



# SAINT ALBANS CITY

## COMPREHENSIVE MUNICIPAL PLAN 2012-2017

Adopted by the Council of the  
City of Saint Albans  
on June 11, 2012

Available online at [www.stalbansvt.com](http://www.stalbansvt.com).

Development of this Plan was funded in part by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development.

Many of the ideas, maps and photographs in this Plan are from the Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit (2011), based on the Create Saint Albans Planning Charrette, facilitated by the Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC) in June 2011, and also funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development.

**Council of the City of St. Albans, June 11, 2012**

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Dominic Cloud, City Manager

Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development

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## **(1) Create Saint Albans: Visioning the Future**

This plan provides a roadmap for the future of Saint Albans City. The roadmap leads towards fulfillment of a vision of Saint Albans City developed by and for its citizens. The vision for Saint Albans is not one point in time far off in the future; it is today, it is tomorrow, and it is years in the future. It represents an ongoing commitment by the community to shape its future.

***The vision for Saint Albans City is to be a prosperous economic and cultural center in the northwest Vermont region, providing a high quality of life to its residents and unique attractions to visitors.***

***This vision is based on the following elements:***

- ❖ A unique identity and sense of community fueled by the natural environment, rich history, and friendly people;
- ❖ A healthy, clean natural environment;
- ❖ A vibrant downtown at the center of the community;
- ❖ A variety of quality job opportunities for a diverse workforce
- ❖ Quality educational opportunities for all ages;
- ❖ A well-developed recreation and open space network, with Taylor Park as the community's gathering place;
- ❖ Responsible, representative local government;
- ❖ Civically engaged community members from all age-groups;
- ❖ Quality municipal and public services and infrastructure;
- ❖ A thriving heritage and creative economy;
- ❖ Safe neighborhoods with a variety of housing options;
- ❖ A walkable community with transportation options.
- ❖ An attractive place for current and new residents of all ages and backgrounds to live in and a beacon for visitors of all types.

## **(2) Process Matters**

***Social advance depends as much upon the process through which it is secured as upon the result itself. ~ Jane Addams***

**Vision Element - Civically engaged community members from all age-groups**

### ***History of Saint Albans City Planning***

The earliest plan found on record for the City of Saint Albans dates from 1963 and the first Zoning Regulations on record followed in 1964. Municipal plans and Zoning Regulations are intended to be "living" documents which have been, and will continue to be updated many times to reflect the ever-changing conditions in the City. The 2011-2012 Saint Albans City Municipal Plan, initiated in the fall of 2010, builds on the previous municipal plans and furthers the effort to maintain a strong, vibrant community. The update was completed with assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and support from a Municipal Planning Grant awarded through the Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development.

### ***Role of Planning Commission***

It is the charge of the Saint Albans City Planning Commission to drive the City's planning process and prepare and periodically update a municipal plan and development regulations to implement the plan. State law requires that the plan be updated and readopted every five years to remain in effect.

The Saint Albans City Planning Commission has a role in all phases of the planning process. This role does not end with the adoption of a municipal plan, but continues in the following areas:

- Plan implementation, which may include the preparation of appropriate bylaws and programs directing the course of future growth and development (e.g., zoning and or subdivision regulations);
- Preparation of further studies to identify and plan for specific problems or situations that may arise; and
- The regular review and revision of the plan, bylaws, and programs to ensure that they reflect changing conditions and requirements.

## ***Public Involvement***

Citizen participation is important in all levels of the planning process. Opportunities for citizen involvement have been assured throughout Plan development in a variety of ways and ongoing initiatives (Figure 1.1). These efforts are intended to foster the broadest level of public participation possible, and to utilize the planning process as a vehicle for exercising an inclusive, community-wide vision for the future of Saint Albans City.

### **Figure 1.1: Public Involvement in 2011-2012 Municipal Plan**

- Open Planning Commission Meetings
- Project Website
- Town Meeting Day Public Input Displays
- Create Saint Albans Planning Charrette
- Stakeholder Outreach
- Wide Distribution of Public Review Draft for Comment and Refinement



**Create Saint Albans Charrette Participants Measuring Sidewalk Dimensions**

Photo Credit: TPUDC

In June 2011, the City of Saint Albans hired the Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC) to lead a planning charrette on character and form based planning. TPUDC produced a Character and Form-Based Planning Toolkit for the City to use as it moves forward with planning and implementing projects and regulations.

The charrette lasted five days, during which TPUDC worked with the community to identify character areas and form-based elements within the City and generate a master plan and a vision for the future (included in the Toolkit).

A **charrette** is an intensive community design workshop that involves all community members interested in or concerned about the future of the community.

### **Consideration of Planning with Adjacent Communities and the Region**

From transportation to land use to water quality, a community's planning cannot happen without the involving adjacent communities and the region. Saint Albans City is a member municipality of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), which provides a forum for municipalities in Franklin and Grand Isle County to act on behalf of the region. All communities, including Saint Albans City, are entitled to equal voting representation by two locally appointed members of the governing Board of Commissioners.

It has been recognized throughout this planning process that Saint Albans City serves as a center for regional, as well as local, growth and development. The City shares its municipal borders only with Saint Albans Town; however the City's service area extends far beyond town boundaries, including much of Franklin and northern Grand Isle Counties. This is recognized in, and in conformance with, the designation of the St. Albans area – including the City and adjacent areas of the Town – as the region's primary growth center in the Regional Plan.

The Saint Albans Town Plan was reviewed during plan development in order to identify rates and patterns of growth along the City's borders. Growth in adjacent areas of the Town has relied heavily on the extension of City infrastructure, and has had both positive and negative impacts locally. The City and Town jointly undertook the study of Saint Albans area traffic patterns and transportation infrastructure; and are now discussing ways to meet other infrastructure and service needs, most recently police coverage. The City will continue to pursue coordinated planning and development efforts with the Town as appropriate.

Saint Albans City is active on several subcommittees and advisory committees of the NRPC. Participation on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is particularly important so the City has a role in overseeing the Regional Commission's transportation planning program and has the opportunity to provide local input regarding transportation issues important to the region. The City of St. Albans also has the opportunity to participate in the NRPC Policy/Project Review Committee, Brownfield Redevelopment Program, and other subcommittees.

### ***Process Goal***

- 1) For Saint Albans City to have a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions.

### ***Process Policies***

- 1) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state, as well as the community in which it takes place.
- 2) Encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process.
- 3) Share resources, infrastructure, and services with Saint Albans Town and other nearby communities for greater efficiency and economy when practical.
- 4) Collaborate with other municipalities and regional organizations to address important regional issues, such as improving water quality in Lake Champlain.
- 5) Consider the impact of land use decisions on adjacent municipalities.

### (3) The Community

Saint Albans City is located in the northern Champlain Valley, approximately 30 miles north of Burlington and 70 miles south of Montreal. The regional relationship of Saint Albans to Burlington and Canada has played an important role in the City's economic and cultural development. The City has thrived due to its position on major transportation routes – as a rail, customs, immigration and trading center serving the upper Champlain Valley. As a result, Saint Albans City has long been positioned as the economic, commercial and cultural hub at the heart of the rural, predominantly agricultural region of northwestern Vermont.

#### *As the Hub of Franklin County, Saint Albans is a:*

- Transportation center located on regional transportation routes;
- Center for commerce, industry and trade;
- Governmental and administrative center;
- Center for higher density residential development;
- Center for educational, medical, and social services; and
- Cultural, religious and civic center.

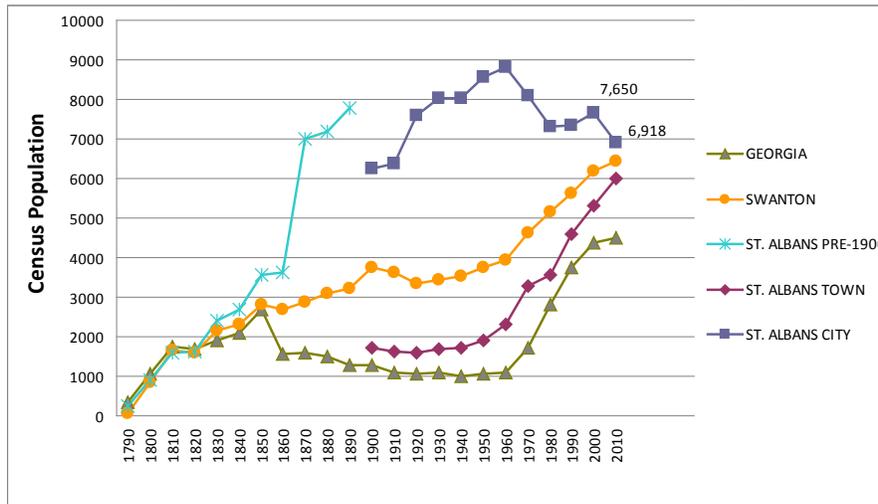


Map 3.1 Regional Location

## Population Characteristics

The current population of Saint Albans City is 6,918, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The City's population curve is typical of traditional centers in Vermont, experiencing substantial growth after its incorporation and then population decline since the mid-1900's, which began as a result of the deterioration of the railroad economy. Most recently, the City's 2010 Census shows a population decline of 9.6% since 2000; however, this number is being contested as local figures do not reflect such a substantial decline. The true population total is likely higher than the 2010 Census count.

**Figure 3.1 – Population of Saint Albans City and Surrounding Communities**



Vermont as a state experienced significant population increases beginning in the mid-1900s, but most of that growth was located in more rural areas and new town centers, which also attracted some of the residents of the traditional urban centers. The other towns adjacent to Saint Albans City have

experienced the growth more typical of rural commuter towns; rapid population increases since 1950.

Age distribution is important in order to predict future service needs, especially for school capacity and senior services. Saint Albans City's median age

shows that the City is younger than the county and the state (Table 3.1), although all seem to be growing older. Table 3.2 shows that Saint Albans City has a lower

	2000 Census	2010 Census
St. Albans City	35.2	36.3
Franklin County	35.7	39.6
Vermont	37.7	41.5

Source: US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing

Age Group	Vermont	Franklin County	St. Albans City
Under 18	20.7	24.7	23.7
18-34	21.5	19.2	24.4
35-64	43.3	44.1	40.0
65+	14.6	12.2	12.0

Source: US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing

proportion of its population in the 65+ age group than the county or state. Despite this data, the City should expect to attract older residents seeking proximate services. Interestingly, Saint Albans City has a higher proportion of its population aged 18-34. Perhaps this represents recent high school graduates who have stayed in the area for work or young families in the City.

Saint Albans City’s population pyramid is atypical of a Vermont community. One cannot see the “Baby Boom Bulge” (roughly the 45-64 age groups) as distinctly as one can in other communities or in Vermont. Saint Albans’ baby boomers seem to have more equilibrium with younger age groups. As also reflected in Table 3.2, the 25-29 age group stands out in the pyramid as the largest overall group, accounting for 8.1% of the population. The exact cause of this group’s prominence is unknown, although it could be a reflection of the baby boom echo, or children of the baby boomers.

**Figure 3.2: 2010 Population Pyramid**

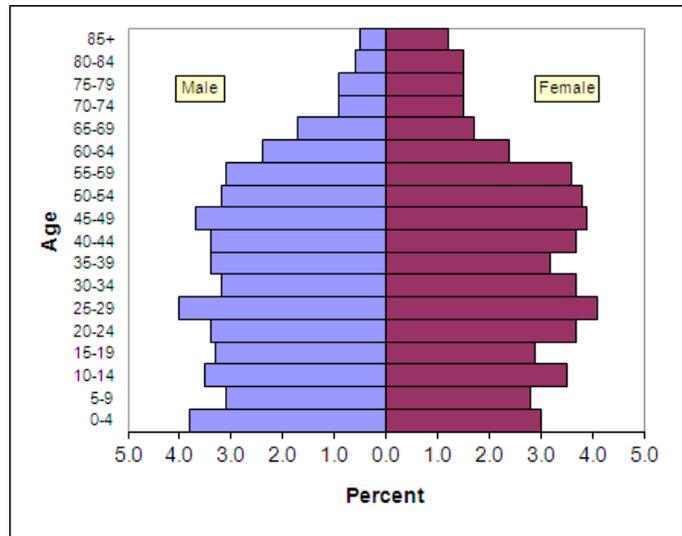


Table 3.3 gives the percentage of the resident population that lived in a different place “one year ago” within any given time between 2005-2009. Paired with the fact that Saint Albans City’s growth is estimated to have stalled, it is no surprise that only a small proportion of the City’s residents are new arrivals. The Town, on the other hand, has a higher proportion of new arrivals.

<b>Table 3.3: Percentage of Population (1+ years) in a Different Place One Year Ago, 2005-2009 ACS</b>			
	<b>Franklin County</b>	<b>St. Albans Town</b>	<b>St. Albans City</b>
Different Town	9.6	15.9	6.9
Different County	4.0	8.1	4.7
Different State	1.7	3.7	1.5

Note: On St. Albans Town’s estimate in “Different Town” is statistically different within its category.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2005-2009 American Community Survey

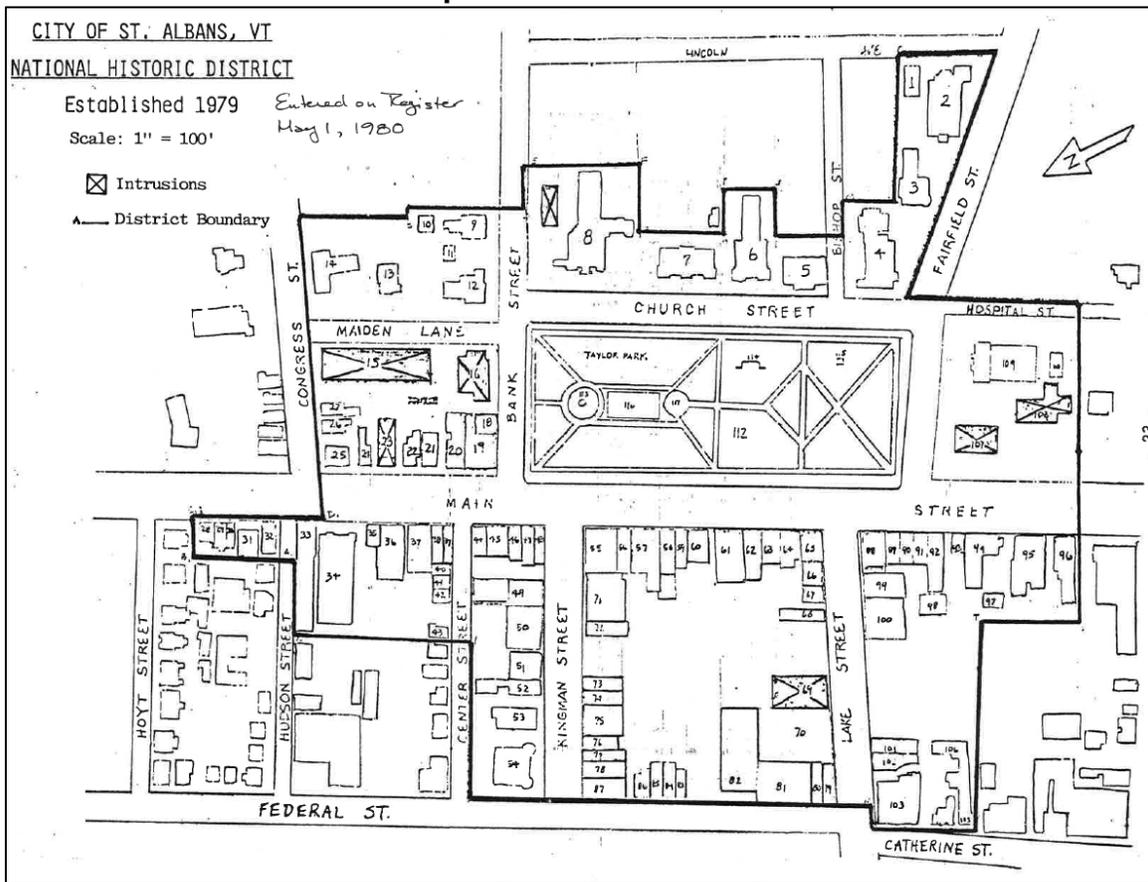
### ***Historic Legacy***

Saint Albans City has a rich cultural heritage and an extensive historic legacy. This heritage not only creates the City’s unique sense of place, but also represents one of its primary economic and cultural assets. Much of the "character" of Saint Albans City arises from its historic development, and the regional role it has assumed over the years. Identifying the location and the significance of historic sites and districts will help lead to appropriate methods of protecting the City’s historic legacy.

There are various citizen groups involved with maintaining and enhancing the character of the City. One notable example is the St. Albans Historic Museum, located on Church Street in the former Franklin County Grammar School building. The Museum is run by the St. Albans Historical Society, and provides a repository of historical information and images of the community, as well as a place to peruse historic items and host events. With a minimal staff and a board of volunteers, the Museum is the primary source of historical information about the City. It is the largest in the county and is visited annually by many, including visitors to the region, community residents and schools. The building is ADA accessible and boasts a sizable performance hall, which seats approximately 350 people. The performance hall serves as cultural performing arts center for the community of Saint Albans and the greater Franklin County Region.

Another example is Saint Albans for the Future (SAFF), a non-profit, tax-exempt Vermont organization and the result of the dedicated efforts and commitment of many community volunteers. It is an initiative built upon past revitalization efforts, devotion and a willingness to improve the quality of life in downtown St. Albans. SAFF oversees the revitalization efforts and state and federal benefits of downtown designation and ensures the preservation of historic buildings through its work to keep them economically active.

**Map 3.2 Historic District**



## **Saint Albans Historic District and Structures**

The Saint Albans Historic District (Map 3.2), which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, defines an area of exceptional architecture and encompasses the downtown commercial and civic core of the City. There are 109 properties located within the historic district. A map of the district is available to the public at City Hall where an ongoing inventory of historic properties is filed and maintained.



**Taylor Park**  
***Saint Albans City Master Plan***

Saint Albans' expansion and prosperity is reflected by the quality of buildings in the commercial core. Ranging in dates from 1812 –1932, the buildings within the Historic District are extraordinary and combine to form spectacular streetscapes. The following buildings serve as historic architectural landmarks:

- On the East Side of Taylor Park – the Courthouse, the Franklin County Grammar School (now the St. Albans Historical Museum, and a number of churches).
- In the commercial center – the former Post Office, the Sherwin Williams building, and the Fishman and Brainerd blocks
- On Main St. – The Hathaway House, the Houghton House, and the Stranahan House
- Other Buildings of Historic or Architectural importance in the City are:
  - The Warner Home
  - The Central Vermont Railway Headquarters
  - Holy Angels Convent
  - Former St. Albans Hospital Building
  - The Messenger and Barlow St. schools
  - The St. Albans House at the corner of Lake and Catherine Streets
  - The former Customs House on the corner of Kingman and Federal Streets

The buildings on Main and Church Streets outline Taylor Park and create a courtyard effect, reinforcing the aesthetic value of this open space in the downtown. Taylor Park is a grand public space that has been the heart of Saint Albans, Vermont since its creation, serving as the community center for many gatherings and events in the downtown historic district. Through the years, the park has remained the focal point of the downtown and is beautifully complemented by the commercial institutional and religious buildings surrounding it.

## **Historic Preservation**

St. Albans for the Future (SAFF), St. Albans' Downtown Revitalization Organization, works in conjunction with property owners to provide additional resources and technical assistance that facilitates preservation. Inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places is of particular significance as it provides property owners an opportunity to participate in federal and state tax credit programs for historically appropriate

improvements. SAFF provides technical support to property owners on these tax incentives, developed a guide and color palette to assist with identifying exterior paints, and maintains a physical & digital inventory of historic structures in the downtown district.

In April of 2004, the City of Saint Albans applied for and received Downtown Designation. A renewal was granted in April of 2007. Since designation, many new businesses have been created, retained or expanded, creating downtown jobs. The City also employs a combination of regulatory design controls and incentives for adaptive re-use of historic structures to achieve its historic preservation objectives. These Design Review Standards are intended to assist property owners, developers, and the City review boards with the preliminary planning, design, and evaluation of proposals and approval of projects. Development of property in the designated historic district must comply with these preservation guidelines and the applicable regulatory design standards.

### ***Community Identity and Sense of Place***

**Vision Element - A unique identity and sense of community fueled by the natural environment, rich history, and friendly people**

How the City looks and feels, its sense of place, says much about its sense of community – how it holds its past, how it values its present, and how it views its future. A sense of place evolves over time through the cultural integration of the natural and built environment. This blending, unique to each community, gives rise to the special qualities and distinct characteristics that create sense of place.

Saint Albans City has a unique identity and sense of place based on:

- The historic character of the architecture, streets, and parks of downtown;
- The influence of the railroad;
- The importance of the agricultural economy;
- Proximity to Burlington and Canada; and
- The beauty and recreational offerings of the natural environment.

### ***Community Character Goals***

- 1) The historic legacy of Saint Albans City will be celebrated and preserved in the City's architecture, programs, and sense of place.
- 2) The City of Saint Albans will continue to attract new residents.

### ***Community Character Policies***

- 1) To continue to identify, protect, and preserve important historical and architectural resources within the City.
- 2) Ensure that new infill development, redevelopment and new construction are sensitive to context and the historic architecture and patterns.
- 3) The re-use and restoration of existing historic structures shall be a required consideration if demolition or conversion is proposed.
- 4) Maintain the Vermont Downtown Program's Designated Downtown status and the National Main Street Center's designation as a Main Street Community.
- 5) Maintain and enhance the City's attractiveness for current and future residents.

## (4) The Environment

### Vision Element - A healthy, clean natural environment

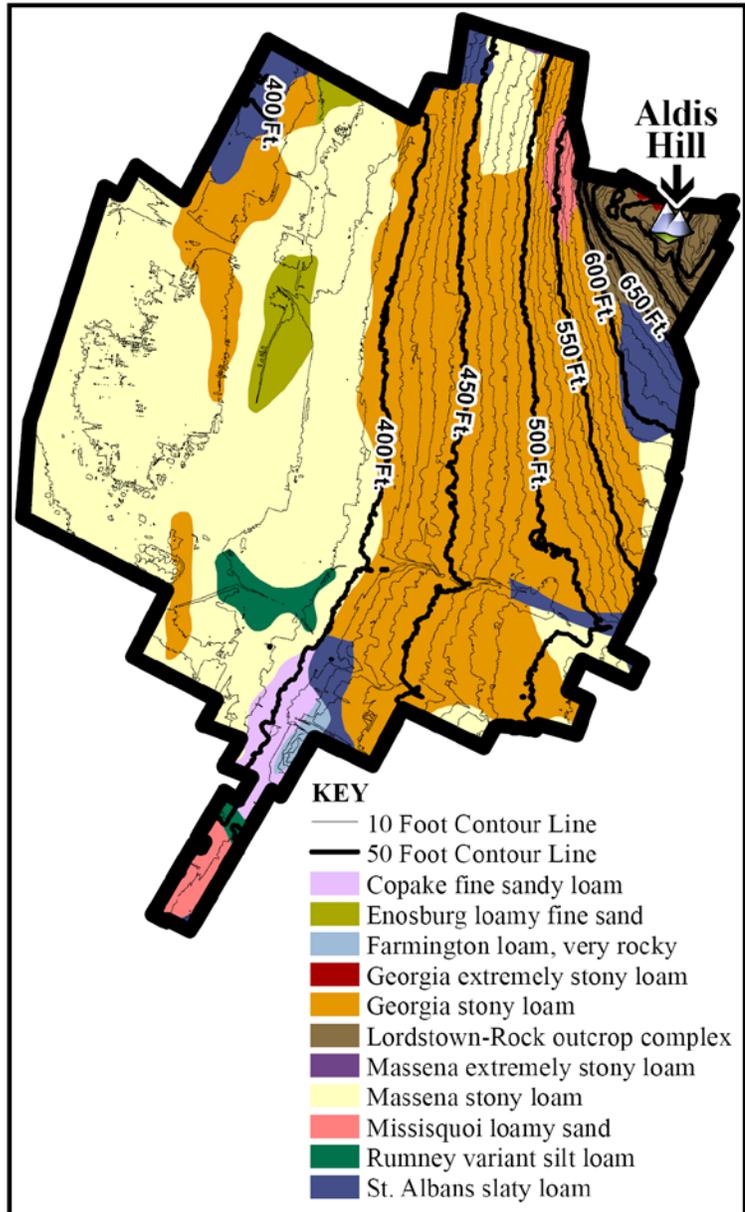
#### **Topography**

Saint Albans City's topography generally slopes from east to west. Land to the east of Main Street rises upward to the hills, and forms the foundation of the City's "Hill Section" neighborhoods. Of particular note is Aldis Hill, rising to 850 feet in the northeast corner of the City, which exhibits steep and rocky slopes (ranging from 25-60 percent) and remains largely undeveloped. West of Main Street, the land levels off and eventually meets St. Albans Bay. Elevation contours are shown on Map 4.1.

#### **Geology and Soils**

The Saint Albans area is underlain mainly by poorly draining soils with a high seasonal water table (generally 0 – 2 feet below the surface) (Map 4.1). While the loamy and sandy soils underlying most of Saint Albans are technically classified as Prime Agricultural Soils, many of the soils in today's Saint Albans have been replaced with urban fill as a result of over 200 years of urbanization.

Surrounding the City, the native soils have supported the area's agricultural heritage. Within Saint Albans, there remains capacity for backyard and neighborhood scale gardening and other forms of urban agriculture.



**Map 4.1 Soils and Contour Lines**

## **Water Resources**

Saint Albans City is located within the St. Albans Bay Watershed, and more specifically within the watersheds of the Stevens and Rugg Brooks (Map 4.2). Stevens Brook and Rugg Brook are two separate perennial streams with over 20 square miles of combined drainage area. Stevens Brook discharges into the St. Albans Bay, Lake Champlain. Rugg Brook discharges into Mill Brook, which then discharges into the St. Albans Bay. Many stretches of Stevens and Rugg Brooks have been channeled to accommodate urban development on adjoining land, which has led to a history of flooding related hazards and water quality impairment.

## **Wetlands**

Wetlands and hydric soils are an integral component to a healthy watershed, providing a number of critical services, including filtering out nutrients and pollutants, storing flood waters and serving as important habitats for a variety of species. There are several areas of mapped significant wetlands<sup>1</sup> and hydric soils<sup>2</sup> located in and around Saint Albans City (See Map 4.3). The Vermont Wetlands Rules, revised in 2010, protect wetland areas identified by the Vermont Water Resources Board as significant (Class 1 and 2 wetlands). It is important to note that VSWI mapped wetlands are intended only to denote the approximate location and configuration of significant wetlands. Wetlands that have significant function and value that are not located on the maps may still be under the jurisdiction of the Rules. A number of activities are allowed inside significant wetlands, including silvicultural and agricultural activities, provided no dredging, filling, or alterations to water flow occur.

## **Groundwater**

Groundwater filters into the ground and travels slowly through the soil and cracks of rock. It is replenished through rain and surface water that percolates down through the soil. Although City residents do not depend directly on local groundwater for their drinking water supply, activities within the City may have long term impacts on the availability and quality of groundwater for the larger Saint Albans area.

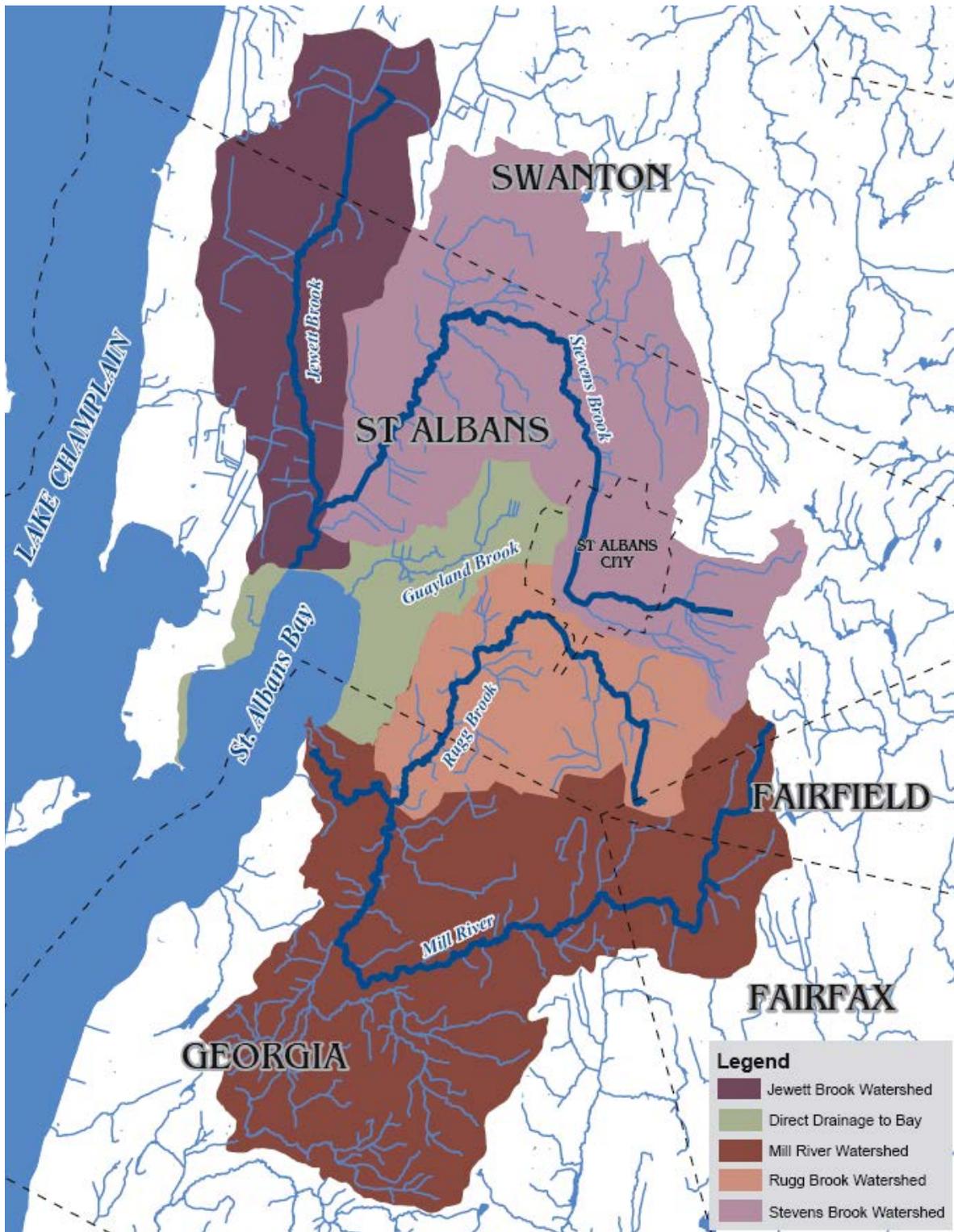
Areas where groundwater feeds underground aquifers are known as recharge areas. Aldis Hill has been mapped as a probable bedrock recharge area because it consists mainly of fractured bedrock covered by thinly laid soils. Permeable sand terraces around its base also allow for water infiltration.

Certain activities, such as improper waste disposal, leaking underground storage tanks, and the application of lawn and garden fertilizers and pesticides, can cause groundwater as well as surface water contamination. Protection of groundwater may be enhanced through proper storage and disposal of possible contaminants, by reducing impervious surfaces, and by incorporating green space to increase on-site infiltration.

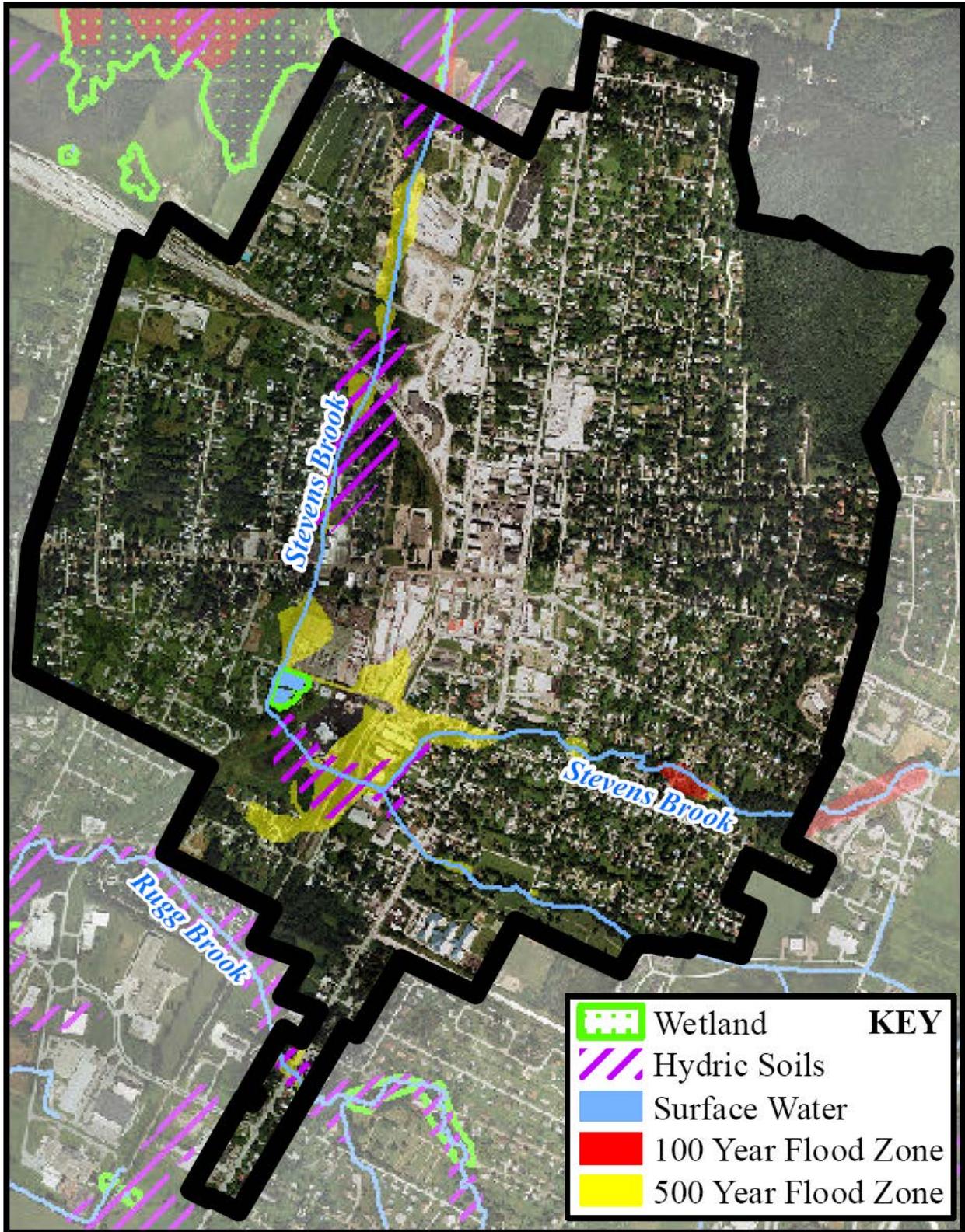
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<sup>1</sup> Vermont Significant Wetland Inventory (VSWI)

<sup>2</sup> Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey, 2008



**Map 4.2 Sub-watersheds of Saint Albans City**



Map 4.3 Water Resources

## Flooding

As noted above, there is a long history of flooding and flood related damages along the Stevens and Rugg Brook floodplain corridors despite their small size. In the 1970's FEMA mapped the flood hazard associated with the 100 year and 500 year flood, which has a one percent and 0.2 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year respectively (See Map 4.3). The City enacted Flood Hazard Overlay Regulations in the 1970's and is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Flooding along Stevens Brook and its tributaries, particularly in some residential sections west of Main Street, was common prior to the building of a dam and diversion channel in the late 1970's. The channel, located in the southwest part of the City and in St. Albans Town, carries high flows from Stevens Brook into Rugg Brook, bypassing residential areas of the City. The project reduced but did not eliminate flooding downstream.

If a home is located in the 100-year floodplain – it has a 26% chance of being flooded over the course of a 30-year mortgage. –VT ANR

Significant out-of-bank flooding occurred several times in 2002, when runoff from storms equivalent to the 30-year and 40-year events caused flood damages throughout the City of Saint Albans and portions of the Town.



The Diversion Structure Post Design Improvements

In 2006, the Town of St. Albans received funding to complete the *Stevens-Rugg Diversion Structure Improvements Design Alternatives Report* (DuBois and King, Inc.). The City of Saint Albans partnered with the Town to implement the recommendations of the report, which included constructing sediment traps in the existing sediment basin

and constructing an extended detention basin by excavating the channel and raising the outlet structure (completed in 2009, see photos above). The City and Town have a Memorandum of Understanding to maintain the structure jointly. These improvements are not only intended to reduce flooding, but to improve stream stability and reduce the impact of sediment loading on water quality impairment.

## Fluvial Erosion Hazard Mapping

While some flood losses are caused by inundation (i.e. waters rise, fill, and damage low-lying structures), most flood losses in Vermont are caused by “fluvial erosion”. Fluvial erosion is erosion caused by rivers and streams, and can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimension during flood events. Using state protocols, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission has mapped the fluvial erosion hazard (FEH) zone along Stevens and Rugg Brooks in the City. These mapped corridors are considered to be the areas most prone to flood and erosion damage. The City is studying whether to develop regulations that discourage or prohibit some or all types of development in these areas, which would have the effect of

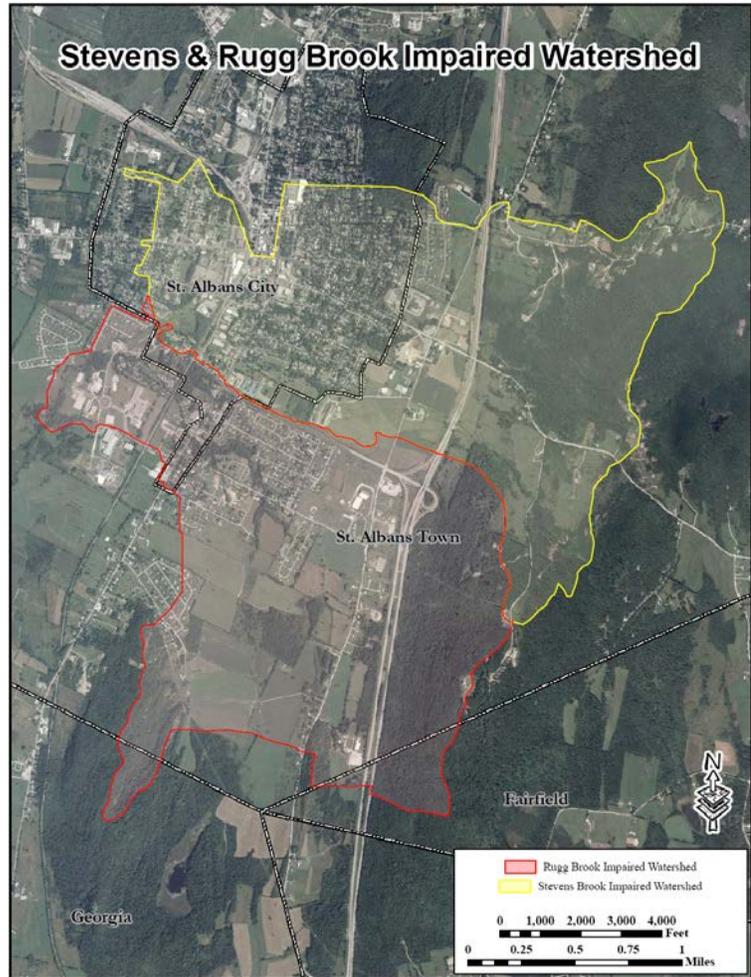
reducing the number of structures at risk for flood and erosion damage; provide space for the stream to move and to attain geomorphic stability; and provide a buffer between development and the stream to reduce the direct input of stormwater from adjacent roofs, parking lots, and other impervious surfaces.

### Water Quality

Stevens and Rugg Brooks have been heavily impacted by increased development in the urbanized and suburbanized areas of St. Albans City and Town they flow through. As a result, a portion of these watersheds has been designated as stormwater impaired by the Vermont DEC (Map 4.4). Once a waterway is listed as impaired, it is scheduled for the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). A TMDL is an EPA approved document that attempts to limit and allocate discharge loads among the various dischargers to impaired waters in order to assure attainment with water quality standards. New TMDLs for Vermont are currently being considered by the EPA.

According to the EPA, polluted stormwater runoff contributes silt, nutrients, bacteria, metals, and oxygen-depleting substances to streams and is a leading source of water quality impairment. In St. Albans City, the municipal stormwater conveyance system acts as the collector of stormwater from roads, parking areas, gutters, and ditches.

The City of Saint Albans has long supported efforts to improve water quality in Stevens and Rugg Brook and in St. Albans Bay. In 2003, the City collaborated with



**Map 4.4**

### Figure 4.1 Stevens and Rugg Brook Watershed Study

The primary objective of the study was to define watershed problems and identify implementable solutions that can be used by the communities to address and correct the problems.

#### Implementation Projects

- Geomorphic Assessments
- Urban Stream Restoration
- Stream Gage
- Low Impact Development
- Rural Riparian Buffers/Phosphorous Barriers
- Outreach and Education

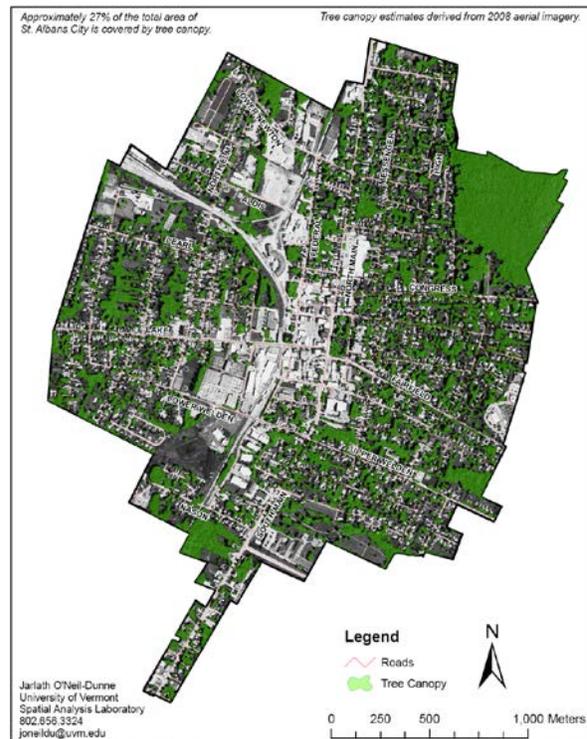
the Towns of St. Albans, Georgia and Swanton, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, and numerous other local, regional, state, and federal partners to produce the “Stevens Brook and Rugg Brook Watershed Study Report.”

Since 2003, the City has played an integral role in implementing the recommendations of the Watershed Study Report. Numerous activities have been undertaken, from geomorphic assessments to educational outreach activities (See Figure 4.1). The City implemented several projects intended to upgrade its stormwater conveyance system and address stormwater pollutants, including the installation of more than a dozen rain gardens throughout the City, the installation of a cistern at the City garage which uses rainwater rather than potable water to wash City vehicles, and the construction of pervious concrete sidewalks in Taylor Park (See Chapter 7 Stormwater for photos of these projects). The City has also pursued larger-scale projects to mitigate its water quality impact, including planning to abate a combined sewer overflow at Lower Welden Street, and improvements at the wastewater treatment plant. In addition to stormwater treatment, the City has also sought to improve and protect the two streams. In 2006, the City developed plans for a floodplain restoration project and constructed a stream buffer at Houghton Park.

### **Forestland, Tree Cover and the Aldis Hill Natural Area**

Trees in an urban environment have many environmental and place-making benefits including creating cool spaces with their shade and thus saving energy, improving air quality, strengthening the sense of place and local economy, reducing stormwater runoff, and enhancing the pedestrian environment. Saint Albans City appoints a Tree Warden who manages the City’s inventory of trees located within public rights of way and greenspaces and maintains their health, appearance and safety.

A 2010 tree canopy assessment based on 2008 aerial imagery found that 27% of the City is covered by tree canopy. While Saint Albans City is fortunate to have abundant street trees and many tree-filled greenspaces, the percentage is actually lower than the national average of 35%<sup>3</sup>. The assessment also considered tree canopy within 39 sub-areas of the City (Map 4.6, following Environment Policies), which



**Map 4.5 Saint Albans Tree Canopy**

<sup>3</sup> Sustaining America’s Urban Trees and Forests, USDA, June 2010

allows the community to understand which areas of the City are lacking in tree canopy and which have abundant canopy. The downtown core is noticeably lacking compared to other areas of the City. While the tree canopy in this area will be enhanced by planned streetscape improvements, further discussion is necessary to determine city-wide goals for tree canopy. Optimal canopy cover is based on a mix of costs, community desires; and benefits provided by tree cover, which vary in different geographic areas<sup>4</sup>.

Aldis Hill is the City's most significant natural area where over 100 acres remains forested and undeveloped and is home to a variety of wildlife. With physical restrictions to development, it has been identified as a natural recreation area since the late 1800's. Now conserved, its value as a unique, relatively untouched natural area in the midst of an urban environment is preserved into the future. Aside from Aldis Hill, tree canopy is formed by street trees, yard areas, stream corridors, and City parks.

### ***Environment Goal***

- 1) The City will have clean and healthy natural areas and open spaces, including streams, floodplains, wetlands, and parks, that contribute to the quality of Saint Albans City's environment and unique sense of place.

### ***Environment Policies***

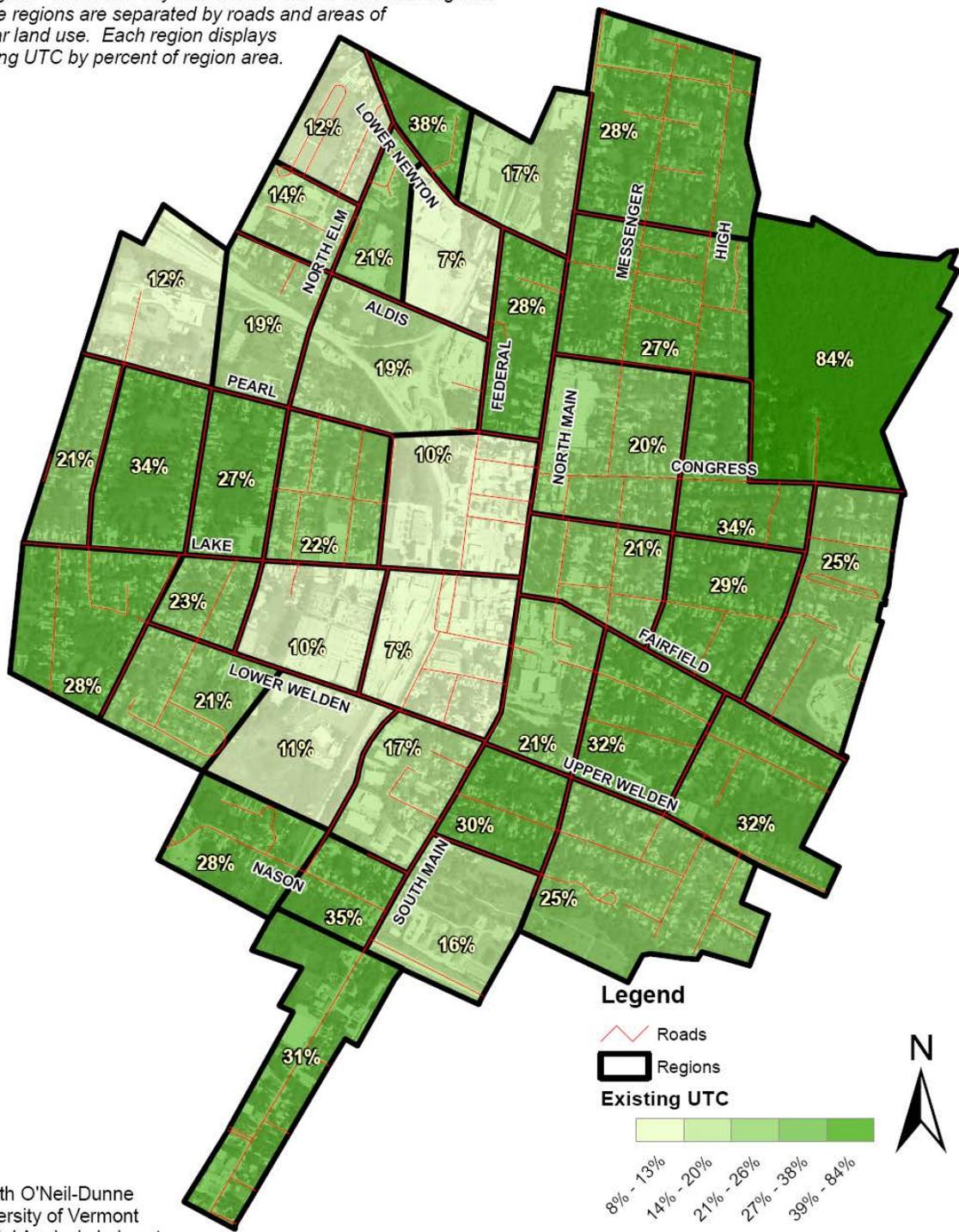
- 1) The quality of air, water, and land resources in Saint Albans City is protected through development regulations.
- 2) Ensure that Aldis Hill is preserved as a natural area within the City of Saint Albans.
- 3) Key natural features such as Aldis Hill, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, floodplains, streambanks, and local waterways are protected from the impacts of development.
- 4) Taylor Park and other green spaces will be optimized for their role in storing and treating stormwater run-off in the City.
- 5) Runoff and erosion shall be controlled during all phases of construction.
- 6) The City values its tree canopy and will enhance it.
- 7) Protect property damage and stream equilibrium through effective floodplain management.
- 8) Increase and support neighborhood-based community gardens throughout the City.
- 9) The City will advocate for sensible state and federal stormwater policies that do not contribute to a disproportionate cost burden for redevelopment and new development in Vermont's urban areas.

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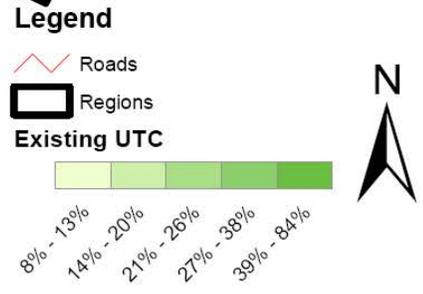
<sup>4</sup> Sustaining America's Urban Trees and Forests, USDA, June 2010

This map shows percent of existing urban tree canopy (UTC) by region. St. Albans City was divided into 39 individual regions. These regions are separated by roads and areas of similar land use. Each region displays existing UTC by percent of region area.

Tree canopy estimates derived from 2008 aerial imagery.



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 Spatial Analysis Laboratory  
 802.656.3324  
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**Map 4.6 Percent Tree Canopy by Region**

## (5) Downtown Master Plan

### Vision Element - A vibrant downtown will exist at the center of the St. Albans community

Saint Albans is fortunate to have a classic New England downtown at its core featuring architecturally interesting block facades, historic landmarks, and the central green of Taylor Park. In recent years, considerable effort has gone into revitalizing and redeveloping the downtown. Downtown St. Albans is a Designated Main Street Community of Vermont, a Designated Downtown, and a Designated Growth Center, all which bring various resources to downtown business owners and the City.

The City of Saint Albans and Saint Albans for the Future (SAFF) work jointly together in Downtown Development. SAFF, a non-profit, tax-exempt Vermont organization, is dedicated to the continued enhancement of the Downtown central business district.

The City and SAFF promote of a variety of special programs, from design assistance, special events, to economic development activities. Downtown St. Albans has adopted the Vermont Main Street Approach, which provides a flexible framework that puts the traditional assets of downtown, such as unique architecture and locally-owned businesses, to work as a catalyst for economic growth and community pride.

The Downtown Master Plan process (completed in 2009 by Arnett Muldrow & Associates, Ltd; Mahan Rykiel Associates, Inc.; and Community Design Solutions) involved the community in creating an urban design vision for downtown revitalization projects, including redevelopment, parking, façade improvements, streetscape enhancements, and Taylor Park improvements. The Downtown Master Plan was a recommendation of the 2006 Downtown Market Analysis and Marketing Plan, which provided recommendations and strategies in the areas of marketing, development, heritage and creative economy, Taylor Park, and SAFF. The Implementation Strategy Board is shown in Table 5.1 on the next page. Since its creation, over half of the recommendations and strategies have been completed or are substantially underway.

Figure 5.1

#### A History of Downtown Revitalization Planning

- **The 1994 Saint Albans Downtown Action Plan** (Community Investment Associates).
- **Downtown Designation** (2004, renewal awarded April 2007).
- **The 2006 Market Analysis and Marketing Plan** (Arnett Muldrow and Associates).
- **The 2009 Downtown Master Plan** (Arnett Muldrow & Associates, Ltd. of Greenville, South Carolina alongside Mahan Rykiel Associates, Ltd. of Baltimore, MD, Community Design Solutions of Columbia, SC, and MapMaker Photogrammetric Services of St. Albans, VT).
- **Growth Center Designation** (2010)
- **Downtown Streetscape Project Progresses through VTrans Planning Process and Readies for Construction** (2011-2012)

**Table 5.1 Market Analysis & Marketing Plan – Implementation Strategy Board**

	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Fostering the Image: The Marketing Strategy</b>	Adopt and implement a popular logo for downtown St. Albans	Phase I completed. Phase II in progress
	Apply the logo in a number of applications	Phase I completed. Phase II in progress
	Develop marketing collateral utilizing logo	Phase I completed. Phase II in progress
	Focus initial marketing effort on St. Albans Town, secondary trade area, and local employees	In progress
	Create new SAFF website using brand	In progress
	Market all events	Continuous
	Extend marketing efforts to Burlington and north Chittenden County	Continuous
	Put new marketing materials at all rest areas/State Dept. of Tourism	Continuous
	Implement first phase of signage using the logo for Taylor Park	Planning
	Apply brand to downtown gateway signage	In progress
	Historic walking tour	Completed
	Implement wayfinding strategy using adopted brand	In progress
	Identify funding streams for marketing strategy	Continuous
	Broaden marketing net to tourism markets	Continuous
	Market downtown to lake community	Planning
<b>Growth Roadmap: The Master Development Plan</b>	Implement incentives for business development	In development
	Business recruitment focusing on market analysis	In Progress
	Begin to market redevelopment opportunities in downtown	Continuous
	Obtain funding/issue RFP for physical Master Plan	Completed
	Develop a parking management plan and summit	In progress
	Business training opportunities through schools	Planning
	Complete physical Master Plan for downtown	In progress
	Issue RFPs for development of key sites	In progress
	Host a developers roundtable	Planning
	Aggressively pursue market rate housing units	Planning
	Improve connection from Saint Albans to Lake Champlain	In development
	Work with private developers and property owners on other sites – Handy Dealership, Lake Street, Redevelopment of downtown shopping center, Vacant and underutilized railroad properties	In development
Physical Master Plan will identify additional goals and development opportunities	Completed	
<b>Heritage and Creative Economy: A Strategic Link</b>	Complete creative economy application	Completed
	Identify an ag/food based strategy for art/retail	Planning
	Create downtown retail opportunities profiling regional products	In progress
	Build events around food themes. Have regular events associated with Farmers Market.	In progress
	Incorporate local foods into the Maple Festival.	Planning
	Market downtown food related retail	In development

<b>Table 5.1 Market Analysis &amp; Marketing Plan – Implementation Strategy Board</b>		
	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Status</b>
	Events Calendar	Continuous
	Build pavilion for farmers market and for more permanent home	Planning
	Develop the Saint Albans food emporium	Planning
	As the Creative Economy strategy starts to unfold, other medium and long term task items will emerge	Planning
<b>Taylor Park: The Centerpiece of Downtown</b>	Host a Taylor Park visioning workshop	Completed
	Master Gardeners develop horticultural options to preserve and enhance the landscape	Continuous
	Hold monthly events in the park.	Continuous
	Involve students in projects including clean up.	Continuous
	Establish an advisory group to help with the park.	Completed
	Complete a round of physical improvements to the park	In progress
	Create a park master plan	In progress
	Do a definitive history on the park and use for park interpretation	Planning
	Restore the fountain	In progress
	Information kiosk at north and south ends of park	West side kiosk completed
	Install more lights such as lighting at the central garden	In progress
	Installing a clock in the central garden	In progress
	Redesigning the reflecting pool for use by kids	In progress
<b>SAFF and its Partners: The Organizers for Success</b>	Host Leadership Roundtable	Completed
	Have each implementing organization officially endorse strategic plan and respective tasks	Completed
	Begin quarterly summit to evaluate progress	Planning
	Build a communication strategy	In progress
	Facilitate Capital Campaign	Planning
	Consider Business Improvement District	In progress
	Tax increment financing	In progress

Implementing the Master Plan takes time, public input, creativity and funding. The City has reorganized the Downtown Master Plan Implementation Committee into a Downtown Board in order to more directly align the work of the Master Plan and St. Albans for the Future. The following five efforts are being integrated into SAFF's Main Street approach:

- Streetscape,
- Parking,
- Branding/Way-Finding,
- Taylor Park, and
- Facades.

## **Downtown Redevelopment**

There are many opportunities for development and redevelopment in downtown Saint Albans. Some of the most significant opportunities are in the three primary downtown blocks bounded by Hudson Street to the North and Stebbins Street to the South. Some of the opportunities are in the form of new constructions (infill) on vacant lots and renovation of existing buildings.

The Downtown Master Plan states:

*“Regardless of the location, it is particularly important to seize the opportunity to reinforce the strong urban form of Downtown St. Albans and avoid suburban-style development patterns that have occurred in the past. New development should be sensitive to the historic context, locate buildings to the street edge with parking located behind and provide active uses and articulated facades along the streets.” 2009 Saint Albans Downtown Master Plan*

The Master Plan made specific redevelopment recommendations for different areas of Downtown (see Figure 5.2), which were coded on a Master Development Plan (Map 5.3).

## **Parking Opportunities**

The Master Plan recommends the City consider downtown parking lots and coin-fed/multi-space meters to facilitate continued downtown redevelopment and new development. The primary strategy for parking is to develop significant shared parking resources within the downtown core. These spaces provide employee and resident parking as well as additional public parking. The coin-fed/multi-space meter

**Figure 5.2**  
**Master Plan Vision for Key**  
**Redevelopment Opportunities**

### **The Downtown Core Block**

This site represents the center of Saint Albans and is bounded by Main, Kingman, Lake and Federal Streets. The vision of the Downtown Core Block is to reinforce these four block faces with infill development/redevelopment and revitalization of existing properties while creating a more merchant/consumer friendly parking system. The streets that comprise the internal circulation system shall be designed as pedestrian-friendly urban streets with sidewalks, street trees, ornamental lighting, outdoor dining and other sidewalk amenities where feasible.

### **Kingman-Hudson Block**

This block is located to the North of the Downtown Core Block and is bounded by Kingman, Main, Federal and Hudson Streets and is bisected by Center Street. The vision for this block is to increase parking resources by coordinating with property owners to consolidate individual parking lots into a more efficient whole. In addition, there are a significant number of façade improvement opportunities in this block as well as an infill opportunity along Kingman Street.

### **Lake-Stebbins Block**

This block has minimal opportunities for infill development but there is an opportunity to create and redevelop parking. There are also opportunities to create attractive streetscapes surrounding such parking developments and redevelopments.

### **Lake and Maple Street Development**

The former automobile dealership property that straddles Lake Street at Maple Street represents the largest vacant property within the designated downtown area. This space has many mixed use development opportunities. It is important that new development blend in with the surrounding architecture and parking.

### **Main and Fairfield Development** **(Handy's Toyota)**

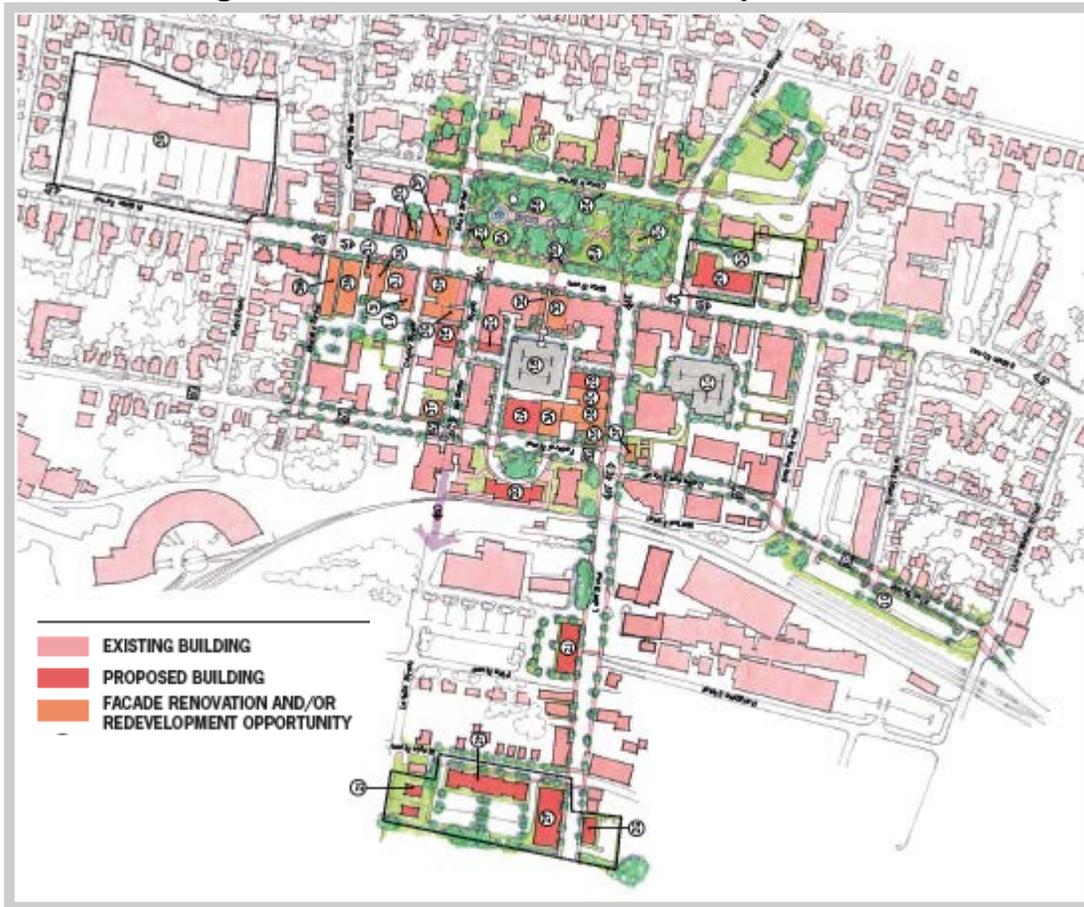
This site is prominently located on Main Street, beside Taylor Park and is main gateway for the City. The master plan encourages enhancements to the property and includes a recommendation if the property owners ever wish to redevelop.

### **St. Albans Shopping Center**

There are a number of ways to redevelop this property from complete redevelopment to partial redevelopment to renovation of the existing buildings. Regardless of the approach, the goal should be to create an architectural presence along Main Street with parking resources located to the rear of the site or internal to the site.

approach would alleviate the current “chalking” parking enforcement strategy. This system would be more visitor-friendly and would encourage prime parking turnover. The City’s Parking Sub-Committee has studied these options and provided public outreach to gain input on the best alternatives. There will also be signage outreach programs along with enhancements to parking safety and aesthetics.

**Figure 5.3 Downtown Master Development Plan**



### ***Façade Improvement Program***

The appearance of downtown is largely determined by the condition of its buildings. Saint Albans is fortunate to have an abundance of historic structures, many of which are in pristine condition. However, some of these structures have been modified over time, or fallen into disrepair. Because this appearance also forms the basis of the public’s overall impression of downtown, it’s upgrading and preservation are crucial to the City’s continued livelihood. One of the most unforgettable impressions left with a visitor or potential investor is the appearance of a community’s buildings. This is where the City could benefit from overall façade grants, item-specific building grants and a façade master plan.

## ***Streetscape Enhancements***

The goal of streetscape improvements is to enhance the existing character through phased improvements that are scaled to the pedestrian. Often streets are viewed as the domain of the automobile, designed to move cars efficiently and effectively from place to place. Streets, however, are much more – they are public spaces, pedestrian corridors and, when well-designed, places for community life and interaction. The streetscapes of Saint Albans City form important and individually unique public spaces. In the downtown areas, historic buildings, on-street parking, amenable sidewalks, street tree plantings, a vital day and night business environment, access for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians, street furniture, and slow moving traffic are all components that contribute to the vitality of these unique corridors.

The Streetscape Subcommittee has made significant progress implementing the recommendations of the Master Plan. With considerable public input, they have transformed the recommendations from the Master Plan into comprehensive engineering designs for streetscape enhancement. Having secured funding to begin implementing the designs, the first phases of streetscape enhancement should be underway by the end of 2012. Completing the subsequent phases of the Downtown Streetscape project (e.g. other sections of Main Street, Lake Street and connecting streets) will continue to be a priority for the City.

### ***Taylor Park***

Deemed one of the most beautiful city parks in Vermont, this Saint Albans treasure is a remarkable centerpiece to downtown. A few key recommendations from the Master Plan include design considerations, converting the former reflection pool into a splash pad, anchoring the south end of the park as a future gathering area, creating outdoor dining, developing a more accessible entrance, establishing a formal memorial program and developing a Taylor Park Master Plan (Figure 5.5). The City has implemented many of these recommendations in the summer of 2011, including a Taylor Park Master Plan.

**Figure 5.4 Downtown Core Streetscape Recommendations** - Create a “sense of completeness” for the heart of downtown and build on investments occurring in the park and in businesses along Main Street.

- Removal of overhead utility lines
- Scored concrete paving for sidewalks
- Permeable pavement in on-street parking zones
- Expanded sidewalk areas
- Street trees, extended root zones, and protective bollards
- Ornamental lighting
- Mast arms for signals
- Banner poles
- Street furniture, including flower pots, benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks
- Way-finding signage



Figure 5.5 Taylor Park Early Concept Site Plan

***Downtown Master Plan Goals***

- 1) Downtown Saint Albans will continue to be the heart of the regional economy with a range of economic, cultural and residential uses, especially the many locally-owned businesses which offer a wide variety of affordable goods and services within an accessible distance.

***Downtown Master Plan Policies***

- 1) The City of Saint Albans will support Saint Albans for the Future (SAFF) in its work.
- 2) The City and SAFF will engage a host of partners in working toward the common goal of preserving Downtown Saint Albans' place as the center of the regional economy.
- 3) The City will continue to dedicate time and resources to the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan, including the completion of subsequent phases of the Downtown Streetscape Project.
- 4) The City will work to preserve and enhance the unique visual quality and design elements of Downtown Saint Albans.
- 5) Provide incentives for the renovation and improvement of existing vacant and underutilized space to promote the occupancy of Downtown buildings, including upper floor market rate housing units.

- 6) Reinforce the strong urban form of Downtown Saint Albans, including the historic context, buildings located to the sidewalk edge with parking located behind and active uses and articulated facades along the streets.
  - 7) Downtown Saint Albans will work to create and market a positive image based on the unique attributes of the downtown district.
  - 8) The unique attributes of Downtown Saint Albans will be the focus of the City's efforts to market a positive image for the community.
  - 9) Encourage a variety of community-wide festivals, celebrations, and activities, and promote knowledge of them to a diverse audience.
- .

## (6) Livability

### Vision Element - Safe neighborhoods with a variety of housing options

Safe, affordable, adequate housing is one of our most basic needs. Availability of a variety of housing types (in equally various price ranges) fosters a diverse community which is more attractive for residents and helps to facilitate economic development. In recent years, access to affordable housing has become a greater issue as housing prices have increased at a greater rate than income. A range of housing types also strengthens the ability of local businesses to attract and retain new workers so they can compete and expand in the changing economy. In addition, the construction and renovation of homes has been identified as an important sector in the local and regional economy.

A **“household”** is defined by the Census as “living in a housing unit.” While some housing units may be vacant, the number of occupied housing units will always equal the total number of households.

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*There are 3,231 housing units in Saint Albans City according to the 2010 Census.*

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### **Current Housing Trends**

The 2010 Census counted 3,231 housing units in Saint Albans City, a decrease of 145 housing units since 2000. This figure corresponds with the decrease in population shown by the 2010 population count. However, the City questions the accuracy of both these numbers, believing that local data does not support such a drastic decline, especially in light of the housing projects in the community over the course of the decade. Just under half of the housing stock in Saint Albans consists of single family homes, with the remainder consisting of two-family and multi-family homes. Most of the City’s multi-family units are in homes with 3-4 units. The second highest number of units is in duplexes and other 2-unit homes.

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*There are a greater percentage of renter-occupied housing units than owner-occupied housing units.*

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*There is a large 18-34 aged segment of the population, the majority of which live in rental housing units with smaller households.*

Population broken down by age shows a relatively even proportion of different age groups, but compared to the county and state there is a higher proportion of 18 to 34 year olds, and specifically 25-29 year olds (See Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2). The majority of this population age group rents, but some are first time homeowners (2010 US Census). They typically require either smaller units in multi-unit buildings (for rent or condominium style ownership) or smaller single family options as first-time homeownership opportunities.

The younger trend in the City's population corresponds to a smaller average household size in 2010 (2.29 persons), compared to Franklin County (2.55 persons). The relatively high number of non-family and single person households in Saint Albans City (44%) is reflective of this. While the percentage of non-family and single person households is greater than the county and the state, the numbers of non-family and single person households in Saint Albans City are comparable to similar sized urban areas in Vermont. The percentage of single parent households in the City also outnumbers the county and the state, which is typical of other urban areas (Table 6.1).

Not surprisingly, there are more renter occupied housing units (52%) than owner-occupied housing units in the City according to the 2010 Census, which is much higher than in the county and state, but consistent with other similar urban areas in the State (Table 6.2). The renter-occupied housing units in Saint Albans City account for about 1/3 of the renter-occupied units in Franklin County as a whole.

**Table 6.1: Household Type, 2010**

	St. Albans City	Newport City	Barre City	St. Albans Town	Franklin County	Vermont
<b>Total Households:</b>	<b>2,977</b>	<b>1,855</b>	<b>4,137</b>	<b>2,277</b>	<b>18,513</b>	<b>256,442</b>
<b><u>Family households:</u></b>	1,665 (56%)	1,033 (56%)	2,173 (53%)	1,602 (70%)	12,939 (70%)	160,360 (63%)
<b><i>Husband-wife family</i></b>	1,107(66%)	687 (67%)	1,328 (61%)	1,263 (79%)	9,939(77%)	124,395(78%)
<b><i>Other family:</i></b>	558(34%)	346 (33%)	845 (39%)	339 (21%)	3,000(23%)	35,965(22%)
Male householder, no wife present	135 (24%)	92 (27%)	216 (26%)	105 (31%)	1,011 (34%)	11,326 (31%)
Female householder, no husband present	423 (76%)	254 (73%)	629 (77%)	234 (69%)	1,989 (66%)	24,639 (69%)
<b><u>Non-family households:</u></b>	1,312 (44%)	822 (44%)	1,964 (47%)	675 (30%)	5,574 (30%)	96,082 (37%)
<b><i>Householder living alone</i></b>	1,017 (78%)	683 (83%)	1,604 (82%)	508 (75%)	4,194 (75%)	72,233 (75%)

2010 U.S. Census Summary File 1

In 2010, 7% of housing units were considered vacant (either for rent, rented not occupied, for sale only, sold but not occupied, or other), which is similar to vacancy rates in other similar urban areas of Vermont. The vacancy rate for rental units only is also at 7%, which is higher than the accepted healthy rate of 5%. Ownership vacancy rates are much lower at 3%. The City's vacancy rates (for all housing units) are up since 2000, when they were at 4%. The increase indicates that there is a sufficient quantity of rental housing units, but does not address quality or type.

**Table 6.2: Housing Unit Ownership Type and Vacancy Status, 2010**

	Saint Albans City	Newport City	Barre City	St. Albans Town	Franklin County	Vermont
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	3,231	2,222	4,504	2,792	21,588	322,539
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	2,977	1,855	4,137	2,277	18,513	256,442
<i>Owner occupied</i>	1,428 (48%)	1,012 (55%)	1,956 (47%)	1,824 (80%)	13,829 (75%)	181,407 (71%)
<i>Renter occupied</i>	1,549 (52%)	843 (45%)	2,181 (53%)	453 (20%)	4,684 (25%)	75,035 (29%)
<b>Vacant housing units</b>	230 (7%)	194 (9%)	330 (7%)	93 (3%)	1,035 (5%)	15,899 (5%)
<i>Rental units</i>	120 (52%)	88 (45%)	190 (57%)	23 (25%)	398 (38%)	6,232 (39%)
<i>Ownership units</i>	45 (20%)	47 (24%)	71 (22%)	40 (43%)	320 (31%)	4,213 (27%)
<i>Other (not including seasonal)</i>	65 (28%)	59 (31%)	69 (21%)	30 (32%)	317 (31%)	5,454 (34%)

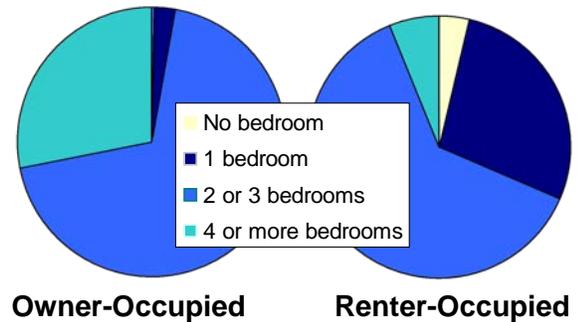
2010 U.S. Census Summary File 1

*The City's younger population and lower average household size may be evidence of demand for 1 bedroom and efficiency ownership opportunities, which there are virtually no supply of currently.*

In terms of unit size, the majority of rental units contain 2 or 3 bedrooms, with close to 1/3 containing 1 bedroom, and efficiency units making up about 4% (Figure 6.1). The City's younger population and lower average household size, is evidence of demand for 1

bedroom and efficiency rental and ownership opportunities. There is virtually no existing supply of such small ownership options.

**Figure 6.1: Number of Bedrooms by Ownership Type**



Data Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

There are many options for subsidized rental housing in Saint Albans City, totaling 287 units or 9% of the total housing stock (Vermont Directory of Affordable Rental Housing, 2011). Of the 287 subsidized units, 26% are available to the elderly only, 2% to disabled only, 34% to elderly or disabled, and the remaining 37% open to any resident meeting applicable low-income thresholds, depending on the type of subsidy. Subsidized housing is also available through tenant based vouchers issued by the Saint Albans City Housing Authority, which are not tied to a specific apartment but can instead be used in a variety of privately owned rental housing.

While seniors (65+) only make up 12% of the City's population, the cohort can experience difficulty finding adequate, affordable housing. The cost of repairs and increasing taxes can often work against older residents who want to remain in their homes. In addition, some older residents find that downsizing their residence or

*There are many options for seniors, several of which are subsidized, although demand is still not being met based on wait lists.*

moving to a location with better access to services is desirable as they age.

There are many options for seniors in and around the City, several of which are subsidized, although demand is still not being met based on wait lists. The City is a good location for senior housing because of its accessibility to community services and public transit. However a good share of the area's senior housing development over the course of the decade has occurred in St. Albans Town, not the City.

### **Affordability**

By most government statistics, housing is considered affordable when a household pays no more than 30% of their income on housing. However, as lower income households have tighter budgets, housing costs place a greater strain on lower income households than on those with more disposable income. Particularly vulnerable populations include first-time buyers, senior citizens, and lower income residents.

Vermont recommends checking housing affordability for 80% of the county's median household income (or median metropolitan statistical area (MSA) income, if it applies) as an indicator for the community. All of Franklin and Grand Isle County have been added to the Burlington-South Burlington MSA. The median household income in Saint Albans City is \$43,506, while the median family income is \$58,955 (2005-2009 American Community Survey estimates). These figures for the Burlington-South Burlington MSA are significantly higher: \$57,622 and \$72,063, respectively.

Table 6.3 and 6.4 compare maximum affordable mortgages and rents with the median sale price for a primary residence and median rent based on spending no more than 30% percent of household income on housing. Maximum affordable mortgages and rents are computed for 80% of the median family and household incomes in Saint Albans City and the Burlington-South Burlington MSA. Since the majority of family households rely on two incomes, median family income is higher and housing is more affordable. The affordability analysis indicates that 80% of the median household income for both the MSA and Saint Albans City individually could not afford the 2010 median sale price for primary residences. Rent is more affordable than homeownership in Saint Albans City, although the American Community Survey figure for median rent

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### **Affordable Housing Defined**

*The definition of affordable housing as stated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states: "Housing is affordable when households with incomes below an area's median income pay no more than 30% of their income on housing. Housing costs for renters are rent and utilities. Housing costs for homeowners are principal on mortgage payments, interest, property taxes, and insurance."*

*The affordability analysis indicates that 80% of the median household income for the MSA and Saint Albans City individually could not afford the 2010 median sale price for primary residences.*

appears to be lower than typical rents as advertised in local papers. 80% of the median household income for the City individually could not afford the median rent.

<b>Table 6.3 Home Ownership Affordability in Saint Albans City</b>					
	80% Median Income	Cash at Closing	Affordable Mortgage	Median Sale Price (2010)	Affordability Gap
MSA Family Income	\$57,650.00	\$16,039.00	\$193,000.00	\$156,000.00	+ \$37,000.00
St. Albans City Family Income	\$47,164.00	\$13,447.00	\$157,000.00	\$156,000.00	+ \$1,000.00
MSA Household Income	\$46,098.00	\$13,195.00	\$153,500.00	\$156,000.00	- \$2,500.00
St. Albans City Household income	\$34,805.00	\$10,423.00	\$115,000.00	\$156,000.00	- \$41,000.00

Computed Using Vermont Housing Data's Home Mortgage Calculator, maintained by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and the Center for Rural Studies.  
 Calculation is based on the following assumptions:

- 5% Down payment
- Average quarterly interest rates (3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2011)
- Average property taxes (county wide average of 1.59 in 2010)
- Average closing costs
- Spending no more than 30% if household income on housing

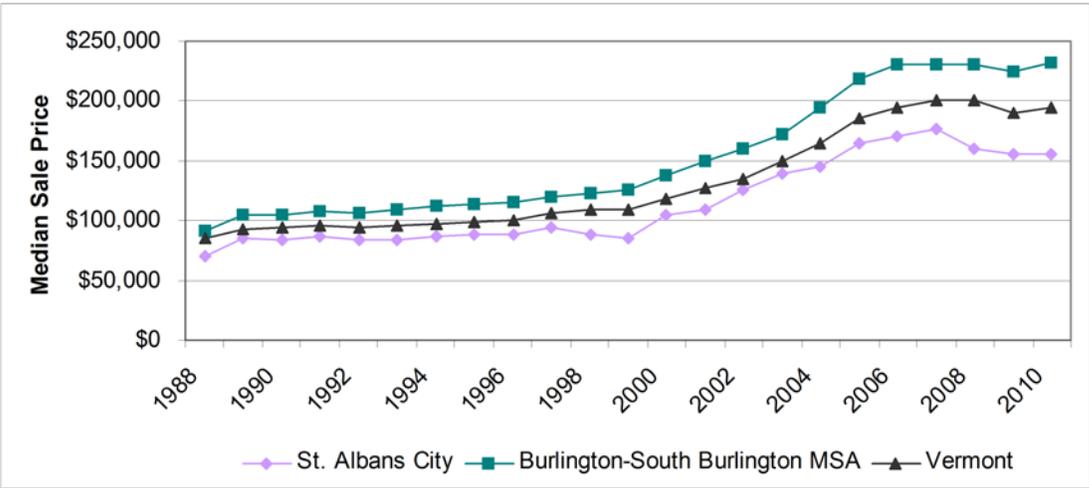
<b>Table 6.4 Rental Unit Affordability in Saint Albans City</b>				
	80% Median Income	Monthly Income (Minus Cost of Utilities)	Median Rent (2005-2009)	Affordability Gap
MSA Family Income	\$57,650.00	\$1,291.00	\$736.00	+ \$555.00
St. Albans City Family Income	\$47,164.00	\$1,029.00	\$736.00	+ \$293.00
MSA Household Income	\$46,098.00	\$1,002.00	\$736.00	+ \$266.00
St. Albans City Household income	\$34,805.00	\$720.00	\$736.00	- \$16.00

Monthly cost of utilities based on natural gas averages from the HUD Utility Allowance Table for the State of Vermont from 10/1/10. Based on the assumption that a household will spend no more than 30% of their household income on housing costs.

Sale prices have increased substantially over the last several decades in Vermont as well as nationally. While sale prices in Saint Albans City also followed this trend, home prices have always been cheaper than adjacent rural areas, the Burlington area and Vermont as a whole. The median price of a single family home sold in 2010 was \$156,000 in Saint Albans City as compared to \$232,000 in the Burlington-South Burlington MSA. This significant difference in housing affordability has led to increased demand in the communities surrounding Chittenden County. Saint Albans City is easily accessible by Interstate 89 and is within a 30 minute commute of employment centers in Burlington, South Burlington and Essex. Of the 2,787 residents who commuted out of

Saint Albans City for work in 2009, about 40% were headed to Chittenden County (2009 U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics).

**Figure 6.2: Median Sale Price of Primary Residences Sold**



**New Housing Development**

According to local building permit records, more than 90 new housing units have been developed since 2000, the majority of which are in multi-family housing projects (Table 6.5). The City is currently in the process of tabulating the difference between this housing unit gain and any multi-unit to single unit conversions, or other losses, to compare with the 2010 Census figure, which showed a decrease of 145 units since 2000.

In order to create a balanced housing stock, the City should explore the need to create additional “workforce” and market rate housing. Single family homes, condominiums, and other housing options for young families and professionals are needed. Encouraging and allowing flexibility in the creation of accessory apartments also presents opportunities for additional housing units. Planning for this housing should be coordinated with planning for new jobs.

**Table 6.5: Building Permits Issued for New Housing Projects, 2000-2010**

Year	Single Family	Duplex	Multi-Family
2000	3	0	0
2001	3	1	0
2002	1	0	0
2003	1	1	0
2004	1	2	1 (20 units)
2005	4	1	4 (# of units unknown)
2006	6	1	1 (27 units)
2007	2	0	0
2008	2	0	0
2009	5	0	0
2010	1	0	1
2011	2	0	1 (3 units)
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>New units</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>50+</b>

The most recent housing development, The Willard Mill, has a waiting list of potential residents and when it opened took less than one month to fill. The development consists of a total of 27 affordable units redeveloped from a former maple syrup

equipment manufacturing plant with a combination of public funding. Consisting of 12 one-bedroom units and 13 two-bedroom units, it provides evidence that smaller, high quality housing options are in demand in the City.

The development of housing in the City should also be pursued with the awareness that more information is needed on the effects of converting single family homes into multi-family. City officials are currently wary of potentially detrimental neighborhood effects of these types of conversions. A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis may be in order.



**The Willard Mill Housing Development**

Photo Credit: Laz Scangas

### ***Livability Goals***

- 1) A variety of housing options will be available for all income levels and segments of the Saint Albans City Population.
- 2) The neighborhoods of Saint Albans are safe, vibrant places, free from residential housing blight.

### ***Livability Policies***

- 1) Support the upkeep of housing in Saint Albans to improve and add value to neighborhoods, with particular attention paid to compliance in multi-family rental units.
- 2) Encourage new workforce and market rate housing development accessible to businesses and the downtown.
- 3) Encourage compatible infill residential development in existing neighborhoods.
- 4) Include neighborhood character and consequences in considerations for converting single family homes into multi-family.
- 5) Support historic rehabilitation of the existing housing stock.
- 6) Encourage appropriate senior housing opportunities in the City, located near the necessary amenities.
- 8) Encourage the development of housing that is energy efficient to reduce heating and electricity costs.
- 9) Support housing connected to schools, safe areas for physical activity and healthy food access via safe walking and biking routes and public transportation.

## **(7) Government and Public Services**

**Vision Element - Responsible, representative local government**

**Vision Element - Quality municipal and public services and infrastructure**

**Vision Element - Quality educational opportunities for all ages**

### ***Form of Government***

The City operates under a Council/Manager form of local government. The Mayor of Saint Albans City is elected by the voters for a two year term and acts as moderator with a voice and vote in all City Council meetings and proceedings. The City Council consists of six-members representing each six wards within the City. Council members are elected for staggered 3-year terms. Elections are held on Town Meeting Day. The primary divisions of City Government under the purview of the Council include finance and administration, public works, water and wastewater, planning and development, recreation, police, and fire. The Council concentrates on leadership and policy decisions - ensuring that the local government is responsive to community needs and wishes. The Council hires the City Manager to manage and administer City operations.

### ***Administration and Finance***

The City provides a wide range of facilities and services essential to residents' quality of life and economic vitality. The City of Saint Albans Finance Department oversees the financing of the City's facilities and services, in addition to general operations. The Finance Department also provides regular financial information to the City Manager, City Council, department heads and residents and carries out human resource functions for the City's full-time, part time and temporary staff members.

The majority of the City's revenue originates from property taxes (58% in 2011). As the community grows and economic conditions and needs change, the type and quantity of services provided change and in response the municipality must adjust revenue streams accordingly.

The City's tax base consists of taxable properties as assessed in the Grand List. In 2011 the Grand List totaled more than \$450 million, but many properties (around 60) included in that number are considered tax exempt by state and federal law or local decisions and thus are not taxed. Residential properties make up the majority of the tax base (Figure 7.1). The tax base has been fairly flat for the last ten to fifteen years; however, the tax rate has grown in response to increases in the cost of municipal services.

In recent years, the administration has placed strong emphasis on recruiting new commercial and industrial development to increase the tax base. The City also aggressively pursues federal and state funding for projects, in order to offset local costs. As a result of these efforts, the tax rate has remained stable for the last few years.

The City uses a capital program as a tool for assessing current and future needs for capital projects and improvements. This allows the City to prioritize projects and create a timeline to accomplish them, making the most efficient use of funding and current resources. The capital program also sets predictions for the pace of growth and development.

### City Hall

Saint Albans City Hall is located on North Main Street. City management and administrative offices, including the municipal vault and storage of all municipal records; City Council Chambers; meeting rooms; and a gymnasium/theater are all located there.

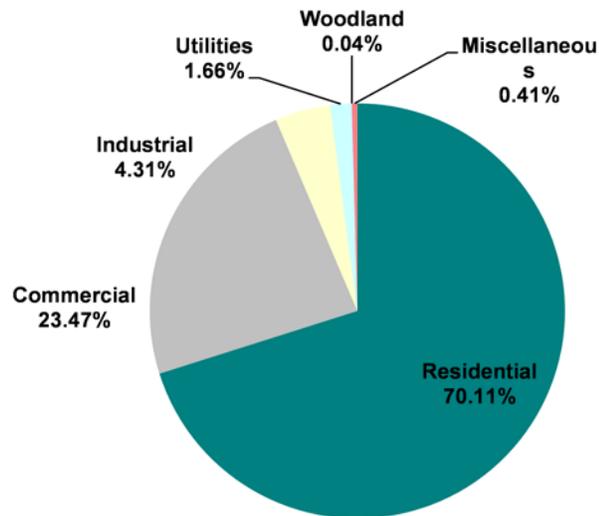
Currently City Hall heating is provided by a combination of two boilers, four hanging furnace and space heaters. In the summer months, cooling is provided by window air-conditioners which are placed throughout the building.

The City is planning for energy efficiency improvements and general modernization of City Hall. Window replacement and renovation planning is included in the FY11/12 capital budget at \$25,000 each.

### City Communications

Constant communication with voters and property owners in the City is critical for successful public initiatives and democratic processes. The City strictly adheres to the State's Open Meeting Laws and ensures that all meetings are posted and recorded in compliance with those laws. However more must be done in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in order

**Figure 7.1**  
**St. Albans City Municipal Grand List (2011)**



### Recent Energy Audits of Municipal Buildings

*In August 2010 an energy audit was performed on City Hall which revealed several areas of recommendation for energy efficiency retrofits. In March of 2011 the Public Works Garage also had an energy audit completed and possibilities for energy efficiency improvements were noted.*

to maintain a fully informed polity. The City has recognized this through the establishment of a website, currently at [www.stalbansvt.com](http://www.stalbansvt.com). The City has also reserved a Facebook account for future use. Other social media will be explored as needed.

Separate from virtual methods of communication, City staff and boards are comprised with people who are well connected with other residents and voters and do their best to stay in contact with their constituents verbally. The City also utilizes specialized advertising methods and other ways of getting the word out when outreach and input are critical for initiatives. Nevertheless the City will be placing much of its new communication efforts in maintaining, improving, and exploring its virtual website and social media presence, as appropriate.

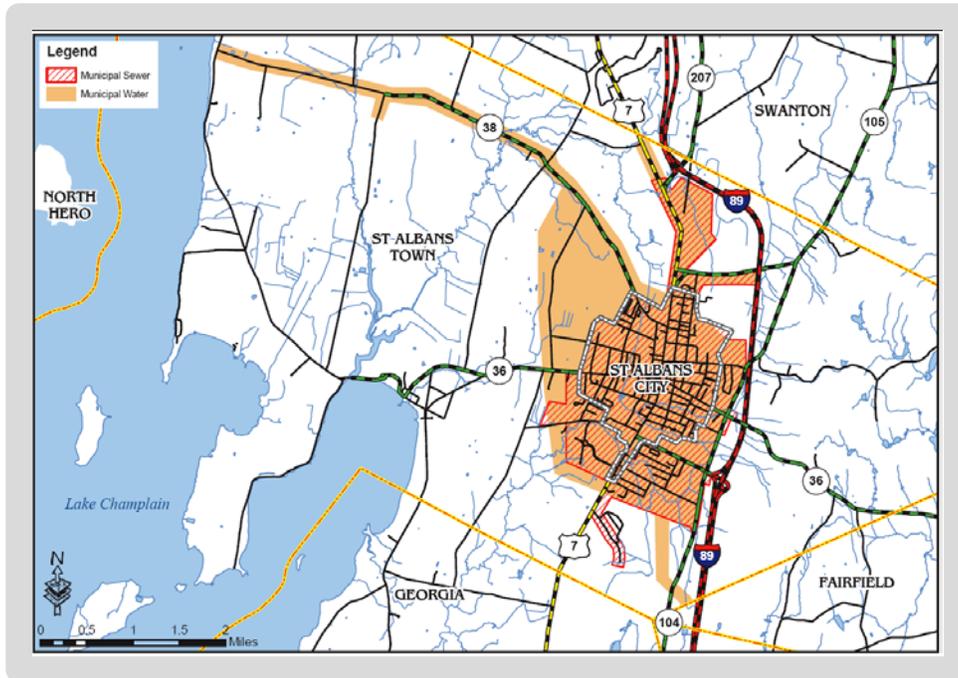
The City currently invites the Local Access cable station to tape and broadcast City Council meetings and other meetings. This policy will be continued, and the City further supports the future possibility of streaming such recordings over the Internet.

### ***Public Works***

The Public Works Department manages municipal utilities and infrastructure, in addition to the maintenance of municipally owned lands and buildings. These include among other things snow removal, street and sidewalk repair, water and sewer line installation and repair, landscape maintenance, and general repair of public investments. The Public Works Department primarily operates out of the Public Works Garage on Aldis Street, with the Public Works Director maintaining an office at City Hall.

### **Water Supply**

The City operates a municipal water supply system servicing the entire City and parts of the Town of Saint Albans (Map 7.1).



**Map 7.1 Municipal Sewer and Water Service Areas**

The City maintains close to 4,000 water accounts, the majority being residential accounts (approximately 10% are commercial and less than 1% industrial). About 1/3 of the water accounts are located in the Town of St. Albans. New service connections are regulated by a water/sewer allocation ordinance.

The City water's system is drawn from two sources – a reservoir complex located in North Fairfax (conventional gravity fed) and Lake Champlain (via a pumping system). The City also owns a reservoir on Silver Lake as an emergency reserve supply. The reservoir complex in North Fairfax consists of the South Reservoir/Dam (constructed in 1873) and the North Dam (constructed in 1893). The Maquam Shore Water Treatment Facility was originally constructed in 1953 to supplement the City's water supply with treated water from Lake Champlain.

Distribution to the City is made possible by several large water mains, pump stations, a one million gallon storage tank, and miles of smaller distribution lines. The City's water supply system has sufficient capacity for anticipated growth within the existing service area. There are no plans to expand the service area.

In 2010, the City started an evaluation and mapping project of the water system funded by rate payer contributions. This evaluation is informing the City on where to focus future water system improvements and mapping will improve the City's ability to monitor the condition of infrastructure. As needed improvements are identified, they are planned and budgeted in the City's Capital Improvement Program.

## Wastewater Treatment

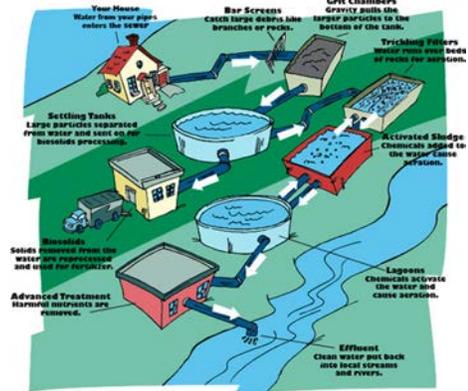
The City operates a municipal wastewater treatment system servicing the entire City and parts of Saint Albans Town north and south of the City (See Map 7.1). The wastewater treatment plant (installed in 1930) is located on Rewes Drive north of the City in the Town of St. Albans. Wastewater and stormwater are transported to the treatment plant via a network of sewer pipes. Approximately 60% of the treated water is combined wastewater/stormwater. Disinfected effluent is discharged into Stevens Brook, which is authorized under a permit issued by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation effective until September 30, 2012. One condition of the permit is the amount of phosphorous allowed to be discharged into the watershed.

The City maintains close to 4,000 sewer accounts, the majority being residential accounts (approximately 10% are commercial and less than 1% are industrial). Less than 20% of sewer accounts are located in the Town of St. Albans (as compared with over 30% of water accounts). As noted in the Water Supply Section, new service connections are regulated by a water/sewer allocation ordinance.

The sewer treatment plant is permitted to receive 4 million gallons per day (gpd) of influent and discharge .5 milligrams per liter of phosphorous. In 2010 the plant received an average of just over 2.7 million gpd. That was a particularly wet year; the previous annual average had been around 2.3 million gpd. There are currently just over 250,000 gpd in committed, unconnected allocations. The plant is currently left with a remaining uncommitted capacity that hovers just under 1 million gpd and is more than enough for the projected growth of the City and serviced areas within the Town. However, if permitted levels of phosphorous were reduced, the sewer plant would require efficiency improvements in order to maintain current capacity levels. The City is planning for how to finance such improvements should they be required.

The City contracts with Drummac for hauling dry-cake (the product of dewatering wastewater at the treatment plant) to landfills out of state.

**FIGURE 7.2**  
**WHERE DOES YOUR WASTEWATER GO?**



### Advanced Tertiary Treatment

The influent first enters primary clarifiers, then it is pumped to a trickling filter for preliminary biological treatment, the wastewater then passes through rotating biological contractors, then into flocculation tanks where alum and polymer are added for phosphorus removal. The wastewater then flows to secondary clarifiers, then through a sand filter for effluent polishing. Disinfection is achieved by chlorination followed by de-chlorination prior to discharge into Stevens Brook.

Image Credit: Renewable Water Resources

The City recently completed upgrades to the wastewater treatment facility that increased the systems organic capacity (completed in 2010 at a cost of approximately 5 million dollars). Financed through a combination of State Revolving Loan Funds and Federal ARRA dollars, debt service is paid via allocation fees and rate payer charges.

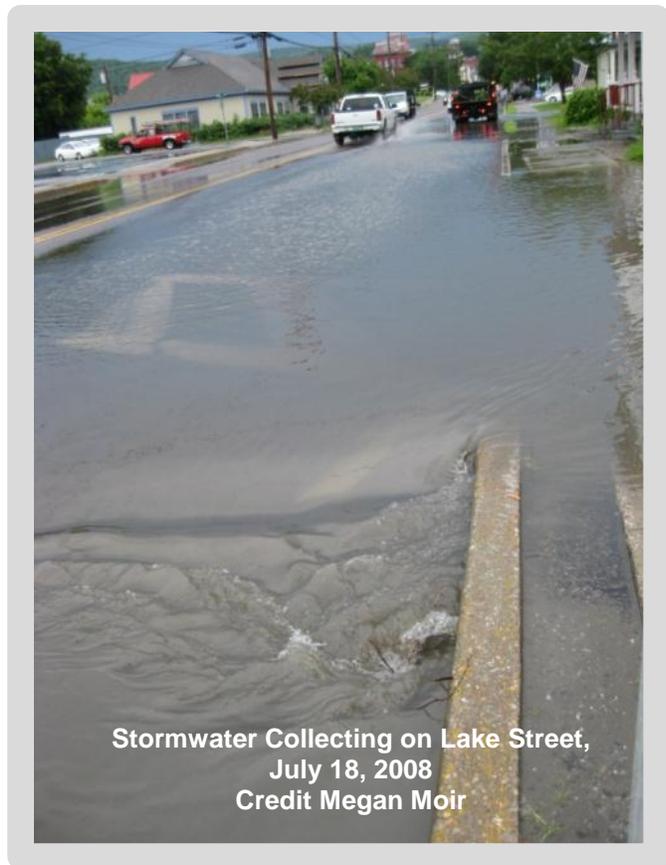
As a requirement of the discharge permit, the City is required to complete a 20-year engineering evaluation/inspection of the facility. The evaluation will be useful to the City in planning for future improvements. As needed improvements are identified, they will be planned and budgeted for in the City's capital budget and plan.

**Stormwater** refers to rainwater, snow melt, and other precipitation. In a natural setting, stormwater can be absorbed into the soil and or taken up by plants. In developed areas, however, pavement and other impervious surfaces such as rooftops prevent rainwater from infiltrating into the ground, instead "stormwater runoff" moves across these surfaces collecting sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants which quickly flow into waterbodies.

### Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is a municipal responsibility that involves planning, coordination, and maintenance of various stormwater management infrastructures. In recent years, there has been greater awareness of the impact stormwater has on water quality. This awareness has led to federal stormwater management requirements for a greater number of urban watersheds, which will be extended to Saint Albans City in the next few years. When this happens, the City will be required to obtain a federal permit for its Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) and to develop a stormwater management program to reduce the contamination of stormwater runoff and prohibit illicit discharges. The City is currently engaged in planning and activities to limit the cost burdens of the requirements of a MS4 permit.

In 2008, the City completed a comprehensive mapping project to create accurate, up-to-date maps of the City's stormwater and combined sewer systems. The study included GPS location and mapping of the storm sewer systems (drainage manholes, catch basins, outfalls, etc.) within the City's collection systems. In addition, the study also included an



inspection of each sewer manhole and catch basin. The City is now completing additional mapping of drainage areas. The study will ultimately provide a baseline understanding of drainage patterns within the City of Saint Albans for stormwater management and infrastructure planning.

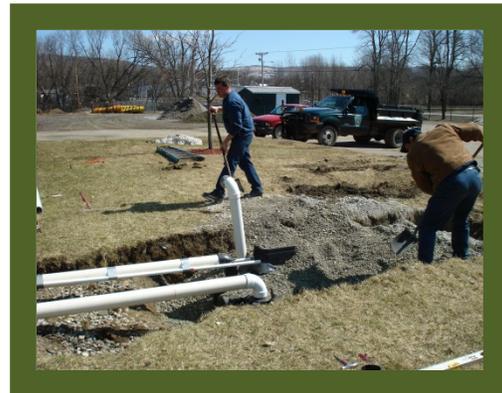
**Figure 7.3 Low Impact Development (LID) Best Management Practices (BMPs) are effective at managing stormwater onsite**

LID BMPs infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate and detain runoff to minimize stormwater runoff and pollution. BMP methods include raingardens, rain barrels, cisterns, vegetated swales, roof-top disconnection, infiltration trenches, green roofs, and pervious pavement.

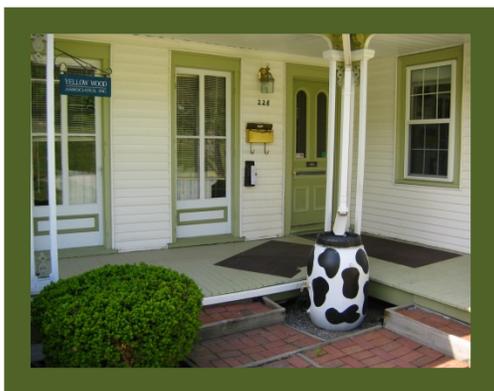
The City has supported several LID demonstration projects including:



**Pervious Concrete Sidewalk in front of Taylor Park**



**Installing Cisterns at the City Highway Garage**



**Rainbarrels in City Neighborhoods**



**Raingardens in City Neighborhoods**

In addition, the City of Saint Albans recently conducted a study to assess the feasibility of implementing a stormwater utility. The study evaluated current and future stormwater management challenges faced by the City, the Town and the surrounding Franklin

County region in addition to exploring the development of a system that would provide stable, fair, long-term funding to accomplish necessary and desirable stormwater management and capital improvement projects. The City continues to consider this study as it prepares for the responsibilities that an MS4 permit will bring.

### **Street Improvement Program**

The Street Superintendent manages the street improvement program - completing paving projects, sidewalk maintenance, street light maintenance, line striping and plowing on an as needed basis. The budget is funded by a combination of Vermont State Highway appropriations and taxpayers. Equipment, vehicle, material and street improvement projects are planned for and budgeted in the Capital Budget and Plan. More information on the street improvement program is included in Chapter 10.

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*In 2011, the City contracted for an above grade infrastructure evaluation, which will include an inventory and assessment of all roads, sidewalks, traffic control and calming infrastructure, and street furniture. The evaluation will improve project prioritization and selection for the Street Improvement Program.*

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### **Solid Waste Management**

Every Municipality in Vermont must either have its own Solid Waste Implementation Plan or belong to a Solid Waste District. The City of Saint Albans belongs to the Northwest Solid Waste District, which has a regional solid waste management plan and a certified regional facility. The Northwest Solid Waste District sponsors many activities such as “special collections” (bulky items, scrap metal, and tires) and Household Hazardous Waste collections (oil based paints, solvents, cleaners, pesticides, and other chemicals that would be harmful to the environment if not handled properly).

It is the responsibility of individual households to contract with a private solid waste hauler for curbside trash and recycling pick-up or to transport solid waste directly to a drop-off location or transfer station. The closest transfer station accepting solid waste from St. Albans City is the Highgate Transfer Station.

In December of 2010, the Saint Albans City Budget Committee endorsed the concept of consolidating garbage collection in the City, offering one contract to a provider, and recouping an aggregation fee. Upon further investigation, this idea did not receive a favorable legal opinion. The City continues to consider ways to make garbage collection more efficient and cost effective.

### **Municipal Buildings and Land**

The City is currently listed as the owner or part-owner of several pieces of property within the City. Public Works Department staff are responsible for maintaining these properties on behalf of City taxpayers.

## ***Planning and Development***

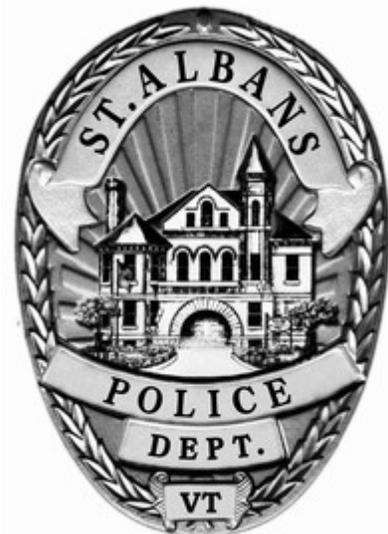
The Planning and Development Department coordinates municipal planning, code drafting and enforcement, downtown revitalization, and economic/community development programs. The Municipal Plan lays out the guiding vision for the City and identifies strategies for City staff, officials, and volunteers to work on. The remaining programs move the community toward its vision. They include, but are not limited to, development regulations, capital planning, brownfields redevelopment, grant writing and management, and downtown master plan implementation. These programs are funded by tax payers and a variety of state and federal grants.

## ***Public Safety and Emergency Services***

Saint Albans City provides the community with public safety and emergency response services. These services are an essential component to a healthy, vibrant community.

### **Police Department**

The Saint Albans Police Department is devoted to providing professional and quality police services, and strives to remain effective, efficient, and responsive to the changing needs of the community, while providing a safe environment that enhances the quality of life in Saint Albans. The role of the Saint Albans Police Department is to provide administrative, patrol, investigative, crime prevention, dispatching and emergency management services. In 2011, the Town of Saint Albans contracted with the Police Department to extend police services to the Town as well as the City.



The Police Department is located on Lower Weldon Street, which also houses the Fire Department and Central Dispatching. The Department has no lock-up facility on site. All prisoners are transported to the Northwest Correctional Center in Saint Albans Town. The State Police and County Sheriff also provide assistance from time to time.

The Saint Albans Police Department employs over 20 full time police officers and 2 part-time officers. At their disposal are several marked police cars, as well as unmarked detective vehicles, and vehicle(s) specialized for police dogs. The vast majority of funding for the Police Department comes from Saint Albans City taxpayers. Some police department positions are partially or fully grant funded, including a school resource officer (supplemented by BFA), a domestic violence investigator, and a Drug Task Force investigator.

Franklin County enjoys a Countywide Mutual Aid Agreement for Emergency Services Responders. When a call is made for assistance in Saint Albans, the Vermont State Police is the primary backup with secondary assistance coming from the Franklin County Sheriff's Department, Swanton Village Police and the United States Border Patrol and Customs. It is estimated that assistance can arrive within two to three minutes.

**Community Justice Center (CJC)-**  
*The CJC is a restorative justice program that involves both victims and the community in a process where each has a voice about how they have been affected and what they need for things to be made right. The CJC receives funding from the Vermont Department of Corrections and the City of Saint Albans.*

While City crime rates have been high over the last decade, they have been improving or the last few years. In 2010, the Police Department was selected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to implement an innovative enforcement program called Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS). DDACTS is based on a simple premise: since criminals move around in vehicles just like the rest of us, increased traffic enforcement produces increased arrests. The Department was recognized in the March 2010 issue of Law and Order magazine for this achievement.

The Police Department notes that the community's strongest asset in crime fighting efforts is an "Informed and Engaged" citizenry. The Department places an emphasis on community policing efforts.

## **Fire Department**

As a first response organization, the City of Saint Albans Fire Department responds to fires, public safety and medical emergencies, disasters and terrorist acts. The timely delivery of these services enables the Fire Department to make significant contributions to the safety of St. Albans and homeland security efforts. The mission of the Fire Department is to protect the residents and visitors of the City of Saint Albans with coordinated efforts in code enforcement, public education, hazardous materials and incident mitigation, thereby reducing the loss of life and property due to fire and other emergencies while also contributing to the quality of life. The Fire Department is also part of the Countywide Mutual Aid Agreement for Emergency Services Responders.

The Fire Department is located on Lower Weldon Street, along with the Police Department and Central Dispatching. The Saint Albans City Fire Department provides 24 hour per day fire and rescue service to City residents and visitors. The water system and hydrants are checked routinely to ensure adequate residual water pressure and proper functioning. There is ample water supply and pumping capacity in the event of a major fire.

The Fire Department currently budgets for three full time firefighters, 24 volunteer firefighters, seven cadets, and several firefighters in training. In addition, the City employs a Fire Marshal to assist the Fire Chief with all matters related to the

supervision and management of the Fire Department and the inspection of all public buildings to ensure they are constructed in compliance with City ordinances, Vermont Health Regulations, and Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code.

The City of Saint Albans Fire Department has one fire engine and one ladder truck in service (May 2011). New vehicles and equipment or their replacement is planned for and budgeted through the City's Capital Budget and Plan.

## **Ambulance**

Ambulance services are provided to the City under contract with AmCare Ambulance Services, located on Main Street in the City. The contract for FY12 was \$74,760; the cost has remained the same for several years.

Along with the Police and Fire Departments, AmCare participates in the county-wide mutual aid agreement. AmCare operates five ambulances, one of which is available for use in the City at all times.

## **Emergency Management**

Saint Albans City has a Rapid Response Plan to help organize the City in case of an emergency. The Rapid Response Plan contains basic emergency preparedness essential for responding to local emergencies. It includes critical phone numbers, contact persons, and critical facilities. The City also has an Emergency Operations Plan which describes the basic mechanisms and structures by which the City will respond to potential and/or actual emergency situations. As noted above, the City's police, fire and ambulance providers participate in the Franklin County Mutual Aid Agreement. This is a formal agreement among the municipalities and emergency first responders within Franklin County to lend resource assistance across jurisdictional boundaries when required; either by an emergency that exceeds local resources or a disaster. The Agreement helps the town achieve compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) strategy.

The City's emergency responders also participate in the Local Emergency Planning Committee for Franklin County, whose mission is to provide resources and guidance to the community through education, coordination and assistance in All Hazard mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery planning to assure public health and safety.

## ***Health Care and Community Support Services***

Northwestern Vermont enjoys a variety of quality health care and community support services. Saint Albans City serves as a regional hub for health care services with the greatest density and spectrum of offerings. The City is committed to doing its part in fostering the health and well-being of all residents. There are many exciting initiatives in the region working towards improving public health and wellness.

## Health Care Facilities

Saint Albans City and Town are home to the Northwestern Medical Center. The hospital was originally established in 1883 and has been providing care to northwest Vermont for 128 years. The services provided at NMC includes 24-hour emergency care, intensive care, general medical and surgical center, OB/GYN services, in/outpatient surgical services, occupational health/industrial medicine, and a host of support services including medical labs, x-ray, and physical therapy. In cases of specific need, many City residents go to Fletcher Allen Medical Center in Burlington, Vermont's most extensive health care center.

*Data collected by the Vermont Department of Health in 2005 indicated there was a shortage in primary care providers in the County.*

Aside from regional medical centers and hospitals, there are several smaller integrated medical practices in and near Saint Albans, where people have access to a group of doctors and other trained staff for health needs. These include Northwestern Primary Care, Saint Albans Primary Care, Mousetrap Pediatrics, NOTCH (Northern Tier Center for Health), and the Georgia Health Center. Other health care providers serving the City include: Northwest Counseling and Support Services, the Vermont Health Department, Planned Parenthood, Northwestern Occupational Health, Franklin County Home Health Agency, various Fletcher Allen specialists, and a variety of other private health care professionals from dentists to optometrists.

## Vermont Department of Health

Aside from actual health care facilities, Vermont's Department of Health also plays an important part in community health services. Essential public health and disease prevention services are available across Vermont through the Department's 12 district offices, one of which is in St. Albans City. The district offices work in partnership with local health care providers, voluntary agencies, schools, businesses and community organizations to improve health and extend statewide initiatives in local communities throughout the state.

## Health Indicators

While data on a City scale is not available, health risk factor statistics on the County level indicate that the City has higher averages than the state in several areas, including not meeting recommended physical activity guidelines; not having any physical activity in their leisure time; smoking; and child exposure to second hand smoke at home (Franklin/Grand Isle United Way Community Needs Assessment, 2009). According to the Vermont Department of Health, obesity is going up and is higher than the statewide average. The Community Needs Assessment also reports that teen pregnancies (dominated by those aged 18-19), the percent of new families "at risk" and individuals receiving substance abuse treatment are higher in Franklin County than statewide averages.

The percentage of children that are eligible to receive reduced or free school lunches is also an indicator of health and wellness in the community. To be eligible for free or reduced price meals a family's income must be at or below 130% of the Federal poverty line. Families whose income falls between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty line qualify for reduced price meals. According to the Vermont Department of Education (2010-2011), at the Saint Albans City Elementary School, 63% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, with all eligible students taking advantage of the program (365 free lunches and 62 reduced lunches, out of 674 total enrollment). At Project Soar (K-8), the percentage increases to 82%, with all eligible students taking advantage of the program (27 free lunches, 4 reduced lunches, out of 38 total enrollment). The percentage of children eligible for free or reduced lunches in the Town of Saint Albans is ½ that of the City Elementary School at 31%. Newport City, a similar urban district, has a slightly higher percentage than Saint Albans City (67% out of 300).

*"It is important to note that these issues have a historical presence in our community, bringing with them the challenge of multi-generational issues. While factors like unemployment, poverty, and rural isolation add additional challenges to health improvement, our community is blessed with a collaborative spirit, a shared-sense of the importance of improvement, and the beginnings of momentum towards improvement."*  
– 2009 Franklin/Grand Isle United Way Community Needs Assessment

## **Improving Health and Wellness**

There are many ongoing initiatives in the region working toward improving public health.

*The Center for Health and Wellness* - The Center for Health and Wellness is a collaborative partnership with Franklin County Home Health Agency, Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, and the Vermont Department of Health. Their mission is to prevent disease and improve the overall health of the community through education, services, and support to help people help themselves live a healthier life.

*Health Risk Appraisals* - The Center for Health and Wellness provides free health risk appraisals at numerous sites in the community where participants learn about their health risks, create individual improvement plans, and have ongoing follow-up to support their efforts.

*Targeted Worksite Wellness Programs* - In partnership with Northwestern Occupational Health, the Center for Health and Wellness is working with a number of employers in the region to bring the message of health improvement to the workplace.

*Franklin/Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention* - This program works with the community to reduce tobacco use through both prevention and cessation programs. Their efforts are helping to bring the statewide tobacco control initiatives to the local levels as they serve as a driving force in the work towards creating tobacco free communities.

*Saint Albans City Recreation Department* - The City Recreation Department offers a variety of fitness classes and other physical activity opportunities.

## **Community Support Services**

Saint Albans City is home to a variety of community support services for households and families of all types. Homeless, low-income, and disabled individuals have particular need for support services.

*Northwest Counseling and Support Services* - NCSS is a private, non-profit, human services agency serving Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. NCSS provides intervention and support to children, adolescents, and adults with emotional and behavioral problems, mental illness and developmental disabilities.

*The Family Center* - Part of NCSS, the Family Center provides support to families with children in the following core areas - child care support services, case management services, family resources, and administrative/data technology.

*Samaritan House Homeless Shelter* - Samaritan House is a non-profit organization that provides emergency shelter and transitional housing to people without other options or resources within the region. Located in downtown Saint Albans, it has been operating in overflow status since August 2008. To address this issue, the City of Saint Albans received \$600,000 from the Vermont Community Development Program to sub-grant to the Samaritan House for an expansion and other improvements to the existing facility.

*Franklin/Grand Isle Community Action* - FGICA provides a variety of free services to help low income residents in the region, including assistance with fuel and utilities, housing, food, budgeting information, Farm to Family Program, advocacy, information and referral and tax preparation.

*Franklin Grand Isle Food Shelf* - FGICA manages the Franklin/Grand Isle Food Shelf, which provides over 450 families a 3 day supply of emergency food each month.

*Voices Against Violence and Laurie's House* – Voices Against Violence and Laurie's House provide shelter, crisis intervention, support and advocacy services to victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the region.

*Martha's Kitchen* – Martha's Kitchen is a soup kitchen run by a collection of local churches. As of 2010, Martha's kitchen served free meals to 40-50 people daily.

## **Child Care**

The availability of adequate child care facilities for working parents is increasingly recognized as an important part of a community's social and economic infrastructure. Child care services are important influences on a child's early development, while at the same time help enable working parents to enter or stay in the workforce. Parents who are unable to find or afford child care services have much greater difficulty entering or remaining in the workforce. This can lead to increased social, educational, and health costs.

The provision of child care services is not strictly a local issue. For example, it might be more convenient or practical for a Saint Albans City resident working in Burlington to use child care services there or along the way in Georgia, and vice versa. Many families that live outside the City use child care services in the City if it is convenient to their place of employment.

The Vermont Department for Children and Families/Child Development Division regulates child care facilities. There are licensed child care centers and registered home family child care programs. The Saint Albans Family Center provided listings of childcare options in the City (as of January 2011). There are 6 licensed facilities and 17 registered homes offering a total of 419 spaces with 35 vacancies (8%). These facilities serve children with full-day child care and/or part-day pre-school, but do not include legally exempt child care services (homes that provide care for not more than two families, including the provider's), or other unregulated arrangements among families and friends.

A closer look at the age-range of child care in the City reveals that infant spaces (age 2 and younger) are the sparsest. In addition, it can be assumed that childcare for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift is difficult to find.

### ***Lifelong Learning***

Communities are nourished by quality lifelong education opportunities. An educational system which provides the skills needed in today's economy enhances both individual and area employment opportunities. Communities with well-educated and trained workforce have more to offer prospective businesses and industries. The City of St. Albans voters have the opportunity to vote on school budgets for the City's primary school (St. Albans City School), secondary school (Bellows Free Academy St. Albans), and technical school (Northwest Technical Center) every March. By doing so, voters determine the resources for the education provided to the City's future generations. Another key component to a well educated population is sufficient post-secondary learning opportunities.

*There are 544 children (7.4% of population) under 5 years of age.*

*There are 560 children (7.7% of population) between the ages of 5 and 9.*

*- The American Community Survey 5 year estimate for the years 2005-2009*

*77% of family households with children under 6 years have both parents in the workforce.*

*93% of family households with children aged 6-17 have both parents in the workforce.*

*17% of family households are single parent with children under 18 years.*

*- The American Community Survey 5 year estimate for the years 2005-2009*

## Primary and Secondary Educational Opportunities

Saint Albans City is part of the Franklin Central Supervisory Union, which also serves Saint Albans Town and Fairfield. K-12 Education in Saint Albans City is primarily provided by the Saint Albans City School (SACS) and Bellows Free Academy (BFA).

### Pre-K - 8 Education

SACS is located at 29 Bellows Street and serves kindergarten through grade 8 with a present capacity of 1,120 students. The school's principal facilities include a gymnasium/auditorium, cafeteria, library, computer lab and numerous classrooms and offices.

Enrollment at Saint Albans City School has been decreasing over the last 5 years. In the past five years school enrollment has decreased by 100 students, with a 2010-2011 enrollment of 670 students. There is plenty of capacity at the SACS to accommodate future enrollment based on this trend.

Curriculum has placed a strong emphasis on computer and Internet literacy, the summer camp program Tech Savvy Kids supporting this effort by creating student technology leaders. At the end of the FY10 school year, a group of SACS 8th graders took BFA's Computer Challenge exam to see if their technology skills might gain them a competitive edge in high school. According to a Saint Albans Messenger Article, eight City School students passed the test and starting high school the following year having already fulfilled BFA's computer literacy graduation requirement.

### 9-12 Education

Students from the City of Saint Albans attend Bellows Free Academy (BFA) for secondary education located at 78 So. Main Street, which has a present capacity of 1,100 students. The school's principal facilities include a library with both in-house and

#### Saint Albans City School Mission

*The mission of the St. Albans City School is to nurture all children's natural love of learning so they develop the confidence, skills, and knowledge to succeed at all levels of their education and become responsible members of the community.*

#### Bellows Free Academy Mission

*At Bellows Free Academy all students learn respect, dependability, and productivity. With academic and social supports, students learn to be effective problem solvers, active community members, and lifelong learners.*

SACS →



← BFA

online reference material, media center with state-of-the-art technology, cafeteria, auditorium, and numerous classrooms and offices. Athletics take place at the Collins Perley Sports Complex.

Within BFA is also the Northwest Technical Center, which teaches technical job skills. Courses in four main subject areas are offered: Marketing and Hospitality, Communication and Technology, Medical and Human Services, and Engineering Technologies. The NWTC serves approximately 200 students and 1500 adults annually, most of which are post-secondary.

Approximately half of the BFA students come from Saint Albans City and Town. The balance consists of tuition students from Fairfield, Georgia, Sheldon, Bakersfield, and Alburgh. In the past five years school enrollment has decreased from around 1,200 students to just fewer than 1,100 students in the 2010-2011 school year. The school capacity is adequate for current enrollment, but administrators are anticipating future growth that might require expansion of the facility.

BFA offers a selection of core course offerings, in addition to a variety of elective opportunities, from engineering, business and cooking to art, band, theater and choir. Course offerings are also broadened by opportunities at the Northwestern Technical Center. The graduation rate was recorded as 92.2% in the 2006-2007 school year.

**Education Spending**

The SACS and BFA school boards prepare the budgets for their respective schools. In recent years, the school boards have used grants as a supplemental source of income, and in the case of BFA, tuition students offset City and Town contributions. Table 7.1 shows education tax rates in the City over the last several years.

<b>Table 7.1</b>	
<b>K-12 Tax Rates</b> (Before Common Level of Appraisal)	
FY06	\$1.36
FY07	\$1.27
FY08	\$1.16
FY09	\$1.11
FY10	\$1.18
FY11	\$1.22
FY12	\$1.23

**Alternative and Non-Traditional Education**

In addition to the Northwest Technical Center, Vermont Adult Learning is a statewide program that administers a High School Completion Program, Vermont Adult Diploma Program, a GED program, and a Work Readiness Program. There is a Vermont Adult Learning Center located on Lemnah Drive.

Project Soar, managed by Northwestern Counseling and Support Services, also offers a non-traditional high school experience for students that have experienced difficulty in the conventional classroom and school environment. While attending Soar, they gain skills in academics as well as in behavioral and emotional development. The goal of the program is to prepare students to successfully return to their sending schools to excel academically and also to become well-rounded citizens and family members.

## **Post-Secondary Education**

Several opportunities exist for higher and continuing education in Saint Albans City as well as in the region. Community College of Vermont has a campus in the City on South Main Street, offering special interest courses and diploma programs. The University of Vermont has an Extension office in Saint Albans that also provides opportunities for lifelong learning. The Vermont Technical College also offers a nursing program. Re-locating the Community College campus and other higher learning opportunities downtown would bring about vitality and new opportunities.

There are several higher education institutions in Burlington, about 40 minutes south of Saint Albans City, including the University of Vermont, Champlain College, St. Michael's College, and Burlington College. Johnson State College, Lyndonville State College, and universities in Montreal are also within commuting distance of Saint Albans.

## ***Energy Utilities***

Energy supplies and demand are influenced by economic forces beyond the control of the City. However there are many strategies that can be implemented at the local level including the promotion of renewable resources, energy efficiency and conservation.

## **Electricity**

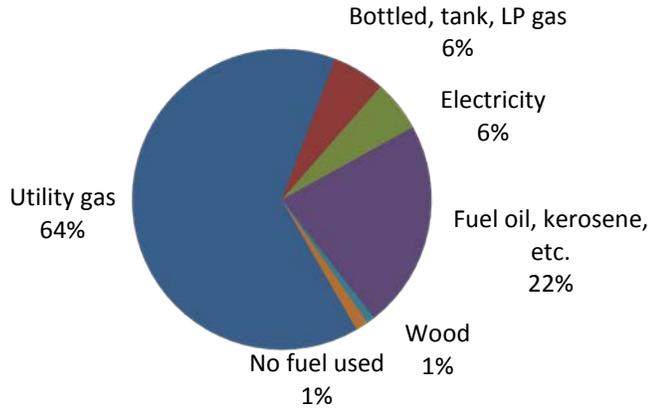
Saint Albans City is served by power provided by the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (CVPS). The main source of this power used is from Hydro-Quebec in Canada. CVPS has several programs that are aimed at energy conservation for both homes and businesses. CVPS "Smart Power" is a solution that helps empower the customer to understand their energy usage and in turn make informed energy choices.

Electricity costs have been escalating for years, and with the uncertainty of energy resources in the future, the City should do what it can to reduce energy use to reduce energy costs.

## **Heat**

The City of Saint Albans has several sources of energy for heat, including utility gas, bottled, tank or liquid propane gas, kerosene, wood, and electricity (Figure 7.4). Private distributors sell fuel oil, kerosene, and propane to residences and businesses.

**Figure 7.4 Primary Heating Sources (2005-2009)**



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey*

The City of Saint Albans is one of the few areas in Vermont to be served by natural gas. Vermont's only natural gas company is Vermont Gas and it supplies natural gas from Alberta, Canada across the TransCanada pipeline.

### **Local Energy Generation Opportunities**

Energy generation facilities that connect to the Vermont power grid are exempt from local zoning. They require a Certificate of Public Good from the Vermont Public Service Board (also known as Section 248 review). The City of Saint Albans' participation in the Public Service Board hearings ensures that the City's interests are represented.

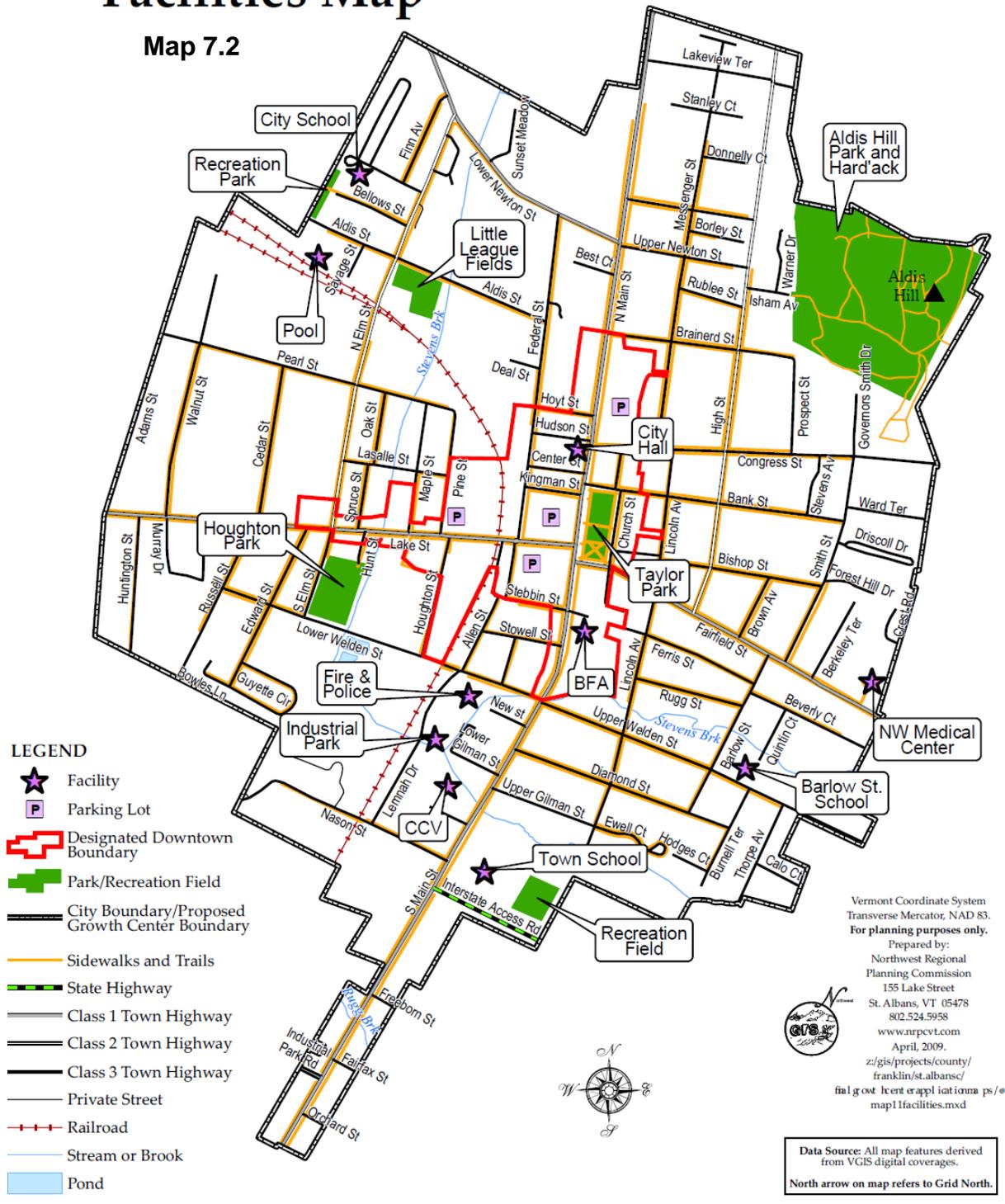
Various energy generation opportunities may be viable for municipal, residential or business applications in the City, which can include cogeneration, biomass, solar, wind, biogas and geothermal. There is a need to explore and discuss advantages and disadvantages of local energy generation options.

### **Telecommunications**

Access to telecommunication services, including high-speed Internet and cellular phone service are important for economic development and quality of life for residents of the City. Cable, DSL, and wireless internet service are available across all of Saint Albans City. Residents and businesses have a number of options in their choice of service providers and can determine what is optimal for their individual needs. Expanding access to fiber optic cable will attract more industry and business. There is a lack of free wireless internet in the City's Downtown, which is an economic and community development goal.

# CITY OF ST. ALBANS Facilities Map

Map 7.2



## ***Government and Public Services Goals***

- 1) Saint Albans City government will plan for and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.
- 2) Saint Albans City provides excellent police, fire, and ambulance/emergency services to its residents.
- 3) People in Saint Albans lead healthy lifestyles. The City has ample opportunity for residents to be healthy including recreation facilities, walkable streets, nutritional food, and community events and activities.
- 4) Accessible learning opportunities support a life-long process that fosters personal success and contribution as members of the community.

## ***Government and Public Services Policies***

- 1) The rate of growth in and around the City of Saint Albans will not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer.
- 2) New development will be phased in as necessary to minimize negative fiscal impacts.
- 3) Use a capital budget and plan to prioritize capital needs identified in this plan and in other related documents or studies, and outline the timing and financing of needed improvements.
- 4) Ensure that the public safety facilities and equipment enable the Police and Fire departments to operate at optimum levels of efficiency and effectiveness.
- 5) Ensure responsible management of City stormwater infrastructure and seek to limit stormwater runoff as a non-point source of water pollution.
- 6) Support the Community Justice Center, Court Diversion Program and other groups in their efforts to provide restorative responses to offending; conflict management and dispute resolution; and community forums and educational programs.
- 7) Ensure Saint Albans City residents have access to a wide variety of health care services in a number of different forms.
- 8) Support access to health education and recreation to support physical and mental health for City residents.
- 9) Support the network of community support services, such as Northwest Counseling and Support Services, to help individuals and families achieve economic, social, and personal success.
- 10) Support a variety of quality, affordable child care options for parents and guardians with young children.
- 11) Support access to high quality educational and vocational training opportunities to encourage full realization of the abilities of City residents.
- 12) Support cooperation and collaboration between the community, municipality and schools.
- 13) Maintain energy efficient municipal buildings and infrastructure.
- 14) Support the development of locally produced, clean and renewable energy generation facilities in Saint Albans.

- 15) Participate in the Public Service Board hearings to ensure that the City's interests are represented.
- 16) Support a broad range of advanced telecommunications options in the City.
- 17) Encourage patterns of land use, population density, transportation strategies and street design to promote walking, biking, and public transportation and support access to fresh and healthy foods for all – regardless of age, ability and income.
- 18) Model best practices related to promoting healthy communities at all municipal facilities and events (such as providing nutritious foods).
- 19) Explore and develop (as appropriate) website and social media options for the City of St. Albans.
- 20) Utilize planning and municipal activities to limit the cost burdens of stormwater, including compliance with an EPA MS4 permit.

## **(8) Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

**Vision Element - A well-developed recreation and open space network, with Taylor Park as the community's living room**

The City is home to a variety of open spaces and recreational facilities, from the facilities at Collins Perley, the City School, BFA, and City Hall to the outdoor offerings at Hard'ack, Houghton Park, the City Pool, the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, and Saint Albans Bay. The City's proximate location to Lake Champlain, the Green Mountains, and recreation trails, combined with its location between Montreal and Burlington, position the City well to promote outdoor recreation as a community and economic development tool.

### ***Recreation Department and Commission***

The City's park and recreation facilities are the responsibility of the Saint Albans Recreation Commission and the City Recreation Department. The Commission reviews budgets and programs and makes recommendation to the City Council and Manager. In addition to maintaining recreation facilities, the Recreation Department also offers a variety of youth and adult recreation programs and assists with community events. There are also a variety of programs offered by non-municipal entities.

The City Recreation Department was staffed with a full time Director in 2008. Since then, the City's recreation program has more than doubled its offerings. The Department is funded by tax dollars and various grants. The Town of Saint Albans also contributes funds each year, and in exchange receives the City resident rate for program offerings. The 2012 recreation budget was approximately \$350,000. Various grants have been instrumental in developing or improving many facilities, many of which have required local matches met through the efforts of local groups, volunteers and businesses that raised money and donated time and materials.

### ***Current Recreation Facilities***

Recreation facilities within the City are shown on Map 7.2. The renowned Taylor Park serves as a centerpiece for the City's downtown. Aldis Hill, Hard'ack and Houghton Park provide free recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The St. Albans City Pool is a particularly popular facility. Beyond the City limits, there are abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation, most notably Lake Champlain, the Bay Park, Kill Kare State Park, Burton and Knights Island State Parks, the Long Trail and other hiking trails in the Green Mountains, various golf courses, Jay Peak Resort, Lake Carmi and other smaller lakes.

## ***Recreation Opportunities***

The Create Saint Albans Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit includes extensive recommendations for developing open space and parks infrastructure. These recommendations build upon and connect the City's existing resources and outline a new expanded vision for parks and open space in the City. The recommendations must be examined in more detail and prioritized in order to ensure successful implementation.



**Figure 8.1**  
**Greenway Conceptual Plan**  
(Source: TPUDC, 2011)

## **Figure 8.2 Create Saint Albans: Parks and Open Space Recommendations**

### *A Greenway Network*

A greenway network can connect the existing green spaces and add additional recreational facilities in strategic locations. The most significant new park addition is along the flats side of the railroad track, where a greenway is created that shrinks and expands to take advantage of available land.

### *Showcase the Park*

A small park currently exists adjacent to the New England Central Railroad office building, with a beautiful historic fountain marking its center. Bring this park to the forefront and make it a celebrated public space within the City.

### *Restore Stevens Brook*

The plan shows a green necklace along the edge of Stevens Brook. The brook should be restored as part of the Railroad Park construction effort.

### *Multimodal Greenway Trail & Railroad Park*

A major system of multi-modal trails and parks along the railroad track can bring together people from all parts of the City.

### *Playground*

A new playground at the corner of Pine and Pearl Streets can serve multiple neighborhoods. A round-house viewing park will allow people to watch the operation of this unique industrial activity.

### *Athletic Stadium*

A potential athletic stadium is shown on industrial land near the N. Elm and Aldis Streets Little League Fields within walking distance of Main Street.

## **St. Albans as a Regional Cycling Hub**

A key recommendation of Create Saint Albans is that the City work toward becoming a regional cycling hub. The City can take better advantage of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail head and build on the idea of St. Albans as the midpoint between Canada and Burlington. A bike plan suggests retrofitting existing streets with bikeways, including a variety of painted and striped biking accommodations (See also Map 9.2).



**Painted Symbol Indicating a Shared Travel Lane for Bikes and Autos (Referred to as a Sharrow)**

Photo Credit: TPUDC

### ***Parks, Open Space and Recreation Goals***

- 1) Saint Albans City residents have a variety of free opportunities to recreate indoors and outdoors.
- 2) Recreation facilities are accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists.

### ***Parks, Open Space and Recreation Policies***

- 1) Maintain high-quality City owned recreation facilities using the City's capital budget and program.
- 2) Development will not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor-recreational opportunities.
- 3) Identify and protect public access to non-commercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hiking trails and recreation paths.
- 4) Preserve and enhance public spaces so that they can be sustainably used for community-wide events.
- 5) Preserve Taylor Park as the historic central green of Saint Albans.
- 6) Promote the City of Saint Albans as a cycling hub of Northwest Vermont connecting Burlington to Canada.
- 7) Ensure that the City's recreation facilities are connected with safe pedestrian and bicycle routes.

## (9) City Streets and Sidewalks

### Vision Element - A walkable community with transportation options

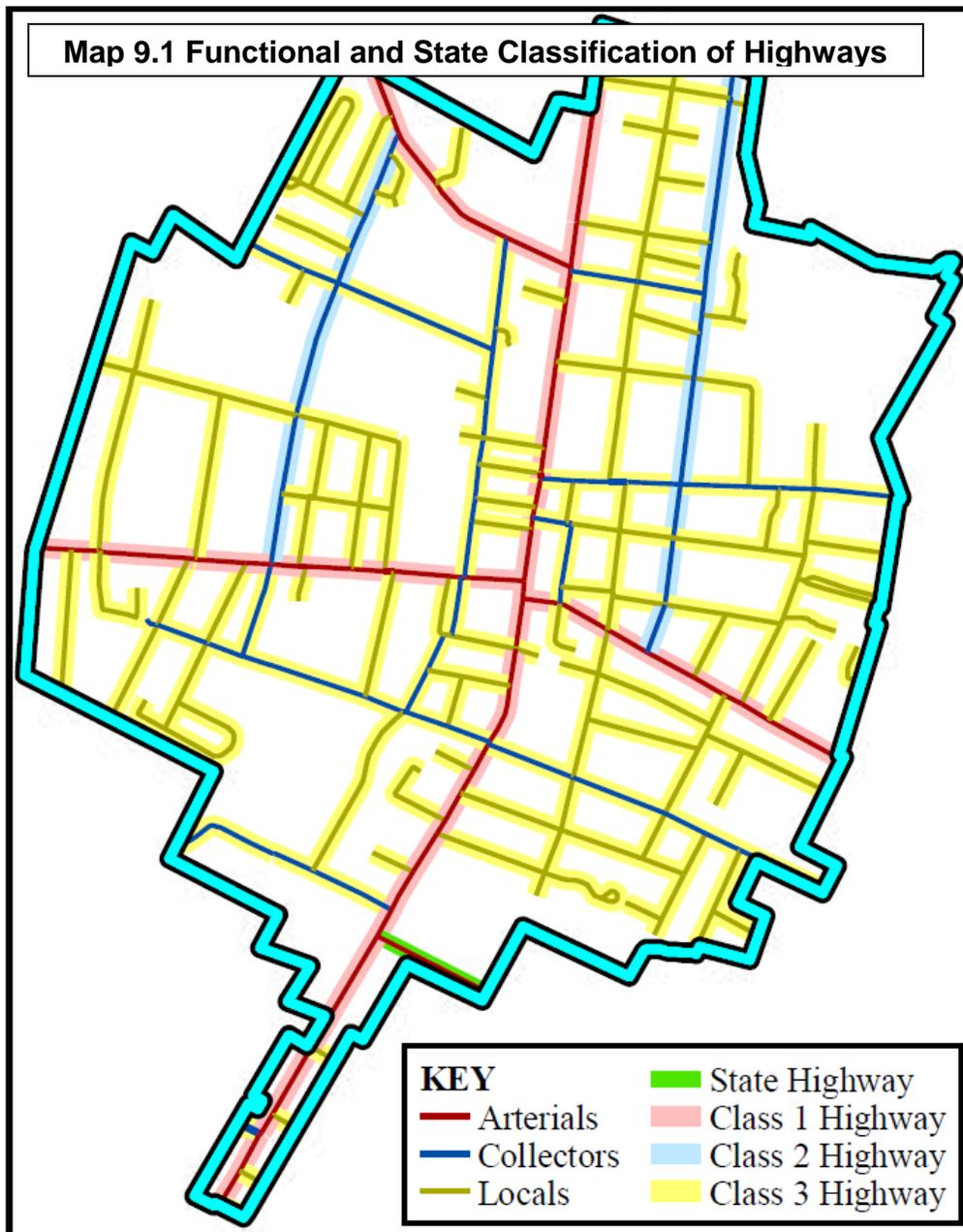
The conveyance of people, goods, and services, or transportation, is a key element to building a healthy, prosperous community. Vermont requires municipal plans to include a plan for transportation, which includes present and prospective highways and streets by type and character of improvement, in addition to parking facilities.

#### ***Circulation, Access Management and Traffic Control***

There are 10 miles of arterial streets (Class 1 highways) and 17 miles of collectors and local streets (Class 2 and 3 highways). At the center of the City is the intersection of US 7 (Main Street) and VT 36 (Lake Street/Fairfield Street). VT 38 (Lower Newton Street) and the limited access St. Albans State Highway South (SASH) also pass through the City. Map 9.1 shows highway functional classification and Vermont classification in the City.

The City of Saint Albans exhibits a well-connected street network easily accessed from Interstate 89 via the Saint Albans State Highway (SASH) to Main Street and Route 104/Fisher Pond Road to Fairfield Street. Connectivity provides for good traffic circulation, efficient travel between local destinations, and the economical provision of services and infrastructure maintenance. Despite the City's street network, circulation in the City is challenged by only one north-south arterial street (Main Street). The lack of alternate arterials creates traffic congestion on Main Street and is disruptive to neighborhoods as motorists use side streets as short cuts to avoid the congestion on Main Street.

Planning and design work is currently underway on the **Federal Street Multi-Modal Connector**, which is a project that would significantly improve multi-modal safety and traffic management in the City. This project will redesign and improve the current "de facto" traffic corridor of Lemnah Drive and Allen, Catherine, Market, Federal and Lower Newton Streets, and construct a new direct connection to the Saint Albans State Highway (SASH). The project will also include signalization of the Federal St. intersections with Lake St. and Lower Newton St., a new round-a-bout at Lower Welden-Allen-Lemnah, and accommodations for pedestrian and bicycle safety along the corridor. The Federal Street Multi-Modal Connector presents the City with a great opportunity to redevelop Federal Street, including developing a multi-modal transportation center at the location of the current AMTRAK station and New England Central Railroad building.



**Figure 9.1**

**Highway Functional Classification**

As highway classification moves from **Freeway** to **Arterial** to **Collector** down to **Local** roads, the emphasis gradually shifts from mobility orientation to one of land access, and provides greater flexibility in design.

**State of Vermont Classification**

**Class 1:** Form extensions of State Highways and are numbered as such.

**Class 2:** Form connections from town to town, and/or carry a more significant volume of traffic than other roads in Town.

**Class 3:** All other traveled roads receiving State Aid funds.

Managing access to land development from roadways, while preserving traffic flow in regards to safety, speed, and capacity is an important consideration in City planning and regulation. Effective access management regulations have proven to minimize interference between traffic flow on the roadway, traffic entering and exiting the roadway, and pedestrians, while providing necessary and appropriate access to adjacent land uses. Inadequate access management results in poor circulation, congestion, high accident rates, and other traffic and pedestrian accessibility problems.

Driveways and other ingress/egress off City streets are regulated under the City's Land Development Regulations in terms of location, width, the number of access points, and the angle of intersections. The City does not have a comprehensive access management policy or regulation. The 2002 Saint Albans Circulation Study recommended that Saint Albans City develop an access management policy and manual. Access management will be a critical component of the Federal Street Extension Project.

There are four signalized intersections located within the City, which are maintained by the City Fire Department. They include:

- US Route 7/Upper-Lower Newton St.
- US Route 7/Rite Aid Shopping Center
- US Route 7/Lake St./Fairfield St.
- US Route 7/Upper-Lower Weldon St.

The 2002 Saint Albans Circulation Study recommends improvements to these intersections including new controllers, pedestrian signals and vehicle loop detectors, and mast arms, in addition to revised signal timing at the US7/Weldon Street intersection. Since 2002, there has been progress in planning and securing funding for several of these intersection upgrades. Funding has been secured for making improvements to the US Route 7/Lake Street/Fairfield Street intersection from a combination of Enhancement Grant funds, Wal-Mart funds, and various other grants. The upgrades will be completed as part of the streetscape improvement project in 2012. The U.S. 7/Upper-Lower Newton Street intersection will be upgraded by Wal-Mart as a requirement of the Act 250 permit.

The 2002 Saint Albans Circulation Study found several intersections without signalization that might warrant signalization or a round-a-bout/traffic circle based on accident rates and level of service. The Study recommends further study to confirm. These intersections included:

**Figure 9.2  
Transportation Related Studies**

***Downtown Master Plan, 2009***

*Sections focus on streetscape and parking improvements to the Downtown Area*

***Federal Street Corridor Study, 1995, update 2005***

*Context, traffic analysis, 4 design concepts, and cost estimates for the connector*

***Saint Albans Traffic Circulation Study, 1991, update 2002***

*Current and future transportation needs, program for implementation*

***U.S. Route 7 Corridor Study, 1995, (update in 2007 for areas outside City only)***

- Lake St./Federal St./Catherine St.
- US7/Industrial Park Rd.
- US7/SASH,
- US7/Nason St.
- US7/Congress St./Hudson St.
- Federal St./Lower Newton St.

Further analysis was completed at the Lake St./Federal St./Catherine St. intersection as part of the 2005 Federal Street Corridor Study; a round-a-bout was the recommended alternative. An update to the Federal Street Corridor Study is currently being completed and may recommend an alternative solution.

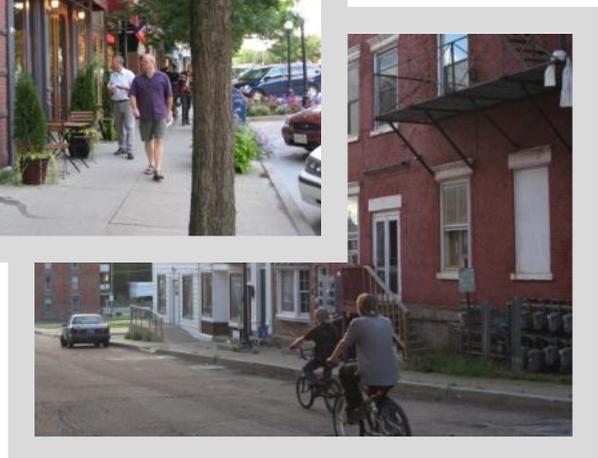
Most streets in the City have a speed limit of 25 miles per hour. The exception is Route 7 north and south of the Central Business District where the speed limit is 35 miles per hour and a 15 mile per hour zone around the City School.

Traffic calming was recommended by the 2002 Saint Albans Circulation Study, including developing a traffic calming policy and procedures manual and completing streetscape improvements. There are a variety of traffic calming techniques that affect driver behavior and expectations - causing vehicles to slow down and adopt a more pedestrian-friendly behavior. Traffic calming techniques are among the streetscape improvements being implemented by the Master Plan Implementation Committee. Traffic calming techniques will also be addressed by the Federal Street Multi-Modal Connector project.

### ***Pedestrian and Bicycle Accessibility and Circulation***

The purpose of the transportation system is not limited to moving cars and trucks efficiently through the urban and rural landscape, but to safely accommodate other ways of getting around, namely walking and bicycling. The benefits of complete transportation systems are numerous and include: adding vitality to downtowns, promoting successful carpooling and public transit, and creating a healthier community.

A pedestrian and bicycle accessible transportation



*Photo Credits – LandWorks, Inc.*

system includes sidewalks and bike lanes along streets, walkways and trails that connect places within the community, crosswalks and other improvements that allow for safe pedestrian crossings. Building facades and other features will also be oriented to the pedestrian and bicyclist, including signs, lighting and street furniture like benches and bike racks. A pedestrian accessible streetscape can encourage people to choose walking and biking as a way of getting around.

The City of Saint Albans has sidewalks along most of its streets within the downtown core and along at least one side of most of its collector and local streets. Pedestrian crossings on Main Street are accentuated by being raised brick and are posted with signs stating that traffic must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. Painted crosswalks are located throughout the downtown core. The streetscape improvement project will further improve the pedestrian environment.

Annually, the City Council places the continuation of the sidewalk replacement program before the voters. It has passed overwhelmingly each year. The Council Subcommittee on Public Safety and Quality of Life has the primary charge to determine replacement priorities and to identify sidewalk width issues, maintenance and other associated technical issues.

In order to more efficiently utilize the sidewalk funds approved by the voters, the City launched a pilot program in 2006 on Walnut St. to address streets where there are severely deteriorated sidewalks on both sides of the street. The program calls for sidewalk replacement on one side and removal on the other where appropriate. The City intends to monitor how this works and evaluate the program for future use. If successful, as other communities have been with this strategy, this method can be used to stretch the sidewalk budget to cover a greater area of the City.

Bicycle accessibility is more limited in the City, with one bike lane located along a short stretch of North Main Street, no "Share The Road" signage, and few bike racks. At the same time, the City experiences a lot of bike traffic, especially from road cyclists traveling between Burlington and Quebec, Canada. The community identified the City's bike accessibility as a weakness during the Create Saint Albans Planning Charrette. As noted in Chapter 8, the Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit includes several recommendations on how the City could improve bicycle accessibility. Map 9.2 below shows a conceptual plan for bike routes in the City. Proposed improvements include either cycle tracks, protected sharrows or non-protected sharrows. While the feasibility of cycle tracks on Main Street, as shown on Map 9.2, may not be good, incorporating cycle tracks or protected sharrows into Federal Street could provide a parallel safe bike route. The recommendations in the

**Safe Routes to School programs** enable community leaders, schools and parents across the United States to improve safety and encourage more children to safely walk and bicycle to school. In the process, programs are working to reduce traffic congestion and improve health and the environment, making communities more livable for everyone.

Toolkit and shown on Map 9.2 need to be examined in more detail, refined and prioritized in order to ensure successful implementation. The Safe Routes to School Program may have potential for furthering these efforts, in addition to general walking and biking safety for school children.



**Cycle Track**



**Protected Sharrow**



**Sharrow**

(As illustrated in the Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit)

● CYCLE TRACK    ■ PROTECTED SHARROW    ■ SHARROW



**Map 9.2 Bicycle Accessibility Improvements**

Source: Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit, TPUDC

## ***Street Improvement Program***

The Public Works Department manages an annual Street Improvement Program, which is included in the 5 year Capital Improvement Plan. The Street Improvement Program has a budget of \$85,000 for the 2011-2012 fiscal year and is proposed to increase \$5,000 for each consecutive year. This funding is used for paving projects, sidewalk maintenance, street light maintenance, plowing, and line striping on an as needed basis. An At-Grade Infrastructure Mapping Assessment and Rehabilitation Plan will be completed in 2012 and provide a database of the character of improvement of all at-grade infrastructures. The database will improve project prioritization and selection for the Street Improvement Program.

The Street Improvement Program operates out of the Public Works Garage, where all vehicles, equipment, and materials are stored. The approximate 7,000 square foot garage was built in 1979 for a City with substantially less responsibilities and equipment than it now has. According to the Public Works Director, space at the Garage is congested.

The City operates a fleet of pickup trucks, utility vehicles and equipment to carry out its street maintenance duties. Vehicles and equipment are replaced in cycles (based on accepted life spans) according to the City's capital plan and budget.

The City's culverts and bridges are managed in an inventory, which was last updated in 2008. The inventory prioritizes culverts and bridges in terms of age, character of improvement, and function. Culverts and bridges prioritized for upgrade are replaced as funding is secured.

Winter road maintenance issues include the storage of salt and sand and space for cleared snow. There is no shelter for the storage of salt and sand at the Public Works Garage. Snow is hauled for storage at Hard'ack after large snow events.

All new roads are required to comply with the Vermont State Design Standards. The Saint Albans City Development Regulations include specific construction standards for street layout, curve radii, grade, and intersection. All public roads are required to be paved.

## ***Public Parking***

Public parking is an important consideration in planning a vibrant downtown. The parking subcommittee of the City's Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) completed an inventory of public parking spaces in the Downtown area. The inventory tallied 414 parking lot spaces, 155 on-street spaces on Main Street from Congress Street to Stebbins Street, and 326 on-street spaces in the remaining Downtown area. An occupancy survey was not completed and therefore no data is available on whether these spaces are sufficient to meet demand, although observances during the course of a business day will reveal trends from freely available parking to near-capacity use. The Downtown Master Plan included parking as one of its top priorities. The Master

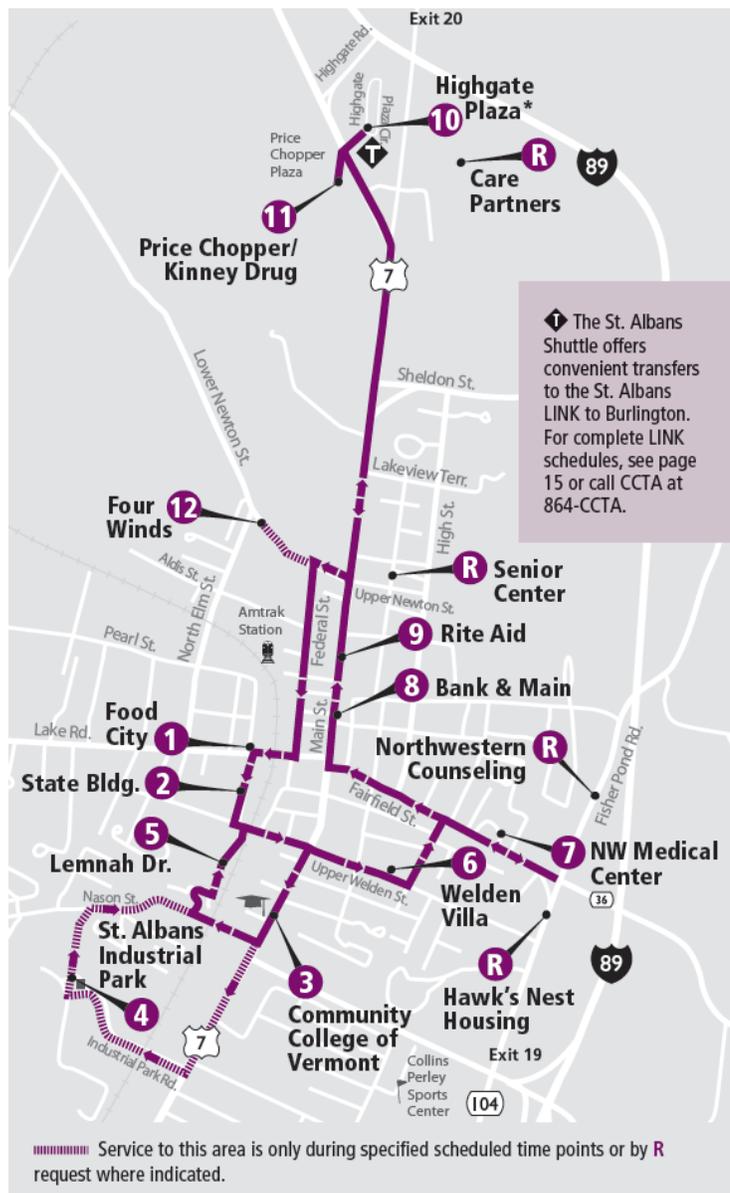
Plan states that “the primary strategy for parking is to develop significant shared parking resources within the downtown core”. Proposed streetscape improvements also include a reconfiguration of on-street parking spaces.

The City of St. Albans is steadily working on a new parking program based on the Master Plan and other studies. This program will address prime parking spot turnover, program management, all day parking options, and revenue options for parking maintenance and other amenities. The goal is to provide a simple program that allows for an inviting downtown. An additional concern is to ensure that the City’s parking lots are perceived as safe public places.

### Public Transit

Green Mountain Public Transit (GMTA) operates public transportation, in addition to elderly, disabled and Medicaid non-emergency transportation services, in the Saint Albans area. They operate a Downtown Shuttle between 5:45am and 6:40pm Monday through Friday and between 9:45am and 3:30pm on Saturdays to many locations throughout the City and Route 7 North in the Town (Map 9.3). Some locations are a request service including the Industrial Park, Senior Center, Northwestern Counseling, Hawk’s Nest Housing and Care Partners.

GMTA also has routes that connect Saint Albans City with other areas in the region. The Alburgh to Georgia Commuter Shuttle runs Monday to Friday and stops at several locations in the City taking riders to the Georgia Industrial Parks. During the school year, it stops at BFA. The Richford to Saint Albans Shuttle runs Monday to Friday along with taking riders from Richford and other locations along Route 105 into Saint Albans. The Chittenden County



Map 9.3 GMTA Downtown Shuttle

Transportation Authority operates the LINK Express, a Saint Albans to Burlington commuter route. It picks up passengers on an early and late route Monday through Friday at Highgate Commons and Collins Perley. GMTA's commuter routes have incorporated LINK Express transfers.

On weekdays, the Downtown Connector route currently averages from 70 to 130 riders per day, while on Saturdays it averages around 25 to 40 riders. Use of all of GMTA's routes is increasing.

For access to Greyhound and Vermont Transit for more distant destinations, passengers must travel to Burlington or Plattsburgh.

## **Park and Ride**

A park and ride lot is located at the intersection of Routes 104 and 36 (Fairfield Street). The lot has 86 spaces, and recent use counts indicate that it is typically between 70-90% full during weekday work hours. The overall use of this park and ride lot suggests that there may be need for additional commuter parking options in the coming years.

## **Rail**

Passenger rail service is available via the Amtrak Vermonter, which originates in the City or via the Adirondack route in Rouses Point, New York. It provides service to Washington D.C. via New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore, with many smaller stops along the way. As it once did in the past, The Vermonter was recently extended to serve Montreal.

New England Central Railroad (NECRR) operates freight service through the City. Available access to rail freight is an important economic development tool.

***Multi-Modal Transportation Center*** – The City has been working on concept plans for a multi-modal transportation center located on the NECRR and Amtrak Station properties. Such a center would have multi-fold benefits for the City from improving public transportation opportunities, creating better bicycle and pedestrian linkages, and enhancing community and economic development. The goal is to coordinate its development with the Federal Street Extension Project.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission coordinated a planning study for the multi-modal center in 2006 (completed by RSG, Associates), which is used by the City to further refine plans for the center in anticipation of seeking funding. The vision identified in the planning study includes the following elements:

- One stop shop for public transportation – housing all commuter rail, bus and other transportation services (Amtrak, GMTA, CCTA, private bus, cabs);
- Incorporates commuter rail to Burlington; and
- Serves as inner City trail-head to Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail with safe, accessible bicycle connection to actual trailhead.

The Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit produced by TPUDC in 2011 includes a conceptual rendering of such a center, which centers on the Amtrak building (Figure 9.3).



**Figure 9.3 Concept Multi Modal Center  
Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit, TPUDC, 2011**

*“This view shows the historic Amtrak station newly exposed to Federal Street. Existing derelict buildings and overgrown hedges have been replaced with a formal green honoring the civic importance of this transportation hub. The new green is framed by live/work buildings to help activate this space and contribute to the generation of a new Transit-Oriented Development node. Parking remains, though now concealed by the infill buildings, with additional parking contained across the street in mid-block structured parking anticipated in the 2009 St. Albans Downtown Master Plan.”*

### **City Transportation Goals**

- 1) Saint Albans City will have good traffic circulation and traffic management, which limits congestion on City streets.
- 2) The physical state of City streets and associated infrastructure will be maintained in good condition.
- 3) A variety of safe and accessible public parking spaces will be available in Downtown Saint Albans.

- 4) City residents have access to a variety of centralized public transit options.
- 5) The streets in Saint Albans City are safe and accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists.

### ***City Transportation Policies***

- 1) Monitor traffic impacts of new development, and consider the requirement of traffic impact studies.
- 2) Pedestrian accessibility and comfort is incorporated into planning for street and traffic improvements.
- 3) Promote the use of arterial and collector roads for through traffic.
- 4) Participate in inter-municipal and regional transportation planning to address regional traffic problems.
- 5) Access off arterial and collector streets is managed to promote good circulation and accessibility for all modes of transportation.
- 6) Monitor the condition of City streets and associated infrastructure through regular inventorying and assessment.
- 7) Include major transportation infrastructure improvement projects in the City's Capital Budget and Planning Process.
- 8) Public parking is planned from a district wide basis taking advantage of shared parking resources.
- 10) The Federal Street Multi-Modal Connector, including reconfiguration of the Lake Street/federal Street/Catherine Street intersection and a Multi-Modal Center, is a priority transportation need for the City.
- 11) Support energy efficient investments in street lighting, including LED.
- 12) Promote transportation energy conservation through efficient modes of travel and travel patterns.
- 13) Improve the street, sidewalk, and street-crossing safety of routes to schools in order to encourage/allow students to walk or bike to school on a regular basis.
- 14) Pursue the implementation of "Complete Streets" designs whenever possible.

## (10) Economic Development

### Vision Element - Job opportunities for a diverse workforce

### Vision Element - A thriving economy that benefits from the City's heritage

Economic development plays a critical role in creating vibrant communities. A well-planned community with sufficient infrastructure, available housing options, quality education and a vibrant quality of life encourages employers to locate and stay. Saint Albans City is the economic hub of Franklin County. Strategically located and with excellent transportation access, the area is home to a number of regionally significant institutions and companies. Saint Albans is second only to Burlington as a regional employment center.

The **labor force** consists of the population aged 16 and over classified as employed and unemployed.

A **primary job** is the highest paying job for an individual worker for the year.

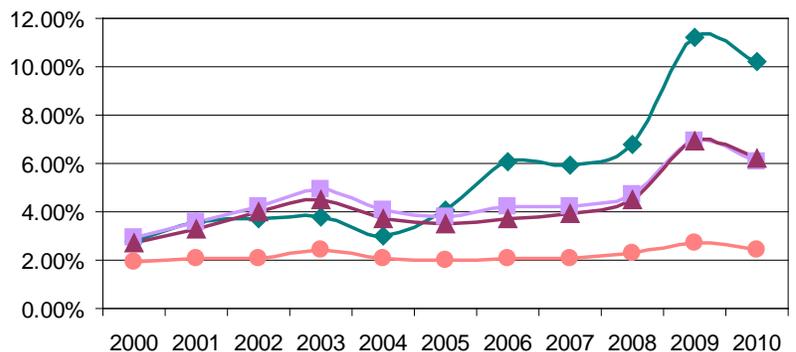
Presently, several agencies and organizations share economic development tasks in the City. These include the City Department of Planning and Development, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation, public-private partnerships, Saint Albans for the Future, and others.

### Employment for City Residents

The City of St. Albans has a labor force of 4,200 people (Vermont Department of Labor, 2009), holding 3,625 primary jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD

Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, Second Quarter of 2002-2009)). About 20 % of the City labor force works within the City, while another 15% works just outside the City in the Town of Saint Albans. Close to 40% of the City's labor force commutes to Chittenden County for employment, while the remainder commutes to other locations. Figure 10.2 illustrates where Saint Albans City residents work.

Figure 10.1 Unemployment Rates (2010)



The unemployment rate in 2010 was 10.2%, which is very high compared with the State, Franklin County, and neighboring municipalities. Unemployment in Saint Albans City corresponds with high unemployment

◆ St. Albans City    ■ Franklin County    ▲ Vermont    ● St. Albans Town

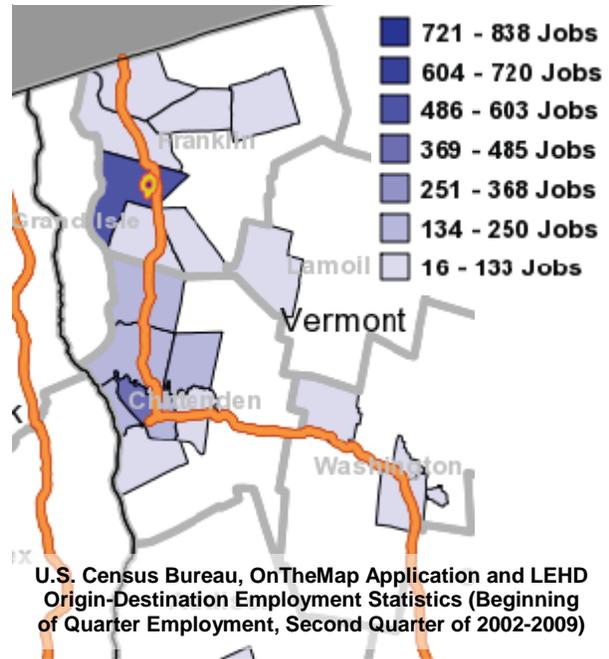
experienced nationwide due to the recent economic recession, but the City felt the impact earlier and harder than the state, county and adjacent communities. While most communities did not experience spikes in unemployment until 2008, Saint Albans City experienced a jump in unemployment in 2006 due to the Solo Cup Company closing in 2005 and consequently laying off 168 employees. Unemployment rates started to rebound in 2010.

The Saint Albans City labor force is employed in a variety of occupations. Health care and social assistance jobs make up the greatest percentage of the labor force at 17%. Retail, manufacturing, and educational services also have significant percentages, 14%, 14%, and 12% respectively.

There are several indicators of income that can be considered for Saint Albans City (Table 10.1). The 2009 median family adjusted gross income (VT Department of Taxes) and the 2005-2009 estimated median household income (U.S. Census American Community Survey) of \$47,154 and \$43,506 are less than the same figures for the county and the state. However, the annual average wage reported by the Vermont Department of Labor in 2009 was higher in Saint Albans City than the county and the state (\$42,446 compared to \$37,662 and \$38,767).

The poverty level is higher in Saint Albans City than the county and state (14% compared to 10%). Virtually all individuals under the poverty level do not hold full time jobs. Interestingly, there are a higher percentage of part-time or part-year workers under the poverty level in Saint Albans City, than the county and the state.

**Figure 10.2  
Saint Albans City Commuter Shed**



**Table 10.1 Income Statistics**

	Median Family Adjusted Gross Income	Median Household Income	Annual Average Wage
	2009	2005-2009 Estimates	2009
Saint Albans City	\$47,154	\$43,506	\$42,446
Saint Albans Town	\$60,204	\$52,670	\$32,194
Franklin County	\$55,905	\$52,279	\$37,662
Vermont	\$56,392	\$51,284	\$38,767

VT Department of Taxes (Median AGI), U.S. Census American Community Survey 5 year Estimates (MHI), VT Department of Labor, Economic and Labor Market Information (AAW).

<b>Table 10.2 Population 16 years and over below the poverty level</b>				
	Total	Worked full-time, year-round	Worked part-time or part-year	Did not work
Saint Albans City	14%	1%	21%	28%
Saint Albans Town	6%	0%	34%	36%
Franklin County	10%	1%	11%	24%
Vermont	10%	2%	14%	20%

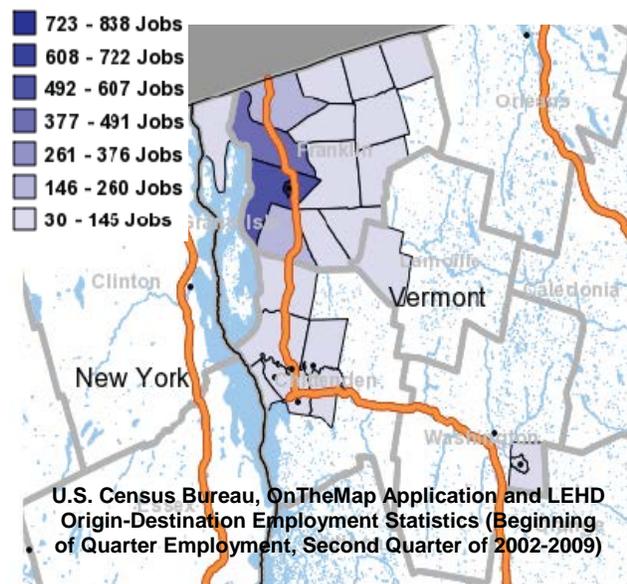
U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

### **Saint Albans City as an Economic Hub**

Employment is the key driver of growth in the City of Saint Albans, having long served as the employment center for Franklin County. The number of people with employment in the City has grown by more than 25%, from 5,449 to 6,966 between 1990 and 2010. The City currently provides more than 42% of the total jobs available in the county. The data shows that this figure is down from 2007, when the City provided more than 48% of the total jobs for the county, a reflection of the economic recession. Figure 10.3 shows the geographic distribution of workers who commute to Saint Albans City for employment.

*The City currently provides more than 42% of the total jobs available in the county.*

**Figure 10.3 Where Workers Live Who are Employed in Saint Albans City**

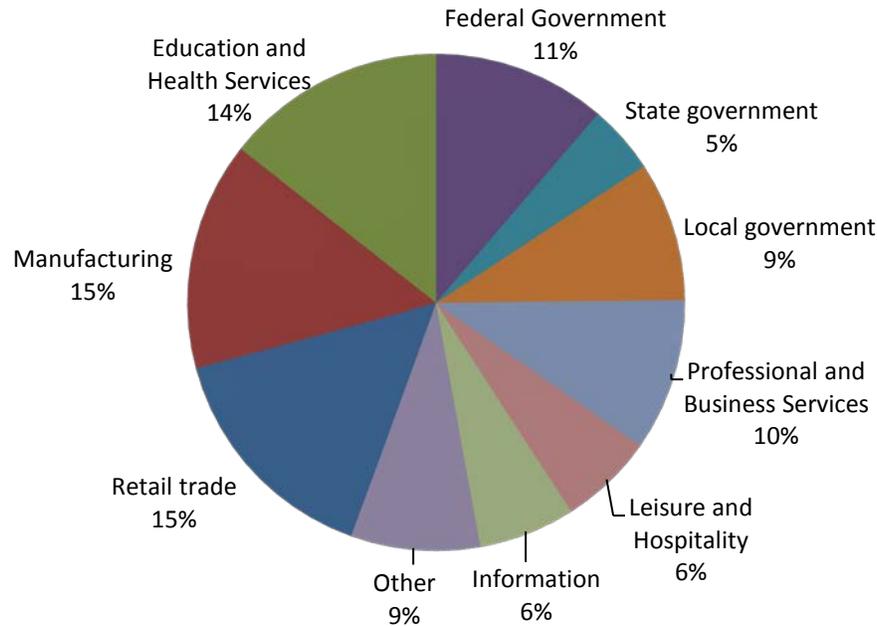


Over half the jobs available within Saint Albans City are distributed between retail trade, manufacturing, education and health services, and the federal government.

Key employers that fall within these categories include BFA and the City and Town Elementary Schools, Mylan Technologies, Homeland Security (INS), a variety of small-scale retail stores and specialty shops, and numerous health care providers.

In 2006, the City developed a Market Analysis and Marketing Plan for Downtown. The study noted that in the primary trade area (which included the City, Saint Albans Town, Fairfield, Swanton, and Sheldon), there were approximately 250 retail establishments, which employed approximately 2,525 people and the secondary trade area employed close to 100 retail employees, making Saint Albans the retail center serving households in northwest Vermont.

**Figure 10.4 Employment by Sector, 2010**



The City intends to maintain a diverse employment base. A discussion of the projected growth in each of the existing major sectors is below.

**Retail Trade.** Retail trade continues to be a large employment sector in Saint Albans City, accounting for approximately 15% of the jobs in 2010. Maintaining the retail sector will likely prove challenging in the future as the development of suburban shopping centers and box stores provides increasing competition for small, specialized downtown shops. Defining niche markets will be key to maintaining the retail sector in Saint Albans City.

**Manufacturing.** Saint Albans City is well-situated to support manufacturing facilities, with easy access to Interstate 89 and the railroad which provide means to transport raw materials and manufactured goods. There are currently a number of large manufacturing facilities in and around St. Albans City, including Mylan, Saint Albans Dairy Coop, Energizer and Peerless Clothing. Food manufacturing, in particular, has been a growing sector in St. Albans City: The number of jobs in this sector has increased by over 30% in the last decade. The Saint Albans City Market Analysis identified this sector as having significant potential for future growth.

**Education and Health Services.** Within this sector, it is anticipated that health services will show the greatest growth. Saint Albans City is home to the Northwestern Medical Center, an institution that is expected to experience increasing demand as the population of Franklin County ages. Currently the City is working with the Medical Center to consider sites for a potential downtown medical clinic. This sector also includes educational facilities, such as the Community College of Vermont (CCV).

**Professional and Business Services.** Professional and Business Services are expected to grow as the other sectors in the City grow. As this sector grows, so will the need for retail and food based industry to grow to support the influx of new employees in the City.

**Leisure and Hospitality.** As urban revitalization efforts increase, it is expected that there will be increasing demand for cultural services, which will likely generate jobs in this sector. In recent years, the City has seen the opening of a new art gallery and the renovation of the Bliss Auditorium at the St. Albans Historical Museum. The City has identified the need for a hotel in the downtown area which would help to support business travelers as well as tourists.

**Information.** Information is a growing sector in the St. Albans economy. This sector includes publishing, broadcasting, telecommunications and information services. Between 1988 and 2007, employment in this sector grew by more than 325%. The City of St. Albans has been working to improve the telecommunication infrastructure in the City by exploring the development of a fiber optic broadband network in an effort to attract new businesses. Fiber optic infrastructure would encourage and lead to the growth and development of creative and knowledge-based cutting edge jobs in areas such as technology, engineering, architecture, marketing, education, and other industries that require greater capacity for electronic data.

**Federal Government.** Federal employment in St. Albans City is mainly through the Department of Homeland Security, formerly INS. This office is currently working to bring approximately 200 jobs to St. Albans City from other locations.

**State Government.** Over the next 20 years, this sector is expected to remain at a similar level to the past and perhaps experience a slight decrease due to cuts in the State budget.

**Local Government.** This sector is expected to remain at a steady level. The City does not anticipate major increases or decreases in the number of local government jobs.

### ***'Create St. Albans' and Economic Development***

The City's sense of place is an important economic development tool. The many facets that make Saint Albans special and unique are its buildings, architecture, people, culture, shops, streets, trees, and parks to its geographical location close to the Lake, Burlington, the farms of greater Franklin County, and the Green Mountains and Canada. These characteristics have drawn the City's current residents to live here and this is attractive for employers and tourists. Capitalizing on the great aspects of Saint Albans and building on what is unique and special will draw more people to the City, and in turn employers that cherish such a vibrant, urban environment will follow.

The Create Saint Albans: Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit described strategies for capitalizing on the City's assets to further economic development. Many of these ideas correspond to those included in the Downtown Marketing Plan and

Master Plan. Included in the text box below, they could be reviewed and refined to ensure successful implementation.

**Figure 10.5 Create Saint Albans: Economic Development Recommendations  
(From the Form Based Planning Toolkit, TPUDC 2011)**

**Making Saint Albans a Destination**

Focus on Place-Based Tourism: Repair the urban fabric, hold festivals and events, and build a locally-based creative culture to build on the present place-based tourism economy.

Capitalize on Access to Interstate 89: Promote the dual access to I-89 and improve the gateways in the vicinity of the highway on- and off- ramps.

Agri-tourism: Given the importance of agriculture to the outlying rural areas surrounding Saint Albans, City programming should include festivals celebrating seasonal harvests and coordination with local restaurants so they use products that are grown and produced locally.

Unique local events: Building on the renowned Maple Festival the City should consider more ways to attract both locals and tourists to the downtown by organizing additional events that are unique and interesting.

Downtown Hotel & Meeting Space: Identify priority citing for a hotel and generate mechanisms to attract an urban hotel operator.

**Center for Cool Jobs**

Place-Based Industry: Incentivize the creation of high quality built environments and then rigorously tailor a marketing message to feature this aspect of the City.

New Business Incubator Space: Develop permanent or moveable incubator spaces to support new and/or growing business.

Additional Office Space: Identify locations to encourage new office space for small, mid-sized, and large companies to supplement that presence of larger office buildings already servicing large numbers of employees.

**Attracting Retail**

Main Street as a Shopping Mall: Generate a strategic approach to identify and attract the right kinds of business, with strategies for providing financial incentives, to fill vacant space and address gaps in the current retail offerings.

Recruit Boutique Craft Businesses: Seek out the kind of entrepreneurs that are looking to develop or market locally produced craft products, such as locally produced coffee, beer, cheeses, and other products that offer improved quality and taste and that support the local economy.

**Center for Industry**

Eco-Industry: Market Saint Albans City strengths as a “green” city that is “open for business” to “green” and sustainable companies to attract these eco-industry operations.

Value Added Production: Build on the success of the Saint Albans Cooperative Creamery and Saint Albans established position as a dairy processing center by incentivizing additional value added propositions, both large and small scale operations, such as local cheese, yogurt, and ice cream production facilities.

Artisan Industrial Space: Create opportunities for the development of artisan industrial space, designed to accommodate a workshop and living quarters within one building.

## ***Economic Development Goals***

- 1) Saint Albans City is the economic and commercial hub of Northwest Vermont, providing a variety of goods, services and economic opportunities for the region.
- 2) The Saint Albans City economy is based on enterprises that use the traditional skills and resources of the region.
- 3) Saint Albans City is recognized as a community that welcomes proactive in-fill and redevelopment activities.

## ***Economic Development Policies***

- 1) Promote Saint Albans City as a vital regional and statewide community center for business/professional services, retailing, education, residential use, recreation, and dining.
- 2) Downtown Saint Albans is a community that embraces its heritage and creative economy, including agricultural and food related industries.
- 3) Invest in educational, health care, and municipal services and infrastructure that will aid in attracting economic development opportunities.
- 4) Encourage local buyers to purchase goods and services from local businesses.
- 5) Encourage the implementation of downtown revitalization strategies available through the VT Downtown Program.
- 6) Support the improvement and/or development of facilities for cultural activities, such as museums, galleries, and theaters.
- 7) Ensure that the Downtown has public access to WiFi.
- 8) Support programs that assist with the working capital and expansion needs of existing or new businesses.
- 9) Assist business in utilizing local labor and community services and facilities by coordinating well matched educational and employment needs.
- 10) Support the efforts of the St. Albans Area Chamber of Commerce.
- 11) Maintain a robust Downtown Redevelopment Program.
- 12) Emphasize customer service in the zoning and development review process.
- 13) Continue to utilize funding and other resources available for Brownfield clean-up activities in the City.

## (11) Land Use and Development in the Future

The future land use and development plan was created to reflect the vision, goals and policies of this plan and the Create Saint Albans Planning Charrette. It is created by and for the people of Saint Albans City and balances the challenges associated with protection of individual property rights and regulating development for the betterment of the whole community.

Saint Albans City is fortunate to have maintained its traditional urban form, which inherently reflects the principles of smart growth that many communities have lost and are trying to rebuild today. The City, now a State designated Growth Center, consists of a concentrated mixed use downtown and central green walkable to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Saint Albans has not been immune to gap-tooth developments that detract from the traditional urban form. But such developments allow community members to draw important comparisons and help in defining future land use and development goals. During *Create Saint Albans*, the community members affirmed their desire to continue the City's traditional urban form, a fundamental element of the City's sense of place.

### ***Land Use and Development***

A discussion of current land use patterns and development trends is provided below for each distinct area of the City. Goals for future land use and development are also identified. Map 11.2 depicts existing land uses by parcel in the City.

### **Downtown**

Downtown Saint Albans is a well-defined urban core with a strong north-south Main Street that parallels the rail line to the west and is edged by Taylor Park to the east. The street pattern resembles a grid, except that there is a lack of continuity between east-west streets as they intersect with Main Street. The downtown continues to maintain its nineteenth century architectural consistency, and human scale.

The downtown area is currently zoned as Business 1 - Central Business Sub-District (B1), which is intended to protect and enhance the function of the downtown area

### **DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT**

The **Traditional Downtown (DR1)** Design Review Overlay District is established to maintain and preserve the unique historic character and function of the City's downtown and central business district. Architecture shall reflect historic forms and materials and adaptive re-use of historic architecture is strongly encouraged. Infill, renovation and revitalization of the City's core shall respect and preserve the "main street" character, walkability, public spaces and the sharing of parking and other public infrastructure, which reflects the historic urban form of the City. The district places emphasis on and the preservation of historic resources and the character of the historic downtown as a part of a vibrant central business district. Buildings in the Traditional Downtown (DR1) are mixed-use with premium local and regional boutique retail uses and entertainment establishments, fostering a multicultural environment. Residential or office use above the ground floor is encouraged.

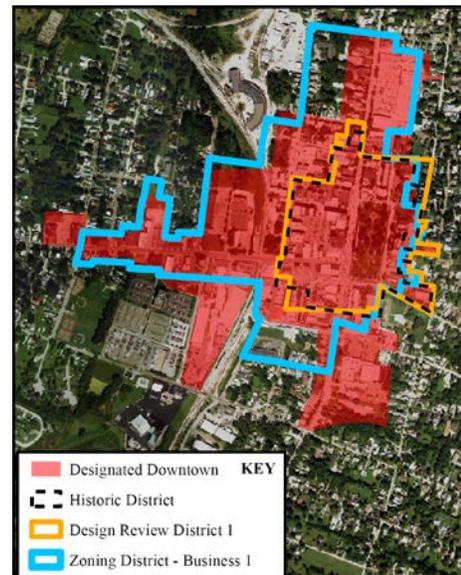
as the primary commercial, financial, retail and governmental center of the region. The downtown is also subject to design review guidelines and is designated as the Traditional Downtown (DR1) design review area.

Development is high density mainly consisting of older, multi-story, brick-faced structures that front the street with little or no setback. Public space is well-defined, and provides a focus for public life. While limited, some potential for infill development remains.

Existing uses in the Downtown include but are not limited to retailing, professional offices, banks and restaurants, general business and repair services, government services, and upper story apartments. Mid-block areas commonly consist of paved parking lots.

It is important that the historic mix of housing and commercial development be continued in the urban core. Downtown residential units add to the life and vigor of the central city. In order to protect the commercial base, however, residential uses should be restricted to the upper floors of multi-use buildings. Appropriate and compatible redevelopment, including the adaptation of existing structures for new uses, and the replacement of nonconforming structures and uses, can allow for continued growth within the downtown.

The appearance and design of local streetscapes is important in a pedestrian-oriented downtown such as Saint Albans. Design considerations along urban streets include the encouragement of building types and patterns that maintain the visual and social integrity of the street, including mixed uses that enhance street life; patterns of development that enhance pedestrian circulation; and the appropriate scaling of street level buildings with elements (windows, entrances, signs), lighting and landscape features to fit in with the pedestrian environment.



**Map 11.1  
Downtown Districts and  
Designations**

### **The Main Corridors (North Main, South Main, Lake and Fairfield Streets)**

Four main arterials – North and South Main Street (Route 7), Lake and Fairfield Streets, lead into the City. Traditionally these streets have been mainly residential in character, defined by associated streetscape elements. More recently, professional offices and a number of commercial uses have been integrated, some in the form of adaptive re-use of existing structures and some in the form of redevelopment.

**North Main Street** – The goal for future development on North Main Street is to require adaptive re-use of historic buildings or infill and redevelopment that emulates the traditional character.

North Main Street is currently zoned as Business 2 Transitional Business Sub-District (B2), which is intended for commercial development convenient to customers that preserves the carrying capacity of streets and requires the provision of off-street parking and loading. North Main Street transitions to Business 1 south of Brainerd Street, intended to protect and enhance the function of the downtown area. North Main is also subject to design review guidelines and is located in the Gateway (DR4), Residential (DR3) and Downtown Expansion (DR2) design review areas from north to south.

North Main Street is dominated by medium to low density detached 2 to 2 1/2 story large residential buildings and estates, with yard areas sloping uphill on the east side of the street and yard areas sloping downhill on the west side. Yard areas are generally large and variable. The street is wide and separated from sidewalks by wide greenspace buffers with street trees. Some of these traditionally single-family residential buildings have been converted to multi-family dwellings, while others have incorporated commercial uses such as professional offices and salons.

**South Main Street** – The goal for future development on South Main Street is to require adaptive re-use of historic buildings or infill and redevelopment that emulates the traditional character.

South Main Street is currently zoned as Business 2 Transitional Business Sub-District (B2), which is intended for commercial development convenient to customers that preserves the carrying capacity of streets and requires the provision of off-street parking and loading. South Main Street transitions to Business 1 between Stowell and Stebbins Streets, intended to protect and enhance the function of the downtown area. South Main is also subject to design review guidelines and is located in the Residential (DR3) design review area south of the Cadillac Motel, the Gateway (DR4) from the Cadillac

## DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT

The intent of the **Downtown Expansion (DR2)** Design Review Overlay District is to recognize an area suitable for the expansion of downtown commercial and mixed-use developments, which expands the synergy of the Traditional Downtown (DR1) district. Buildings in the Downtown Expansion (DR2) district are mixed-use developments, housing street front retail and restaurant services with residential and office use above the ground floor, where feasible. Architecture of a historic nature shall be used in conjunction with contemporary designs. Beautification and building upkeep are encouraged, utilizing signage, awnings and greenery for an aesthetically pleasing environment.

Architecture should reflect historic forms and materials and adaptive re-use of historic architecture is encouraged. New structures and additions or alterations to existing structures shall be designed in a manner that is harmonious with, or complements the scale, massing, height, proportions, roof pitch, window style and placement, materials, color and design of surrounding historic structures and significant buildings of architectural merit.

Strong pedestrian access to neighboring uses and districts shall be developed and maintained. The establishment of unique outdoor spaces of any size with fountains and public art is recommended. Parking lots and structures are to be located away or discreetly screened from street view.

Motel north to Upper Gilman Street, and Residential (DR3) from Upper Gilman Street to the area where BFA is located, where it transitions to Downtown Expansion (DR2).

The character of South Main Street is not as uniform as North Main Street. South Main Street is dominated by mixed land uses in the form of medium density detached 2 to 2/12 story residential buildings with medium sized setbacks and a mix of attached and detached 2 to 3 story buildings with varied, shallow setbacks. Like North Main Street, the street is wide and separated from sidewalks by wide greenspace buffers with street trees. And also similar to North Main Street, adaptive re-use of traditionally single family residential buildings has taken place, including conversion to multi-use dwellings and commercial uses. South Main Street has also experienced a substantial amount of infill and redevelopment, most of which has not been in keeping with the historic character.

**Lake Street** – Lake Street is particularly important because it forms the main connection between the west side of the City and the east side of the City, bisected by the railroad tracks. During the Create Saint Albans Planning Charrette, community members identified that development along Lake Street from the Edward Street/South Elm Street area east does not form an enjoyable pedestrian connection to Main Street. The goal for future development on this area of Lake Street is to require that infill, redevelopment and streetscape enhancements be pedestrian oriented and human scale.

West of Elm Street, Lake Street is currently zoned as Low Density Residential, which is intended to maintain a pleasant and uncrowded primarily single family residential area and to encourage appropriate development and/or redevelopment that will complement the existing residential land use. East of Elm Street, Lake Street is currently zoned as Business 1 Central Business Sub-District (B1), which is intended to protect and enhance the function of the downtown area. Lake Street from Edward Street south is subject to design review guidelines and is located in the Downtown Expansion (DR2) design review area.

## DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT

The **Gateway (DR4)** Overlay District provides a higher standard of appearance for corridors that serve as the main entrances into the downtown area and shall complement and anticipate the historic core of the City. Buildings, architectural styles, and design features shall create a memorable and positive first impression upon entering the City, to establish an image and character that is uniquely St. Alban's, as well as to fulfill the service demands of nearby neighborhoods, residents, and visitors. Signing and lighting associated with the commercial density and transitioning land use that currently exists in this district is inconsistent with the historic, residential quality of these areas. These areas are distinct with regard to the presence of specific transportation infrastructure, with the north gateway just south of an important intersection and the terminus of the MVRT; and the south gateway having the Interstate connector and intersection. New construction, conversions or rehabilitation of existing structures should continue existing historic scale and setbacks. Site plans shall reference and relate to the historic greenbelt and provide creatively screened and located parking areas.

## DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT

The **Residential (DR3)** Design Review Overlay District provides residential housing adjacent to the traditional downtown and is intended for the preservation and enhancement of its historic pattern, architectural scale and green space. It is characterized by dense, compact development with a mix of housing types. Similar setbacks, footprints, scale, mass and height are expected to continue. Existing vegetation and the pedestrian-oriented environment shall be maintained. Emphasis shall be placed on the preservation of the tree lined boulevard quality of Main Street and the surrounding streetscape. Low-intensity business activity is permitted at residential scale, which includes home occupations or professional offices that are unobtrusive and fit within the character of the neighborhood. New development and redevelopment in these neighborhoods shall reflect the existing and desirable patterns of size, scale, footprint and massing as well as historic architectural patterns and materials.

West of Edward Street, Lake Street is characterized by medium density detached 2 to 2 1/2 story small to large residential buildings with medium sized setbacks. This part of the corridor has maintained its historic residential character, with some single to multi-family conversion. The street is moderately wide and separated from sidewalks with small greenspace buffers with street trees. East of Edward Street, Lake Street transitions to a higher density mix of attached and detached 2 to 3 story buildings with varied shallow setbacks. Greenspace buffers are reduced or eliminated altogether along this segment of Lake Street. Sidewalks even disappear along some frontages. This part of the corridor has experienced varied infill and redevelopment to the point that there is no dominating character evident.

**Fairfield Street** – The goal for future development on Fairfield Street is to require adaptive re-use of historic buildings or infill and redevelopment that emulates the traditional character.

The western portion of Fairfield Street is zoned as High Density Residential, which is intended for moderately dense residential development and growth, while maintaining a safe and healthy atmosphere for the district's residents. The eastern portion is zoned Low Density Residential, in recognition of the form of development as one gets farther away from Downtown. Fairfield Street is not subject to design review.

Fairfield is characterized by medium density detached 2 to 2 1/2 story large residential buildings with medium sized setbacks. The street is on the narrow side shaded by an expansive tree canopy planted in the medium sized greenspace buffer that separates the sidewalks. Fairfield Street has maintained its traditional residential character although many of these traditionally single-family residential buildings have been converted to multi-family dwellings, while others have incorporated commercial uses such as professional offices and salons.

### **The “Future” Corridor – Federal Street Multi-Modal Connector Project**

Information has already been presented in this plan about the initiative to develop this project. The intent of this new corridor in the City would be to increase livability in the

entire community and on the corridor itself by better connecting, interconnecting and managing traffic with South and North Main Street. This corridor is currently planned to connect to South Main Street, directly across from the State Access Highway, and follow the existing Nason, Lemnah, Allen, Catherine/Market, Federal, and Lower Newton Streets to connect back to North Main Street. This project will proceed with careful planning and input from City stakeholders.

In recognition of the future redevelopment that could be facilitated by this project, as well as currently underutilized lots, the Planning Commission has put a priority on this corridor for possible form codes and inclusion in Design Review.

### **The Flats (West of Main)**

The goal for future development in these neighborhoods is to preserve the traditional residential character. Infill development and redevelopment should maintain the scale, density, and character of the existing neighborhoods and enhance the pedestrian oriented streetscape.

The neighborhoods to the west of Main Street are currently zoned as Low-Density Residential to maintain a pleasant and uncrowded primarily single family residential area and to encourage appropriate development and/or redevelopment that will complement the existing residential land use. Residential areas are not subject to design review.

The neighborhoods west of Main Street are bisected by Lake Street, and somewhat disconnected from downtown by the railroad, a shopping plaza and industrial land. Narrow streets form a modified grid network with only a few dead-ends. Sidewalks, either along one or both sides of streets, are separated from the street with small greenspace buffers lined with trees. The neighborhoods are characterized by small and medium sized homes on small and medium sized lots, which are unique narrow, deep lots, particularly north of Lake Street along Cedar Street. The neighborhood area that extends along North Elm Street north of the railroad (where the City Elementary School is located) is distinct from the area to the south of it. While homes are generally the same size they are newer construction on much shallower lots.

### **The Hill Section (East of Main)**

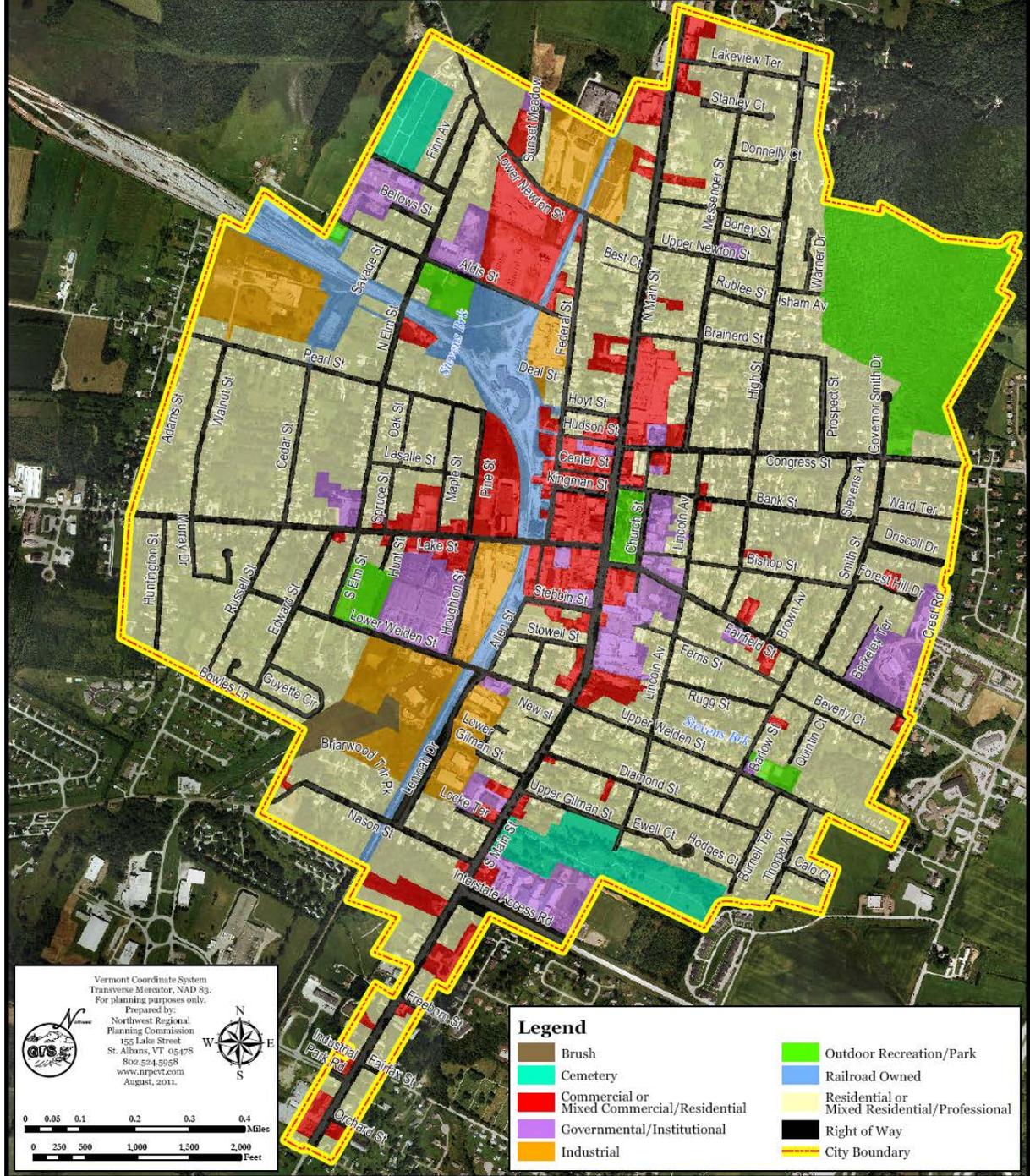
Similar to the neighborhoods west of Main Street, the goal for future development in these neighborhoods is to preserve the traditional residential character. Infill development and redevelopment should maintain the scale, density, and character of the existing neighborhoods and enhance the pedestrian oriented streetscape.

The neighborhoods east of Main Street are predominantly zoned Low Density Residential, with a few blocks between Fairfield, Congress and High Street zoned High Density Residential. As noted above, the Low Density Residential District intends to maintain a pleasant and uncrowded primarily single family residential area and to

encourage appropriate development and/or redevelopment that will complement the existing residential land use. The High Density Residential District is intended for single and multi-family housing.

The neighborhoods east of Main Street form the City's hill section, bisected by Fairfield Street. Narrow, sometimes extremely narrow, streets form a modified grid pattern along the hillside, with very few dead-ends. Sidewalks, either along one or both sides of streets, are separated from the street with small greenspace buffers lined with trees. The neighborhoods north of Fairfield Street are characterized by a mix of small, medium, and large homes and lot sizes. Bank, Congress, Smith and High Streets in particular reflect areas of larger estate lots and homes, some with historic significance such as the Smith Mansion property. The neighborhoods south of Fairfield Street are dominated by medium homes and lot sizes.

# ST ALBANS CITY Existing Land Use



Vermont Coordinate System  
Transverse Mercator, NAD 83.  
For planning purposes only.  
Prepared by:  
Northwest Regional  
Planning Commission  
155 Lake Street  
St. Albans, VT 05478  
802.254.5958  
www.nrtcc.com  
August, 2011.

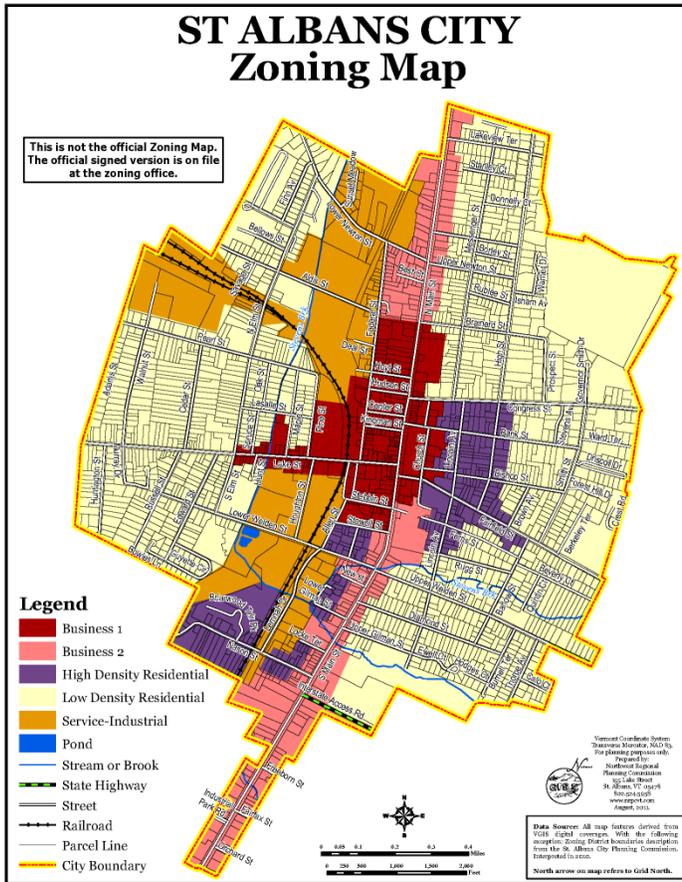
Legend			
	Brush		Outdoor Recreation/Park
	Cemetery		Railroad Owned
	Commercial or Mixed Commercial/Residential		Residential or Mixed Residential/Professional
	Governmental/Institutional		Right of Way
	Industrial		City Boundary

Map 11.2 Existing Land Use

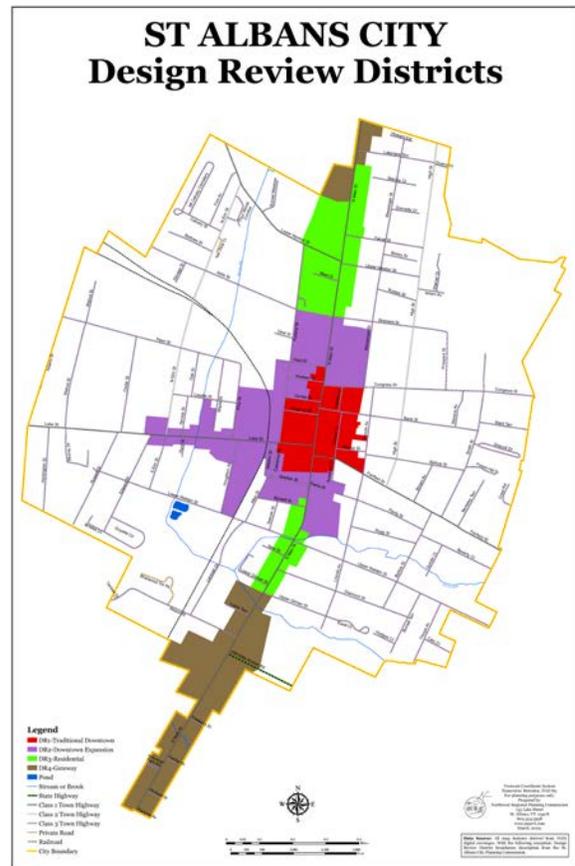
## Planning for the Future

This plan is proposing that the City of Saint Albans continue using the existing Zoning Districts and Design Review Districts, shown on Maps 11.3 and 11.4 below. However, the Form and Use Map on Page 89 is a proposed land use map still being developed by the City as part of its form based planning process. The Zoning Districts are described below and the Design Review Districts are described in text boxes on the preceding pages. The form based planning process is described on the following pages.

**Map 11.3 Proposed Land Use Districts**



**Map 11.4 Proposed Design Review Districts**



**Figure 11.1 Zoning District Purpose Statements**

### LDR-Low Density Residential

The intent of this District is to maintain within the City a pleasant and uncrowded residential area, and to encourage appropriate development and/or redevelopment that will complement the existing residential land use. This area shall be primarily for single-family dwellings, along with accessory uses. A variety of other residential uses, along with selected non-residential uses may be allowed as conditional uses, provided they meet all applicable standards and can be shown to be compatible with the district's objectives.

**HDR- High Density Residential**

The intent of this district is to provide an area within the City for moderately dense residential development and growth, while maintaining a safe and healthy atmosphere for the district's residents. Single-family dwellings shall be permitted uses within this district, along with accessory uses. A variety of other residential uses, along with selected non-residential uses may be allowed as conditional uses, provided they meet all applicable standards and can be shown to be compatible with the district's objectives.

**Business Districts**

It is the intent of the Business District to provide for a wide range of commercial and related activities to safeguard and enhance the City's role as the economic center of northwestern Vermont. It is also the intent of this district to protect the historic and cultural characteristics which distinguish the City of St. Albans, and to enable a diverse range of uses, which contribute to the vitality and diversity of the Business District and to expand the tax base. Toward these ends, the Business District is composed of two subdistricts: B1 - Central Business Subdistrict and B2 - Transitional Business Subdistrict.

**B1- Central Business Subdistrict**

It is the intent of the B1 - Central Business Subdistrict to provide for a diverse range of business and service uses within the traditional business center of the City. The subdistrict is intended to protect and enhance the function of the downtown area as the primary commercial, financial, retail and governmental center of the region. It is designed to accommodate a wide variety of commercial activities, particularly those which benefit from pedestrian activity and access. Design criteria for the subdistrict are intended to protect the National Landmark Historic District and the special urban features of Taylor Park.

**B2 – Transitional Business Subdistrict**

It is the intent of the B2 - Transitional Business Subdistrict to provide for the location of a wide range of business activities. These activities support the function of St. Albans as the primary business center in the region and provide a wide range of goods and services for local and regional needs outside the downtown area. These areas are convenient to customers, preserve the carrying capacity of streets and require the provision of off-street parking and loading. Design criteria for the subdistrict are intended to encourage the expanded use and preservation of existing buildings or new construction, alterations, and enlargements compatible with the architectural character of the subdistrict.

**S-IND – Service Industrial District**

It is the intent of the S-IND Service Industrial District to provide for the location of a wide variety of service, industrial, manufacturing, distribution and research facilities providing employment opportunities and broadening of the tax base of the City. These locations provide good transportation and infrastructure access. All uses shall be in conformance with the performance standards found in Section 519 of these regulations. Due to the location of the district adjacent to residential areas, buffering shall be required to minimize conflicts between non-residential uses and residential districts.

**FHO- Flood Hazard Overlay District**

The intent of this district is to minimize future public and private losses caused by development in flood hazard areas. Designation of this district is also required for the City's continued eligibility in the National Flood Insurance Program. Included in this district are all areas of special flood hazard as shown on the latest National Flood Insurance Program maps. The Flood Hazard Overlay District overlaps other districts established in this Bylaw; where the provisions of the underlying district differ from those of the Flood Hazard Overlay District, the more restrictive shall govern.

## Form Based Planning

One of the main concepts explored during Create Saint Albans was whether changing the organizing principal of the City's land use and development regulations from use to form would improve the regulations, both in terms of process and result. During the charrette, the community and the consultant team explored the specific dimensional characteristics that make up the form of Saint Albans City. By recognizing the relationship between how a place feels to a pedestrian and the physical characteristics that define a space, people began to understand the factors that are most important to creating vibrant and successful streets and neighborhoods.

**Form-based codes** address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals. They are keyed to a *regulating plan* that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use types. – *The Form Based Code Institute*

The City is interested in the concept of form based coding for its potential to offer a streamlined, predictable development review process, while at the same time effectively protecting the character of the City's traditional downtown, corridors and residential neighborhoods.

The charrette process of discovery led to the development of 5 distinct character areas within Saint Albans - Downtown Center, General Neighborhood, Cottage House, Large House and Estate House. Descriptions for these areas, as excerpted from the Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit, are described below and depicted on map 7.5.

**Downtown Center** - The Downtown Center Character Area refers to places within Saint Albans where attached buildings are pulled to the back of the sidewalk, and typically have a height of 2 to 4 stories. Often the first floor is occupied by retail, with office or residential above. The Downtown Center includes Main Street as well as the side streets that share similar characteristics.



These photographs of the Downtown Center Character Area in Saint Albans City  
(Photo Credit: TPUDC)

**General Neighborhood** - The General Neighborhood Character Area, which is largely missing in St. Albans, is characterized by a mix of attached and detached buildings, with varied, shallow setbacks. Buildings are typically 2 to 3 stories and include a diversity of uses. The General Neighborhood character area would accommodate a mix of new building types geared to young adults, retirees, and entrepreneurs, including live/works, loft apartments, and artisan industrial space.



Photographs of General Neighborhood Character Area in Saint Albans City.  
(Photo Credit: TPUDC)

**Cottage House** - The Cottage House Character Area refers to neighborhoods within St. Albans dominated by smaller cottage houses. These simple houses are pulled relatively close to the street and are set on more narrow lots. Often these houses can be found on “piano key” lots.



Photographs of the Cottage House Character Area in Saint Albans City (Photo Credit: TPUDC)

**Large House** - The Large House Character Area includes the majority of residential neighborhoods within St. Albans. The area is defined by a mix of single family homes with moderate setbacks. Houses are typically 1 to 2 stories with lots that include outbuildings.



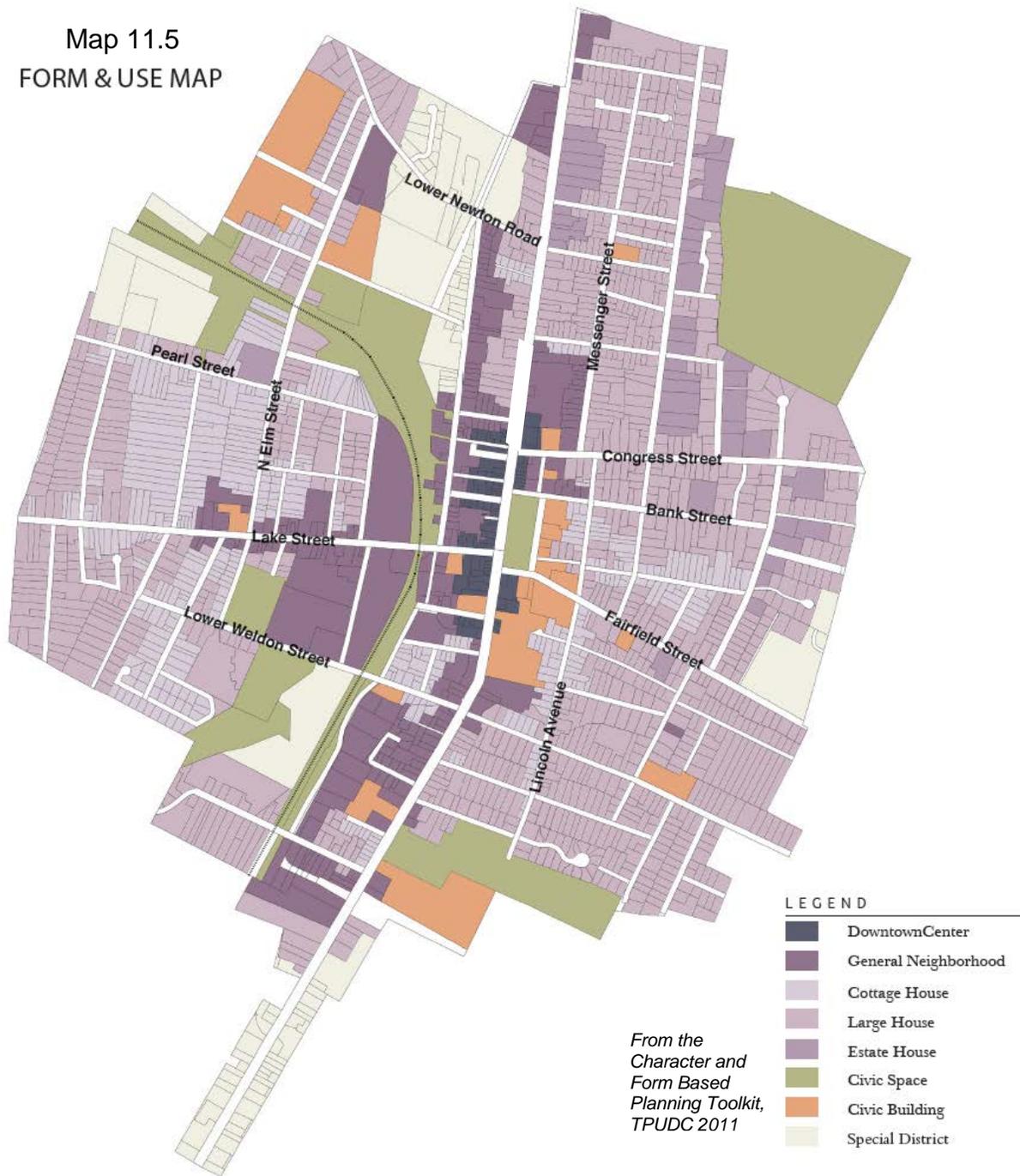
Photographs of the Large House Character Area in Saint Albans City (Photo Credit: TPUDC)

**Estate House** - The Estate House Character Area is reserved for the unusually large lots within St. Albans, the majority of which are located on the hill. The area is defined by large lots, grand setbacks, and 2 to 3 story homes.



Photographs of the Estate Character Area in St. Albans City (Photo Credit: TPUDC and NRPC)

Map 11.5  
FORM & USE MAP



City staff and Planning Commissioners are continuing to study how best to apply the form/character analysis to the City's land use and development regulations. Planning Commissioners are particularly enticed by the concept of form based regulations for Downtown, Federal Street and Lake Street (Edward Street/South Elm area and east), where the effect of such regulations would have more impact. The impact would be felt through a more efficient review process (many uses in these areas currently require conditional use review and site plan review, in addition to design review). The character

of these areas is also vulnerable to changes from new development. Form based regulations could be an effective way to streamline development review, make it predictable for developers and plan reviewers, while creating development that matches the desired character. This plan specifically recommends that the City move forward with the next steps towards implementing form based regulations for these areas, which are made up of Downtown Center and General Neighborhood Character Areas. The Character and Form Based Planning Toolkit includes specific building mass and dimensional standards, including visual renderings, which would create development compatible to these character areas and can be used to develop form based regulations.

### ***Future Land Use and Development Goals***

- 1) The City serves as the region's growth center, and as the economic, cultural, transportation, and governmental center.
- 2) Development undertaken in Saint Albans City preserves the integrity and character of the city's respective neighborhoods.
- 3) The character of Saint Albans City's Historic District is enhanced and maintained.

### ***Future Land Use and Development Policies***

- 1) Ensure that new development maintains and complements the character of its surrounding neighborhoods.
- 2) Ensure design standards and/or guidelines are incorporated into development review in the Downtown and major corridors.
- 3) Concentrate retail, civic and cultural activities in the Central Business Sub-district.
- 4) Ensure that the Central Business Sub-district remains mixed use, including residential units on upper floors of storefront buildings.
- 5) Ensure Development Regulations incorporate smart growth principles.
- 6) New development is designed at a pedestrian scale and is accessible to pedestrians and bicycles.
- 7) Promote infill development, adaptive reuse and/or redevelopment of vacant or underutilized land.
- 8) Provide tax or zoning incentives to encourage the redevelopment of vacant or underdeveloped lots within the city.
- 9) Identify and make available city owned empty lots and vacant fields for community gardens and/or farmers' markets.
- 10) Explore form based codes, design review and other options for ensuring that the design of development in the City benefits our community to the highest degree possible. Prioritize these explorations for areas of the City with high redevelopment potential.

## (12) Implementation Plan

This Plan frames a vision for the City - a vision of its future built on the past that sets forth goals to be achieved and ways to achieve them. One of the most important aspects of a planning process is to identify how the plan will be implemented. This chapter outlines action steps the City should take to move forward toward achieving the recommendations of this Plan. Some of these recommendations are ongoing, some achievable in the short term and some in the long term. Turning vision into reality is challenging and will take strong leadership, good communication and the dedication of municipal staff, officials and volunteers.

The action steps for this Plan are broken into three categories: Coordination and Outreach, Regulatory Municipal Programs and Non-Regulatory Municipal Programs.

### **Coordination and Outreach**

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#### ***Planning and Development***

- 1) Have regular joint Planning Commission meetings with Saint Albans Town.
- 2) Participate in regional planning programs, including the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee, Brownfields Redevelopment and other regional committees.
- 3) Review and participate in the Act 250 permitting process for applications affecting the City
- 4) Place emphasis on holding regular, open Planning Commission meetings and other gatherings as special topics arise.
- 5) Develop a protocol and resources for posting more information on City websites and other media (i.e. social media, public access TV, newspapers) concerning planning and land use documents and projects.
- 6) Engage in active recruitment for open Planning Commission and Development Review Board openings.
- 7) Maintain an active role in the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

#### ***Collaboration***

- 1) Pursue increased collaboration and shared initiatives with St. Albans Town and other nearby municipalities.
- 2) Be an active participating municipality in state-wide and regional discussions including the Lake Champlain TMDL and stormwater/wastewater management.
- 3) Develop lines of communication and seek the counsel of adjacent municipalities and NRPC on a regular basis.
- 4) Support and collaborate with the Saint Albans Historical Society, especially in the realms of identification and preservation.

- 5) Collaborate with the Green Mountain Transportation Authority (GMTA) Board on public transportation routes in Saint Albans City.
- 6) Coordinate with the Senior Center on transportation related needs.
- 7) Periodically evaluate the relationship between the City and Saint Albans for the Future, in terms of optimal support for the Designation program.
- 8) Support the efforts of local water quality committees, including increasing the general public's awareness of water quality issues.
- 9) Continue to contribute to the regional and statewide conversation on outreach and resources for appropriate stormwater management in urban areas of VT.
- 10) Maintain a high degree of collaboration between SAFF and City staff and boards.
- 11) Use City's ability to apply for Vermont Community Development Program funds in partnership with private entities.

## **Regulatory Municipal Programs**

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### ***Development Regulations and Design Review***

- 1) Analyze the City's Land Development Regulations for missed opportunities in the protection of water, air and soils.
- 2) Strengthen the stormwater management and erosion control section of the City's Land Development Regulations.
- 3) Incentivize and promote low-impact development best management practices that mimic natural systems to limit stormwater runoff and improve groundwater recharge.
- 4) Study whether regulating development in the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area makes sense in Saint Albans as a way to increase stream stabilization, protect water quality and decrease flood inundation.
- 5) Analyze and strengthen the current site plan and landscaping planting sections of the Land Development Regulations to ensure that run-off and erosion are controlled during the entire life of a permitted project.
- 6) Explore the use of the environmental principles found in Act 250 to consider natural features in the course of development reviews.
- 7) Implement the City's development regulations to require appropriate buffers, screening and landscaping when development is proposed near outdoor recreational areas
- 8) Explore the establishment of a special district for the Aldis Hill area, as well as an overlay district for the periphery.
- 9) Review the City's Development Regulations to consider where incentives for downtown (re)development could be applied.
- 10) Periodically evaluate the City's Design Review policies and district boundaries to ensure their effectiveness at achieving design in conformance with each district.
- 11) Further research and provide outreach on the idea of form-based codes for St. Albans.
- 12) Develop form-based elements in the Land Development Regulations for the Downtown and periphery. Implement elsewhere in the City as appropriate.

- 13) Create incentives for market rate and workforce housing development in the central business district, including rehabilitation of Main Street upper stories.
- 14) Review the City's Development Regulations to consider where incentives for infill development could be applied.
- 15) Create zoning based incentives for senior housing located within the City.
- 16) Create zoning based incentives for green developments.
- 17) Review the zoning regulations to consider how smart growth principles could be strengthened.
- 18) Incorporate requirements in the Development Regulations to make Saint Albans City streets more bicycle friendly, such as bike lanes, sharrows, and bike racks.
- 19) Consider whether zoning incentives would be effective in promoting the development of cultural activities.
- 20) Consider how the Development Regulations should address the review of renewable energy resources.
- 21) Implement the provisions of the Development Regulations that enable phasing when appropriate.
- 22) Involve City Officials, the Police Department, Fire Department and Public Works Director in the review of development proposals.
- 23) Provide outreach to property owners on allowed uses of land and clarification of legal nonconforming uses and structures.
- 24) Improve the permit and review process to render it simpler, more comprehensible, and expedient.

### ***Other Regulations***

- 1) Adopt a Tree Protection/Management Ordinance.

### **Non-Regulatory Municipal Programs**

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#### ***Downtown***

- 1) Continue to support the Downtown Program with City staff.
- 2) Provide City staff and resources for managing and maintaining Downtown Designation.
- 3) Use City staff to continue to support Downtown events.
- 4) Grow the City's revolving loan fund for making improvements to downtown buildings.
- 5) Grow the City's Brownfield Redevelopment Program in cooperation with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.
- 6) Make a program and funds available for façade improvements.
- 7) Explore the strategic use of development funds and public-private partnerships for redevelopment projects that benefit the City.
- 8) Promote the benefits of the Designated Downtown program to eligible property owners, including tax credits, grants and loans from various state agencies.
- 9) Explore designation as a Certified Local Government and seek the status, if appropriate.

- 10) Continue to evaluate the idea of a merged SAFF and City Downtown Board.
- 11) Create a Tax Increment Finance District as a redevelopment tool.
- 12) Research additional resources and conduct outreach to encourage the private sector toward small-scale infill housing development.
- 13) Provide outreach to property owners on rehabilitation resources and avenues.
- 14) Pursue grant funding to provide WiFi Downtown.
- 15) Encourage Downtown businesses to provide WiFi for their customers.
- 16) The Master Plan Parking Committee will continue to work towards an agreeable parking plan for the Downtown.
- 17) Review the economic development strategies in the Create Saint Albans Toolbox and consider which ones should be implemented in the short and long term.
- 18) Promote the Northwest Farmers Market and the Annual Food and Wine Festival.
- 19) Work with the Community College of Vermont to find a Downtown Saint Albans location, should it be of interest to them.
- 20) Create a Buy Local Campaign in Saint Albans.

### ***Marketing***

- 1) Engage in branding and marketing efforts to keep current residents and attract new ones.
- 2) Market downtown redevelopment opportunities.
- 3) Adopt and implement a popular logo and branding for Downtown St. Albans and use it in a suite of marketing materials.
- 4) Market Downtown Saint Albans to the greater region, state, New England and Quebec, for example by putting marketing materials in all interstate rest stops and visitor centers.

### ***Stormwater***

- 1) Plan for the additional responsibilities that an MS4 permit would add to City government, such as developing a stormwater management education program directed at City residents and business owners.
- 2) Review the Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study and determine what the next steps are.
- 3) Continue to use Taylor Park, Houghton Park and other green spaces in the City as key hubs for managing stormwater through natural means.
- 4) Seek "Tree City USA" designation.

### ***Recreation***

- 1) Continue to fund and staff the Recreation Department.
- 2) Continue support for the Saint Albans City Pool.
- 3) Pursue expanded public access to the Aldis Hill Natural Area and Hard'ack.
- 4) Support the growth of the City Recreation Department programs related to physical fitness, nutrition and weight loss.
- 5) Implement the Taylor Park Master Plan, including emphasis on a continued capital campaign and long term planning.

- 6) Pursue State and Federal Grant programs to secure funding for recreational projects that are consistent with the recreational goals of the City.
- 7) Pursue grant funds to complete an open space, pedestrian and bicycle feasibility study to move forward ideas originating out of Create Saint Albans.
- 8) Support local efforts to connect the Rail Trail to Lake Champlain.
- 9) Collaborate with the Town of Saint Albans on improving pedestrian access to the Collins Perley Sports Complex.

### ***Housing***

- 1) Access market data and assess needs for elders, imminent retirees, families, and the newest generations of Americans.
- 2) Research into the need for efficiency and one bedroom ownership opportunities and optimal sites/configurations.
- 3) Create a housing rehabilitation and maintenance revolving loan fund and/or market similar existing loan programs to the community.
- 4) Provide outreach to property owners on efficiency resources and avenues for their homes, such as the energy efficiency and weatherization programs from Efficiency Vermont, Champlain Valley Office for Economic Opportunity and Champlain Housing Trust.
- 5) Engage in a more detailed analysis (including geo-spatial data) of the housing stock, condition and needs in the City.

### ***Capital Planning and Infrastructure***

- 1) Periodically study the City's growth rate in relation to the ability of facilities and services to expand in response.
- 2) Seek funding sources for planned facility and service expansions to limit impacts to the tax rate.
- 3) Update the capital budget and plan on an annual basis.
- 4) Study options for making garbage collection more efficient and cost effective.
- 5) Address the space issues at the Public Works Garage.
- 6) Involve the Police and Fire Departments in annual capital budget updates.
- 7) Implement the recommendations of the energy audit completed for City Hall.
- 8) Take steps to make Saint Albans City streets more bicycle friendly such as adding bike lanes, sharrows, and bike racks (i.e. feasibility study, grants/loans for targeted improvements).
- 9) Implement a sidewalk improvement program.
- 10) Complete the downtown streetscape improvements.
- 11) Implement the Federal Street Multi-Modal Connector.
- 12) Study the results of the street lighting inventory completed by a City School class and implement energy efficient improvements.

### ***Other***

- 1) Research whether there is a shortage of health care services in the community.
- 2) Research how the City can help increase child care options in the community, such as sponsoring workforce development.

- 3) Access the Vermont Community Garden Network to build a local network for community gardens in Saint Albans.