and infrastructure to provide a foundational understanding of the area's current state. Findings from this analysis will contribute to the "Discovery" phase of the TOD Master Plan.

Information summarized in this memo is based on a site visit conducted by the project team in December 2024, feedback gathered during a design charrette, and a review of existing plans and studies. The project team was provided and reviewed several digital documents, maps, and reports to have a better understanding of past plans, policies, goals, and regulations in the City of Vergennes and the Town of Ferrisburgh. These documents included:

Transportation

- Ferrisburgh Central School, Safe Routes to School Travel Plan, 2012
- Triangle Loop Master Plan, 2020
- Vergennes-Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL)-Study Alternatives Development and Screening, 2023
- Northwest Vermont Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Market Analysis Project, 2024

Land Use

- Vergennes Commercial and Industrial Structures Map
- Vergennes Land Use and Zoning Map Overlay Districts
- Vergennes Municipal Plan 2020
- Vergennes Land Use and Zoning Map
- Vergennes Municipal Development Plan, 2020–2028
- Town of Ferrisburgh Technical Review, 2018
- Ferrisburgh Town Plan, 2017–2025
- City of Vergennes, Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (adopted 2012, amended 2023)
- Housing Need in Vergennes, Vermont, April 2024

Utilities

- Vergennes-Panton Water District Pipes and Boundaries
- City of Vergennes, Sanitary Sewer Collection System Map of Existing Conditions and Previously Completed Investigations
- Vergennes-Panton Water District Service Area Map
- Vergennes-Panton Water District Distribution System Map
- Soil Septic Suitability and Private Water Well Yield Ferrisburgh Map

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Current Land Use

The portion of the study area that is in the City of Vergennes includes a mix of industrial, residential, and commercial land uses. Several former industrial properties are concentrated around a rail siding adjacent to Vermont Route 22A (VT 22A), along with several small retail and service businesses in a former furniture factory. A former manufacturing building north of the railroad is mostly vacant, other than a local cidery and physical therapy practice. The remainder of VT 22A heading south into downtown Vergennes is lined with many stately residential buildings. An older single-story commercial center with a grocery, hardware, and pharmacy lies at the northwest corner of Monkton Road and U.S. Route 7 (US 7) in both Vergennes and south Ferrisburgh. In between the commercial center to the east, and VT 22A to the west is an area that has more recently seen the development of 3-story multi-family and other community uses.

The portion of the study area in the southern part of Town of Ferrisburgh consists largely of open farmland along both sides of US 7. The Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Amtrak station and regional park-and-ride is at the northwest side of the intersection of US 7 and VT 22A and on the northern border of the City of Vergennes. On the eastern border with the City along Monkton Road is the older single-story commercial center with a substantial amount of surface parking overlapping into Vergennes.

Current Zoning

The portion of the study area that is in the City of Vergennes includes five zoning districts:

- Northern Gateway,
- Commercial,
- High Density Residential,
- Industrial, and
- Residential/Limited Business.

Key zoning characteristics and challenges in Vergennes that may impact the development and implementation of the TOD Master Plan include:

- There are few building placement and frontage design standards to support walkability improvements in the area.
- Large lots, frontage, and setback requirements can inhibit a compact, mixed-use, and walkable development pattern.
- There is flexibility through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) processes, but much of the approval process relies on discretionary review by the Development Review Board (DRB). The DRB can adjust (increase or decrease) on-site parking requirements at its discretion without specific standards, creating uncertainty and inconsistency in implementation.
- PUDs are required to develop more than one residential building, but there is ambiguity regarding their applicability to non-residential projects.
- Lot size requirements for residential areas are directly tied to the number of permitted units, and zoning currently prohibits residential uses in Commercial districts.
- Most uses other than one and two-family dwellings are only allowed as Conditional Uses, requiring most new development to go through a potentially lengthy, uncertain, and costly discretionary review process.
- Future zoning updates will need to align with provisions of the Homes Act, allowing up to four units as a Permitted Use wherever water and wastewater infrastructure is adequate.

Zoning in the Town of Ferrisburgh portion of the study area is composed of:

- Highway/Mixed Use,
- Industrial, and
- Rural Agricultural 5 districts.

Key zoning characteristics and challenges in Ferrisburgh that may impact the development and implementation of the TOD Master Plan include:

- Compact development in the south Ferrisburgh area is hindered by large lot and setback requirements, though the PLUD processes offer opportunities for flexibility.
- The Planning Commission (PC) and/or Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) primarily handles the review process, relying heavily on discretionary oversight.
- Development standards are minimal, with no clear requirements for building placement or frontage design, resulting in limited support for walkability within the zoning framework.
- Excessive on-site parking requirements mandate 2 spaces per dwelling unit or 4 spaces for every 3 multi-family units.
- Parking for commercial uses must be set back 50 feet from residential uses.
- In Highway Mixed Use districts, single-family residences are permitted but multi-family housing is conditional and all non-residential uses require conditional approval, limiting development flexibility.
- In Industrial districts, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are permitted but no other residential uses are allowed, restricting potential mixed-use opportunities; 100-foot setbacks in residential districts (side and rear) and 200 feet from US 7, VT 22A, and the railroad are excessive and reduce developable land.

Figure illustrates the current zoning in the study area.

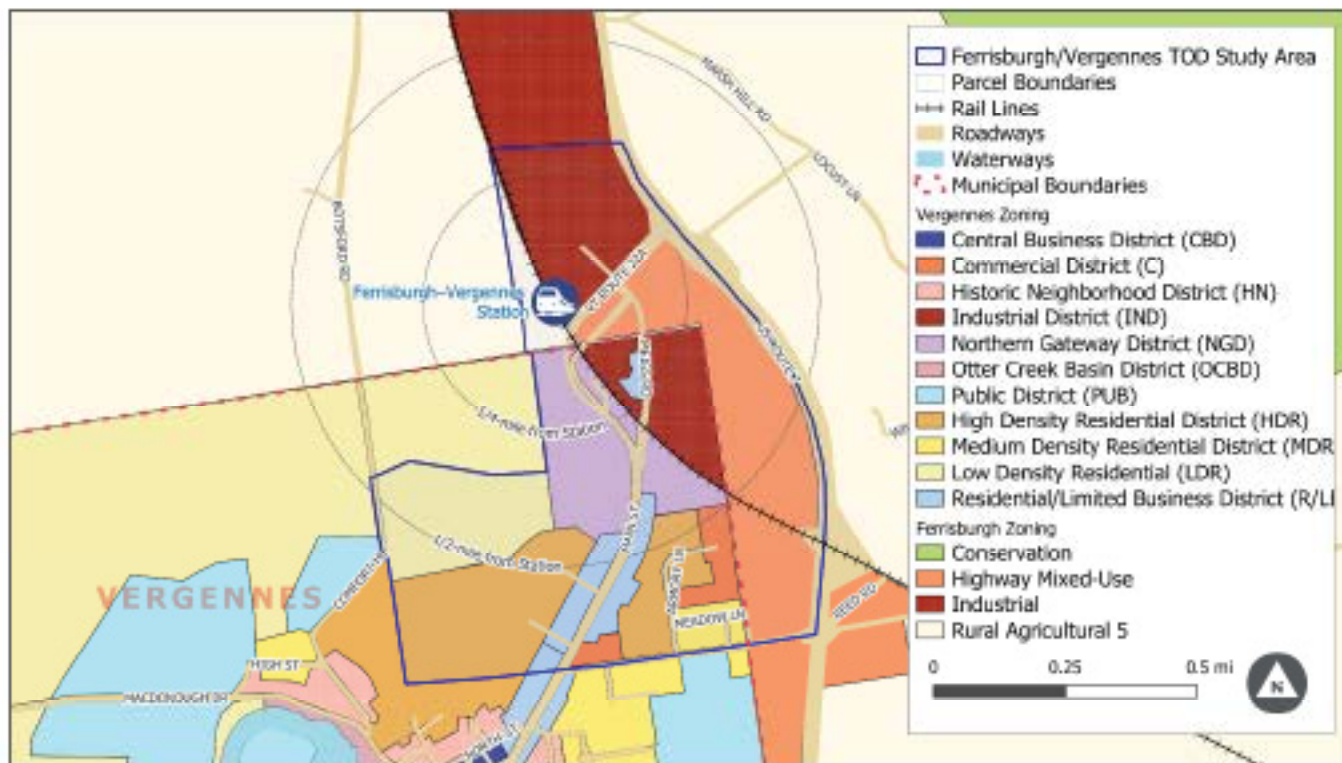


Figure 2: Ferrisburgh and Vergennes Zoning (Source: State of Vermont Open Geodata Portal, accessed January 2025)

Protected Lands

There are portions of the study area that are currently identified as protected lands – specifically the parcel just north of the station along US 7. Protected lands are areas that are protected from development through public ownership, private ownership, or protection mechanisms such as easements. As the TOD Master Plan is developed, this area will have to be noted so that no major development should be proposed on this parcel. Figure illustrates the current protected lands in the study area.

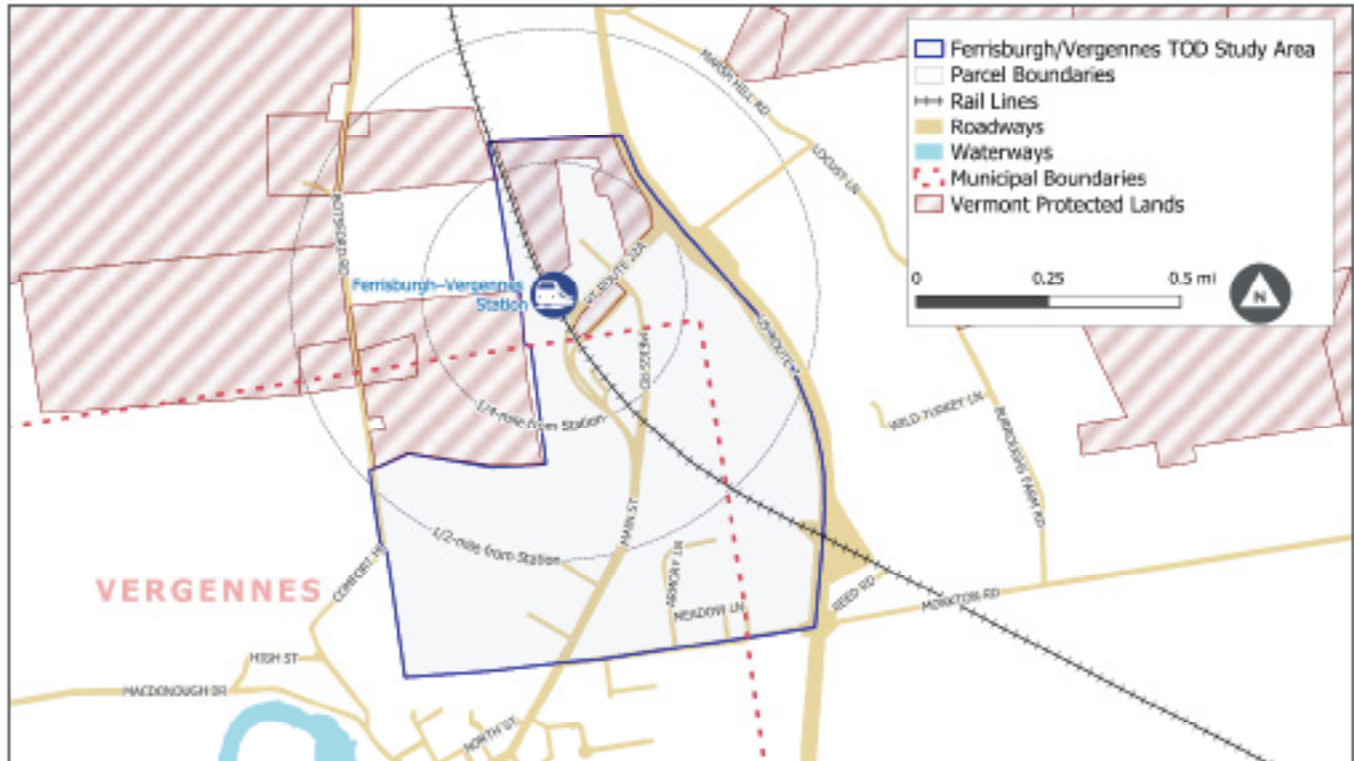


Figure 3: Protected Lands (Source: State of Vermont Open Geodata Portal, accessed January 2025)

Current Development

Several development projects are currently active within the TOD study area, signaling forward momentum in addressing local housing and economic development goals. These include:

- **Champlain Valley Grain Center:** The Grain Center will be a new agribusiness facility located at the corner of US 7 and VT 22A. Permitting is currently underway.
- **Workforce Housing (VT 22A):** Situated just west of VT 22A beyond the underpass, this proposed development includes 10 new residential buildings. Permitting is currently underway for the project, which is intended to provide much-needed workforce housing.
- **Armistice House (Armory Lane):** Located behind the existing 10-unit Armory House on Armory Lane in Vergennes, this new 3-story building will add 18 additional housing units.

These developments will support more compact, transit-supportive land use because and their proximity to the train station reinforces the importance of the TOD Master Plan in leveraging current development momentum to guide sustainable and coordinated growth in the study area.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Transit

The passenger rail service to the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes station is provided by Amtrak's Ethan Allen Express line. The line serves the station with one daily round trip between Burlington, Vermont, and New York City. The line stops at the station at approximately 8 P.M. when traveling northbound to Burlington, and at 10:30 A.M. when traveling southbound to New York City.

The station features a waiting room and a park-and-ride facility, and is served by three regional bus routes:

- Vermont Translines' Route 7 primarily travels the US 7 corridor from Colchester, VT to Rensselaer, NY AMTRAK station, the Albany, NY Greyhound bus terminal, and Albany International Airport in Colonie, NY (this route is marketed as and can be booked via Greyhound services);
- Tri-Valley Transit's Tri-Town Shuttle stopping at the station by request and connecting Vergennes & Bristol, VT to Middlebury, VT; and
- Tri-Valley LINK to Burlington connecting Middlebury to Burlington via US 7 and four stops per day at the station.

Road Network and Trucks

The study area is served by two highways – VT 22A (Ferrisburgh Road / Main Street) and US 7 (Ethan Allen Highway). US 7 and the portion of VT 22A are maintained and operated by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). The portion of VT 22A passing through the City of Vergennes is maintained by the City as a Class 1 Town Highway. The surrounding local and collector road network is maintained by the respective municipalities of Ferrisburgh and Vergennes, and includes several roads providing access to nearby residential and commercial areas in a curvilinear pattern. The road network pattern in the study area is distinct from the small, gridded hub-and-spoke network in downtown Vergennes. Because VT 22A and US 7 are the primary regional, state, and interstate north-south corridors for Vermont's western edge, there is a high volume of trucks through the study area. The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) Revised Transportation Plan (approved August 2024) describes VT 22A as high-level of concern due to increasing truck volumes in Vergennes – 16% of the average daily traffic on VT 22A are single unit and combination trucks.²⁸

Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study

A study of potential truck bypasses of downtown Vergennes is currently being evaluated through the Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study.⁴ The PEL Study is currently focused on five alternative routes for truck bypasses, illustrated below. Four of the "new routes" (orange, blue and pink) will continue to have trucks using VT 22A through the TOD study area, and therefore have implications on the safety and comfort for walking and biking in the vicinity of the train station. The green route will keep trucks on US Route 7 and connect to VT 22A south of downtown Vergennes, and would result in improved safety and comfort for all modes in the TOD study area. The purple option would maintain all southbound trucks on the existing VT 22A corridor, and northbound trucks would use VT Route 17 and connect with US Route 7.

²⁸ Addison County Regional Planning Commission Revised Transportation Plan (August 2024): https://arpc.vermont.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/2024ACRPC_TransPlan.pdf

⁴ VT 22A Corridor Analysis: https://www.vermont.gov/files/transportation/2024-08/2024ACRPC_TransPlan.pdf

⁴ Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study (2021-2025): <https://vergennepel.com/>

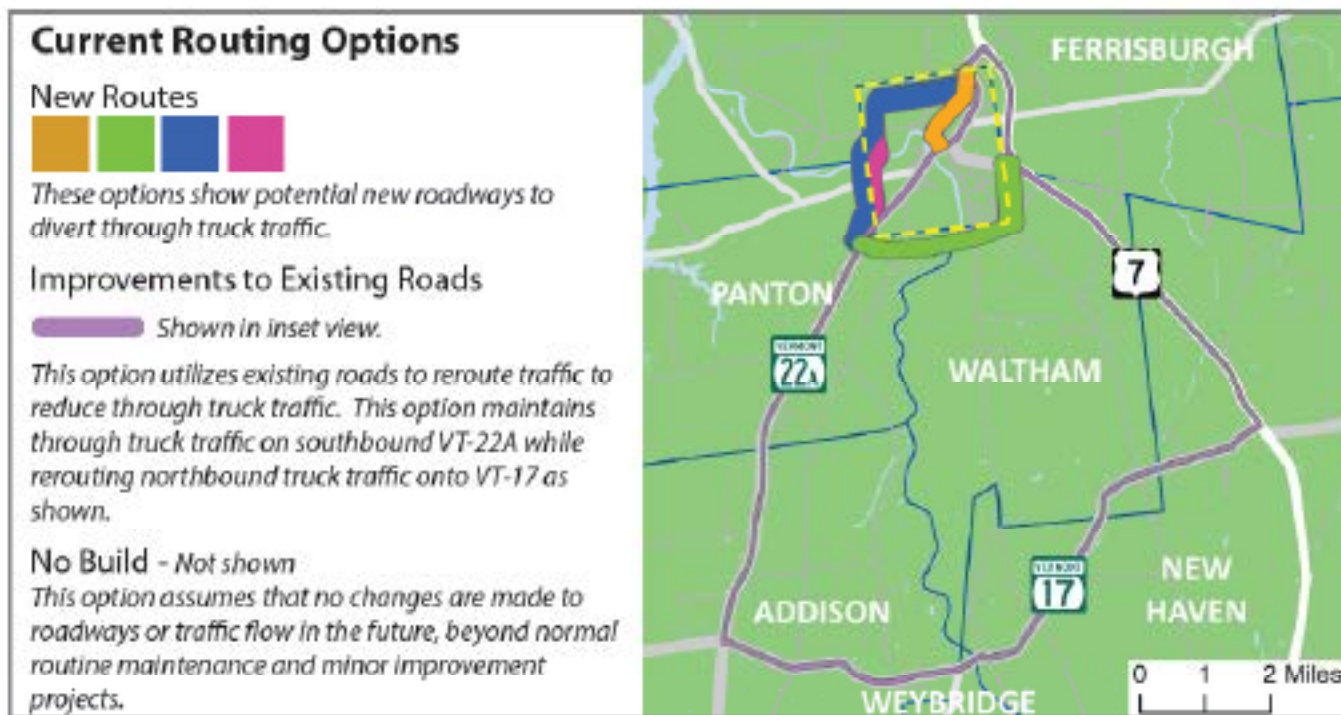


Figure 4: PEL Alternative Routes – Currently Under Study (Source: PEL Study)

An evaluation of alternatives conducted as part of the PEL study is summarized below, and shows that the Blue and Pink routes are most favorable. All options have significant environmental impacts, but the Blue and Pink routes were found to be more favorable for transportation functions and more compatible with local and regional plans. Therefore, the TOD master plan should assume continued truck traffic on the portion of VT Route 22A between US 7 and the proposed truck bypass northern terminus.

Route Evaluation

	PURPLE ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	BLUE ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	PINK ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	GREEN ROUTE ALTERNATIVE	ORANGE ROUTE ALTERNATIVE
Transportation Impacts	-6	5	5	1	3
Local and Regional Issues	-3	5	3	-2	-5
Environmental Resources	-16	-17	-17	-15	-13
Total	-25	-7	-9	-16	-15
Construction Cost Estimate	\$34 M	\$65 M	\$71 M	\$59 M	\$18 M

Figure 5: Evaluation Matrix

Road Safety

The PEL Study provided a summary of crash data analysis to understand safety issues on the highways in the vicinity of downtown Vergennes.⁶ The study identified six high-crash roadway segments based on an analysis of crashes that occurred between 2016 and 2021. Three of the six segments are in the TOD Master Plan study area:

- Monkton Road between VT 22A (West Main Street) and Crescent Drive (8 crashes; 1 injury),
- US 7 (Ethan Allen Highway) near Monkton Road (10 crashes; 7 injuries), and
- VT 22A (West Main Street) between East Street and Coventry Lane (13 crashes; 1 injury).

VTrans conducted a review of crashes along the VT 22A corridor, and found that Vergennes has by far the highest crash rate (crashes per 100 million vehicle-miles traveled), more than double the crash rates of all other towns along VT 22A. Vergennes also has the highest rate of truck crashes compared to the other communities along the VT 22A corridor, indicating the high safety benefit of relocating VT 22A away from downtown Vergennes.

⁶ Vergennes Planning and Environment Initiatives (PEL) Study (2021-2025), Purpose and Need
<https://vergenneped.com/files/initial/vergennes-pel-study-purpose-and-need-final-march-2022.pdf>

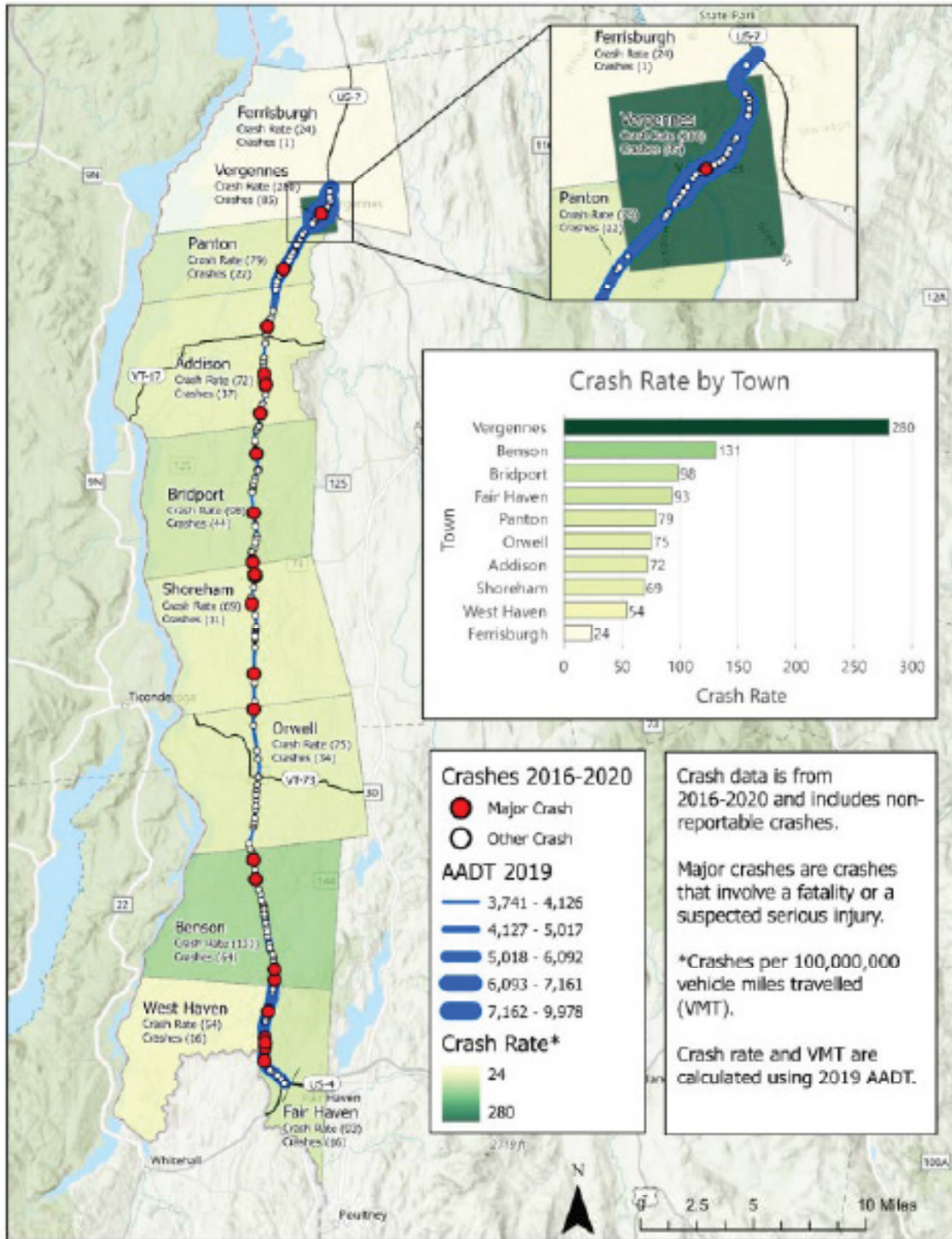


Figure 6: Crash analysis results for VT Z2A (Source: https://vttrans.vermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/VT%20Z2A%20Analysis%20Report-Final_0.pdf)

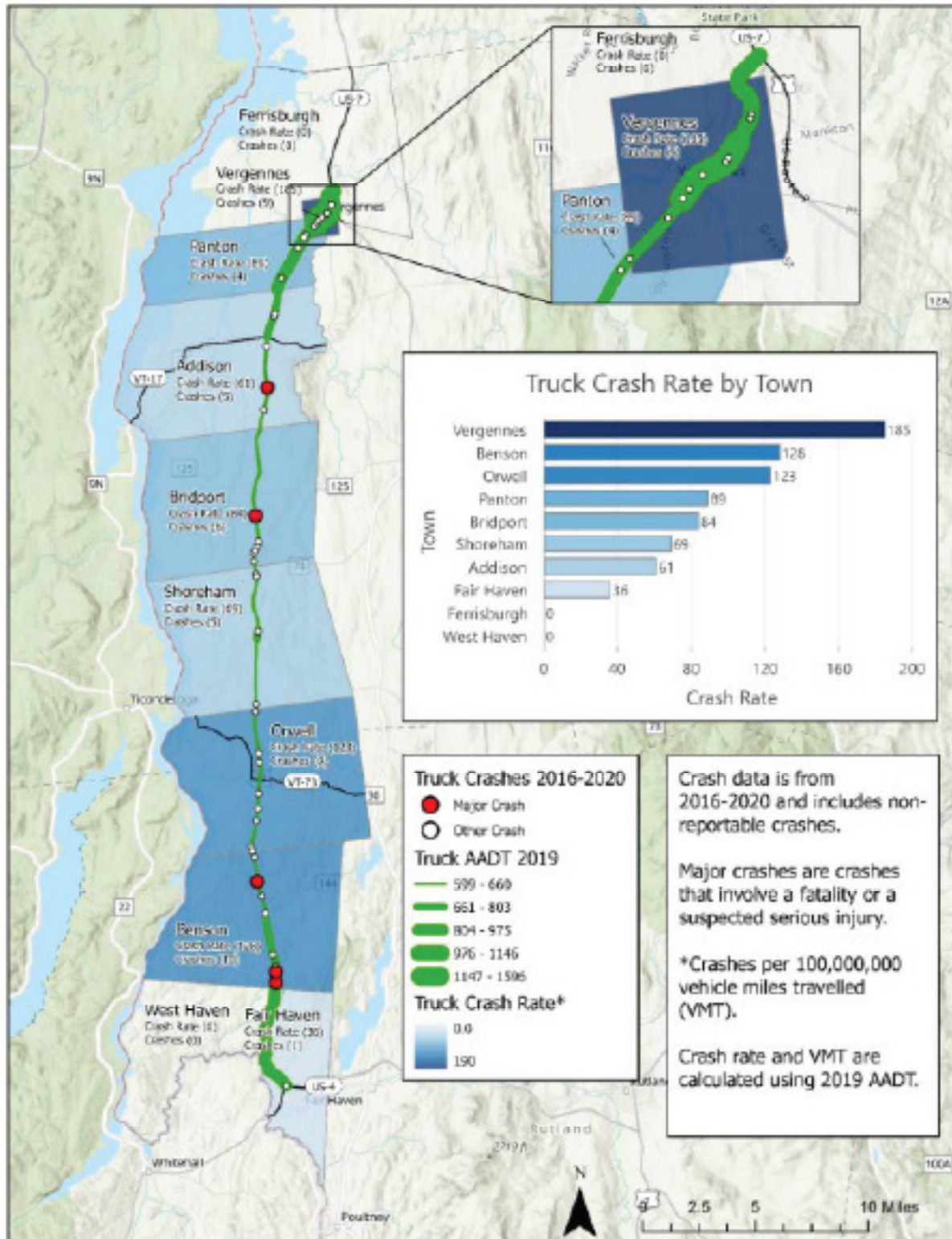


Figure 7 Truck crash analysis results for VT Route 22A (Source: https://virians.vermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/VT%2022A%20Analysis%20Report-Final_0.pdf)

Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation and Access

The existing conditions for people bicycling and walking in the study area vary. The non-gridded road network in the study area may create a challenge in providing the shortest distance connections between destinations and the train station, especially for people walking or bicycling. Currently, sections of VT 22A within the city limits of Vergennes – particularly from Monkton Road north to the vicinity of the Railway Lane / Vergennes Police Department building – and Northern sections of VT 22A, closer to the station, do not have sidewalks but wide shoulders exist. There are sidewalks on Monkton Road and Armory Lane within the study area, but sidewalks are not present on most of the other local streets in the study area such as Meigs Road and Meadow Lane.

There are no dedicated bicycle facilities in the study area, though the northern end of VT 22A has shoulders that can serve for bicycle use. Both US 7 and VT 22A are considered “High Priority” bicycle use corridors in the VTtrans On Road Bicycle Plan, and also found to have the highest Bicycle Level of Comfort (BLOC). These corridors should therefore have high priority for improved conditions for biking. There is a bicycle route proposed to travel through the southern part of the study area – the Addison County Triangle Bike Loop. It is proposed to connect three major centers of Addison County – Middlebury, Bristol, and Vergennes.⁶ The loop would provide safer connections for people bicycling and enhance connectivity among these communities with an established recreational resource. The proposed route includes Monkton Road from VT 22A (Main Street) in Vergennes. The project is currently in the planning stages, with efforts focused on securing funding and implementing the proposed improvements.

PLANNING AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

Vermont’s comprehensive land use and development law, Act 250, was enacted in the 1970’s to mitigate the environmental, social, and fiscal consequences of major subdivisions and development projects. Statewide planning and development policies over the past 30 years have made incremental efforts to encourage development in areas designated as appropriate for growth. Those designated areas are identified as Downtowns, Village Centers, New Town Centers, Growth Centers, and Neighborhood Development Areas. Based on the designation, some areas are exempt from specific Act 250 requirements to streamline development and reduce regulatory barriers, along with priority assistance for planning and infrastructure. While the act has played a critical role in preserving Vermont’s natural resources and rural character, its requirements have been seen as cumbersome, duplicative, and a barrier to efficient development.

Act 181 was enacted in 2024 with several significant reforms to Act 250, including the creation of geographic distinctions for the application of regulatory jurisdiction – something that was originally part of the concept behind Act 250, but never enacted into law. A new tiered jurisdictional system is being created to regulate development based on where development should be encouraged and where the capacity exists to manage and support new growth. Areas designated as Tier 1A and 1B, such as Planned Growth Areas, Downtowns, and Village Centers, are granted regulatory exemptions from Act 250 to help facilitate development. It also includes measures to protect biodiversity, reduce mitigation requirements for certain agricultural businesses, and incentivize housing development through temporary exemptions and increased tax credits.

Based on the changes to Act 250 and the newly enacted Act 181, the possible introduction of Tier 1A or 1B status for the TOD study area could reduce regulatory hurdles, making it easier to develop housing and other infrastructure. The TOD Master Plan will need to reflect Act 181 requirements by aligning with updated land use maps and regional plans, specifically the Future Land Use Map from the ACRPC.

⁶ Triangle Bike Loop Master Plan (2022): https://www.addisoncountylv.gov/sites/default/files/2024/01/2024-01-09-Addison-County-Triangle-Bike-Loop-Master-Plan-FINAL_reduced.pdf

Vergennes has an existing “Downtown” designation that encompasses the City’s historic center. This area is expected to transition into a “Downtown Center” designation under Act 181, with potential adjustments to the boundary. Additionally, Vergennes has an existing Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) that extends north to the railroad but excludes properties along VT 22A (Main Street) and the commercial area off Monkton Road. Alongside the current NDA, the Downtown is anticipated to become the core of a new “Planned Growth Area” Under Act 181, adjustments to this boundary are expected to address current gaps and include the schools and the Monkton Road commercial area.

South Ferrisburgh is not currently included in any state designations. However, due to its immediate proximity to Vergennes, and the potential for wastewater sharing, portions of South Ferrisburgh west of US 7 could be incorporated into Vergennes’ Planned Growth Area.

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Access to municipal water and wastewater to support compact mixed-use development is a high priority across Vermont and is often the greatest challenge to creating that type of development.

Municipal Water

Both the City of Vergennes and the Town of Ferrisburgh are served by the Vergennes-Panton Water District – an independent water utility.⁷ In Ferrisburgh, water is delivered through privately owned water lines, many of which are aging and limited in capacity. These lines are not municipally owned or managed and do not guarantee new connections, making it difficult for new development to access water service. Linking Ferrisburgh more fully into the VPWD system would require a legislative charter change and financial resources that currently exceed the Town’s capacity. Meanwhile, the City of Vergennes’ public water system is aging and in need of substantial investment to support the scale of future growth projected in regional housing forecasts. Expanding water service will require careful coordination, funding, and long-term planning to support new development in both communities.

Wastewater

The City of Vergennes operates its own municipal wastewater system, and has planned a \$30 million upgrade (slated for approximately 2028). This investment aims to address existing deficiencies while expanding capacity to meet demands. In contrast, the Town of Ferrisburgh has no municipal wastewater. The challenging soil conditions across much of the town have made on-site septic systems a persistent obstacle to development.

Informal discussions have begun regarding a potential inter-municipal agreement between Vergennes and Ferrisburgh to share wastewater capacity on a limited basis (e.g. immediately adjacent to Vergennes west of US 7). An agreement like this would be instrumental in enabling compact mixed-use development on both sides of the municipal border that complements and supports future development and economic viability in the study area. This level of collaboration between the municipalities is fundamental to the success of this TOD Master Plan.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND NEXT STEPS

This review of existing conditions provides an understanding of key elements that may be opportunities or challenges in developing the TOD Master Plan and implementing its recommendations. These key takeaways include:

- **Zoning and Land Use:** Existing zoning regulations in Vergennes and Ferrisburgh create barriers to compact, walkable development. Opportunities exist to revise zoning standards to better support TOD goals.

⁷ Vergennes-Panton Water District: <https://vergenne-pantonwaterdistrict.org/?q=index.php>

- **Transportation:** The station is a critical node for regional connectivity, supported by passenger rail and bus services. However, the prevalence of truck traffic and the non-gridded road network that lacks connected sidewalks and bikeways present challenges for multimodal access.
- **Environmental Considerations:** Protected lands and physical barriers such as wetlands and protected lands will need to be integrated into the TOD planning process to ensure growth does not impact surrounding lands.
- **Regulatory Context:** Based on the changes to Act 250 and the newly enacted Act 181, the introduction of Tier 1A or 1B status could reduce regulatory hurdles, making it easier to develop housing and other infrastructure. The TOD Master Plan will need to reflect Act 181 requirements by aligning with updated land use maps and regional plans.
- **Utilities and Infrastructure:** Stable municipal water infrastructure supports development, but wastewater capacity is a limiting factor. Planned upgrades and inter-municipal collaboration would be key to overcoming this challenge to implement TOD.

These takeaways, in addition to feedback from stakeholder and community engagement, are crucial for the "Discovery" phase of the TOD Master Plan. Understanding the existing challenges and opportunities will form a solid foundation from which recommendations in the TOD Master Plan will be based.