

Public Art Corridor Plan for Vergennes

Brief summary of what the project will accomplish and produce.

Through robust public engagement with artists, businesses and students, we will develop a public art plan for a 'pedestrian art corridor' along Main Street/Route 22 A from the City's gateway to the Otter Creek bridge.

Project Description:

Public art is a component of a vibrant, livable community. Investment in public art benefits our economy, culture, and community. It aesthetically enhances the public realm and artists working with neighboring residents strengthens social cohesion. It can be temporary or permanent, visual or performance-oriented, require large financial resources or repurpose materials at no cost. Process is as important as the product.

In addition to engaging the community, we will engage regional artists of all disciplines, to use their creativity to address issues related to the environment, community health, cultural diversity, youth development, and attracting tourists. Plan goals:

- Strengthen pedestrian connection between the historic downtown and Gateway at Route 7
- Bring new vibrancy to public spaces.
- Increase walkability in the downtown on Main between Park Street and Water Street to support brick and mortar retail and dining
- create new opportunities for local and emerging artists to participate, learn and connect with our community.
- Increase opportunities for public private partnerships.
- Celebrate Otter Creek and raise awareness of water as a vital natural resource

Working in collaboration with the City and Vergennes Partnership, the consultant will:

- convene two meetings with area artists – one before and after the community meeting.
- Convene one community meeting where artists, students and community members will be invited to imagine public art in the city and submit ideas for their creative expression in the public realm. These “imaginings” will be presented and shared to the community to start conversations about public art.
- Followed by a survey of residents.
- Using this information, the consultant, in collaboration with Public Arts Committee, will present a report to the City Council with the following:

1. Validation of plan goals.
2. Identify priority opportunities
3. Develop conceptual site plan identifying potential locations of artwork.
4. Develop timeline for a first project
5. Task the city with determining policies for creating and managing future public art works .
6. Identify funding mechanisms and plans for communications, education and community engagement

The plan will recognize the importance of balancing City-initiated projects with nurturing grassroots efforts by individuals, neighborhood groups, local businesses and others seeking to enhance the public realm and our community vibrancy.

Project Location:

Along Route 22 A / Main St between the Vergennes/Ferrisburgh border and Otter Creek Bridge, spilling from Main St onto side streets between Park and Water Streets and into the Otter Creek Basin .

Project Issue & Urgency:

- Preparing for the inevitability of a bypass is our city's most significant challenge. VTrans has dedicated planning and engineering resources to study an alternative route for the 800 trucks per day that rumble daily through our city along Main St / 22 A. A possible alternative route north of the city –called the Vergennes Economic Corridor or VEC – would divert truck traffic north of downtown in an area ripe for commercial and industrial development. While the possibility of a bypass carries risks for our downtown businesses, placemaking strategies like public art can help to draw locals and tourists to patronize our stores and restaurants, and help us maintain our community vibrancy.

- Reducing vehicular traffic by promoting more walking/biking is essential to preserving and protecting our dense residential neighborhoods and compact downtown. Public art as a strategy enhances the public and can be expressed through sidewalk design, bicycle racks, bus stops, and a bicycle repair station in City Park – becoming a reward to bicyclists and pedestrians.

- Preserving our relevance as the regional center for our five-town area, public art can strengthen Vergennes' brand, highlight the active arts community and make connections to our rich history, environment, Otter Creek, community health, cultural diversity and youth development.

- Engaging our community at all levels by leveraging artistic expression to address and highlight community concerns such as the environment, community health, cultural diversity and youth development.

Project Management:

Leading the process will be a Public Art Committee appointed by the City Council. Members will be selected for their diverse backgrounds and interest in improving public places and spaces through art. This volunteer group will include city staff, artists, the Vergennes Partnership, cultural institutions (including Bixby Library) education (including Vergennes Elementary and Vergennes High School), and community members. They will make the final decisions. We will seek committee members who are enthusiastic advocates for growing the presence of art in public spaces. The final product will be presented to the City Council and community for review.

Proposed PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE MEMBERS to City Council for their approval:

- Dawn Wagner, Committee Chair
- Julie Basol, Vergennes Partnership
- Bixby Library representative
- Boys & Girls Club representative
- ANWSD representative
- X # of artists from Vergennes area
- Ron Redmond, City
- FACILITATOR/ADMINISTRATOR: Katie Raycroft-Meyer, ACRPC

Public Outreach:

In our preparation for this application, we have learned that public art has become more complex, process-oriented, collaborative, and experimental. Artists working with neighboring residents can help strengthen social cohesion. We have learned that public art can come in many forms: temporary or permanent,

visual or performance-oriented, require substantial fundraising or repurpose materials at no cost. The process is just as important as the product.

To bolster public participation and build and strengthen social connections, we will use a community-wide “imagining” process, inviting local artists, students, and other interested stakeholders to imagine the many different forms that public art might take, and where art might be placed along the proposed public art corridor. We will engage students in our schools -- Vergennes Elementary School and Vergennes High School – as well as our community non-profits serving the under-served and under-represented in our community, including the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Vergennes, Addison County Community Trust, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and the John Graham Shelter in this process. Ideas and images generated will then be shared with the broader community via social media and via our county-wide newspaper, the Addison Independent. We will also share this information in a survey distributed throughout the community. This process will serve to inspire the broader community, helping them to envision the possibilities that public art can bring to Vergennes.

5.2 Project Partnership & Support:

Actualization of the City’s Public Art Corridor Plan will allow us to meet the following goals and recommendations contained in our current Municipal Development Plan:

- Recommendation § 3.1.11 – Parks and Recreation: Install Permanent and/or Temporary Public Art in the Downtown and Basin (This item is also Recommendation #2.9 of the Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan, which is an appendix to the Municipal Development Plan.)
- Goal § 2.3.C.: Promote tourist attractions, festivals, and local arts.
- On 10/12/21 Vergennes City Council voted unanimously to approve the city’s application for a Municipal Planning Grant application for city public art plan.
- Respected Vergennes artist, chocolatier and Daily Chocolate business owner Dawn Wagner is collaborating with the City and the Vergennes Partnership to mobilize participation by area artists for this initiative including Northern Daughters Gallery on Main Street, Bethany Farrell, Erin Daigle and Rebecca Rey.
- Our highly engaged 14-member Vergennes Parks and Recreation Committee, will collaborate with the City to bring more public art to programming and facilities.

6.1 Project Outcomes & Goals:

We envision that through this effort, long term outcomes would include:

- an increase in successful and engaging public spaces, where citizens and visitors alike will encounter works of public art that will surprise and delight them.
- a public art along the corridor that celebrates the diversity and history of our community, while pointing to the city’s identity, character and aspirations for the future.
- a celebration of local and regional artists, who will be permanently marked in the public landscape.
- a stronger sense of place that connects our downtown to neighboring residential areas through increase walking and biking.
- supporting continued economic development as the VEC progresses.
- the finished Public Art Corridor Plan would be considered for inclusion in a future update of the City’s Municipal Development Plan, allowing us to more actively pursue the goals and recommendations the PAC Plan puts forth, thus making it a plan with an implementation path and not just one that sits on a shelf.

Statewide Priority Project Categories:

- 🏠 Fair & Affordable Housing Planning or Regulations that Implement Zoning for Great Neighborhoods COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plans and/or Investment
- 🏠 Plans for a NEW Designated Area or Specific-Area Visual/Physical Master Planning for a Designated Area *(must contact DHCD in advance of application to qualify for new designation points)*
- 🏠 Innovative Statewide Model Projects

Priority Project Explanation: how the project furthers the selected statewide priority(s).

1. A strategy to increase consumer spending in small, local businesses. We have a small, vibrant local retail and dining sector that is fragile and can never be taken for granted. Our public art plan will intentionally deepen the already strong connections between local artists and businesses by employing public art strategies including interior and window art displays, in-store performances, interior and exterior murals, and sculpture.

2. A placemaking community arts plan project integrating local heritage preservation . Our plan will draw upon and support existing community assets, preserve and enhance the authentic character of Vergennes , and ensure equitable outcomes for local stakeholders. While our heritage is renowned for its connections to the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, we will place new focus on those who haven't been acknowledged including Stephen Bates, Vermont's first black sheriff and police chief, and Philomene Daniels, the first American woman to be licensed as a pilot and master for steamboat navigation, 1887-1903

3. Physical design plan for designated downtown or village improvements. Having a physical plan for our Designated Downtown will complement and strengthen the work of the Vergennes Partnership . We have received over \$900K in state tax credits (leveraging \$6 million in private investment) to rehabilitate, upgrade and improve business properties; \$300,000 in Downtown Transportation grants (matched with \$300k from the city) to make streets and sidewalks more visually pleasing and accessible to residents and visitors. Vergennes has noticeably improved because of these investments.

Designated Area Projects:

Our downtown will be an area of focus for our public art corridor plan. Our partner in managing our compact downtown is The Vergennes Partnership, a non-profit organization formed in 1999 to enhance the economic viability of Vergennes and preserve the beauty and character of downtown . They have an energized Board, enthusiastic volunteers, and eager partner organizations. The Partnership manages our Downtown Designation. Through the Vermont Downtown Program, business and property owners in our downtown have been able to take advantage of over \$900K in state tax credits to rehabilitate, upgrade and improve their properties. Additionally, the City of Vergennes has received close to \$300K in Downtown Transportation grants to make our streets and sidewalks more visually pleasing and accessible to residents and visitors. The tax credits have leveraged over \$6 million in additional private investments and the grants have resulted in over \$600K in downtown streetscape projects. Our City has noticeably improved as a result of these investments.

Municipal Planning Application FY22

Organization: City of Vergennes

07110-MP-2022-Vergennes C-38

Work Plan and Budget

Attachment A

Task Name	Description of Task	Paid Personnel	If other, please specify	Hours	Hourly Rate	Personnel Cost	Material Description	Material Cost	Total Cost
Project Kick-off	review MPG project concept and process. Discuss and develop draft engagement plan and strategies with public Art Committee.	Consultant	Public Art Committee	12	\$70.00	\$840			\$840
				12	\$70.00	\$840			\$840
First Area Artist meeting	Review project location. Organize public Art 'Imagining' community meeting. Identify intended community groups. Strategize publicity/ communication methods.	Consultant	Public Art Committee	30	\$70.00	\$2,100			\$2,100
Community Forum/ Meeting	Prepare and hold 'Imagining' community meeting. Artists, students and community members will be invited to brainstorm/ charrette/ imagine public art in the city and submit ideas for creative expression in the public realm. Public art discussion.	Consultant	Public Art Committee	12	\$70.00	\$840			\$840
Second Area Artist meeting	Review/ synthesize outcomes and takeaways from community 'Imagining'.	Consultant	Public Art Committee	25	\$70.00	\$1,750			\$1,750
Community Survey	Work with Public Art Committee to develop Community Survey. Distribute survey. Assess findings.	Consultant	Public Art Committee	33	\$70.00	\$2,310			\$2,310
Develop Conceptual Site Plan	Develop Public Art Corridor conceptual design and narrative (report). Identify potential sites for installations.	Consultant	Public Art Committee	18	\$70.00	\$1,260			\$1,260
Final Presentation	Present Public Art Corridor concept to the Vergennes City Council and community.	Consultant	Public Art Committee						
						\$9,940		\$0	\$9,940

Work Plan and Budget

Total Project Costs	\$9,940
State Grant Funds (Grant Amount Requested):	\$9,000
Match Funds:	\$940
Minimum Required Match Funds: (10% of State Grant Funds)	\$900
Additional Match Funds: (Optional)	\$40

Work Plan and Budget

BUDGET DOCUMENTATION

Describe Source(s) of match funds (if required): *Contribution of municipal staff or volunteer's time cannot be offered as a match. Other contributions, while not required, may be documented here as well.*

The City Council has approved the expenditure of \$1,000 from City of Vergennes general fund budget. 1-7-10.98.00 Miscellaneous Expenses

Describe how you arrived at realistic budget estimates for the work plan.

Vergennes worked with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission staff to develop a work plan and budget based on the scope of the project. We also solicited a proposal for this project from a planning consultant in the area .

Upload or mail supporting documents that show the work plan and budget is based on realistic information. *If your project involves hiring a consultant (including regional planning commission staff), provide a letter or other documentation from a consultant with cost estimates for tasks, including hourly rate.*

Upload Budget Documents

Mailed to DHCD

ACCOUNTING

Responses to the following questions are used for administrative purposes only and will not impact the competitiveness of your application.

Please remember that state funds cannot be awarded to municipalities who are (a) suspended or debarred by the Federal Government; (b) delinquent in submitting their subrecipient annual reports; and (c) delinquent in submitting their Single Audit Reports (if required).

What type of accounting system does your municipality use?

- automated
- manual
- combination of both

Does your organization have an accounting system that will allow you to completely and accurately track the receipt and disbursements of funds related to the award?

- Yes
- No

Application Attachments

Applicant Attachments

Document Name: Cost Estimate Claire Tebbs

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086938-CostEstimateClaireTebbsAICP.pdf Mailed to DHCD

Document Name: Planning Commission Support

Letter
https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086938_2-PlanningCommissionSupportLetter.pdf Mailed to DHCD

Document Name: Vergennes Partnership Support

Letter
https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086938_3-VergennesPartnershipSupportLetter.pdf Mailed to DHCD

Document Name: ACRPC_LOS

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086938_4-Vergennes_mpg_LOS.pdf Mailed to DHCD

Document Name: Bill Benton Support Letter

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086938_5-BillBentonSupportLetter.pdf Mailed to DHCD

Document Name: Dawn Wagner Letter of Support

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086938_6-DCLetterofSupport.pdf Mailed to DHCD

DHCD Staff Attachments

Document Name: Letter of Support

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086941-VergennesMPGAppSeaburgletterofsupport.pdf

Document Name: Letter of Support

https://egrants.vermont.gov/_Upload/260609_8086941_2-BixbyofSupportforArtsPlanningGrantNov2021.pdf

