Lamoille County Planning Commission
FY 2019 Annual Report

Founded in 1966 as the Lamoille County Planning and Development Corporation, the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) continues to be an important resource to the 15 municipalities of Lamoille County – ten towns and five incorporated villages. The county’s economy is primarily tourism-based - including two major ski resorts – with a growing number of home-grown, nationally-renowned businesses, such as Concept 2, MSI, and Butternut Mountain Farm. LCPC’s mission is to ensure the protection of the region’s environment and conservation of natural resources, and to facilitate sustainable economic development for the benefit of all residents and visitors through a coordinated and cooperative planning process at the local level.

Each municipality’s legislative body (Selectboard or Trustees) determines who will represent them on the LCPC Board of Directors. Member municipalities of 2,500 residents or greater appoint two directors and municipalities under 2,500 appoint one director to represent that municipality’s interest in regional affairs. Additionally, the LCPC has five at-large, elected directors to represent regional interests. Directors serve on committees that make recommendations to the full 23-member Board of Directors. The LCPC has seven highly-qualified full-time and part-time staff that provide support to the Board and its committees and execute the Commission’s multifaceted work program.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION
RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont’s municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving municipal plans and local permitting through education and consultations, bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing statutory requirements for flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential for smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map on the final page of the report. Highlights include:

- With assistance from LCPC, Cambridge and Jeffersonville continue to implement major aspects of the “Jeffersonville Flood Mitigation Master Plan” developed with support from State and Federal grants. The mitigation measures are funded through a mix of Federal (HMGP, CDBG,) and State (ERP) funds, and, once implemented, will reduce flood levels in the Village core by up to 1.5 feet. Had such measures been in place during the flood of 2011, evacuation of the Village’s Senior Housing would not have been needed.
- LCPC oversaw installation of a large flood bypass culvert under Route 15 that will enable floodwaters to flow more efficiently out of the Village of Jeffersonville.
- With assistance from LCPC, the Village of Jeffersonville updated the Village’s Flood Hazard Bylaws to reflect recommendations from the Lamoille Flood Modeling Study. LCPC is also working with the Village to develop a long-term Management Plan for the former Bell Gates Lumber Mill, which was purchased as part of the Village’s flood mitigation efforts.
- LCPC obtained a USDA Rural Business Development Grant to develop strategies to advance redevelopment at two former industrial sites in Johnson. The sites are the former Manchester Lumber Mill and the former talc mill processing plant. The sites are located close to the Village center, have access to municipal infrastructure and are adjacent to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.
• With LCPC’s assistance, the Town of Waterville and the Village of Jeffersonville revised and adopted their municipal plans.
• In response to concerns raised several years ago at Waterville’s Town Meeting, LCPC also completed pedestrian counts in front of the Town Hall during town meeting. These counts will be used to inform future decisions about improving pedestrian safety for pedestrians accessing the Town Hall.
• The LCPC provided ongoing assistance to Belvidere for transportation project planning and management including project management services for replacement of the culvert on Bog Road as well as project management services for Better Roads and Grant in Aid projects.
• The Commission was active in water quality issues including, implementing water quality projects and programs to protect water resources, ensuring safe water supplies, enhancing recreational opportunities, and addressing known sources of pollution. Staff provided Vermont Clean Water Fund Outreach and assisted in the development of the Winooski River Tactical Basin Plan.
• LCPC provided help identifying appropriate funding sources, defining project scope, and writing applications for numerous municipalities which, among other grants, resulted in municipal planning grants for Jeffersonville, Cambridge, and Waterville.
• The Commission provided application development and mapping services to assist Elmore and Wolcott in establishing Village Center Designation.

REGIONAL PLANNING
RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors. The Lamoille County Regional Plan was adopted in 2015. LCPC has updated their Act 250 review process, making the process more transparent, understandable and accessible to both developers and municipalities. The Commission has engaged in extensive outreach to increase regional understanding of the Commission’s role in the Act 250 process. In 2019, LCPC reviewed one major Act 250 application and five Section 248 applications.

BROWNFIELDS
Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

The LCPC previously received a total of $400,000 in Assessment Grant Funds from the US EPA ($200,000 for hazardous sites and $200,000 for petroleum sites). In fiscal year 2019, the LCPC’s brownfields Grant Funds advanced environmental assessments at four sites in Jeffersonville, Johnson and Cambridge. Two that were previously assessed through LCPC’s program were successfully remediated and returned to productive use. This includes the new Trailhead for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail located on Depot Street in the Village of Hyde Park and the Bell Gates Parcel in Jeffersonville. Another site, a former Auto Repair Garage in Cambridge, was found to have no contamination exceeding regulatory limits, increasing the salability for the owners. In addition to the assessments in Lamoille County, LCPC worked with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission and the Northeast Vermont Development Corporation to provide funding for property assessments in Montpelier, St. Johnsbury and Albany.
ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

In Fiscal Year 2019, LCPC hired Purpose Energy, Inc. to study the feasibility of locating a regional anaerobic digester in Lamoille County. The study developed three solutions: 1) build a smaller digester to serve breweries and sugar makers in Morristown, 2) build a larger regional digester to serve businesses in the broader Lamoille region, or 3) truck all by-product waste to a large nearby digester currently being built in St. Albans. The regional digester would generate up to 264 kW of renewable energy. USDA Rural Development’s Rural Business Development Grant program and Lamoille Economic Development Corporation provided funding for the study.

Lack of critical infrastructure such as water, wastewater, and broadband, impedes economic development in much of rural Vermont. LCPC continues to work with municipalities to identify new funding sources for this infrastructure, and to seek creative means to maximize use of existing but limited capacity, such as encouraging mixed use development, relaxed setbacks and frontage standards so that more users can be accommodated within existing service areas, and flexible parking standards. In early 2019, LCPC began assisting Wolcott in a DEC sponsored program funded by the Northern Borders Regional Commission to explore and evaluate small scale wastewater solutions for Wolcott Village. LCPC is also providing planning and grant writing assistance to the Village of Jeffersonville in its efforts to secure an additional water source for the Village Water System.

LCPC reached an agreement with the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation so that the Executive Directors of each organization serve ex officio on the other’s board. This level of coordination allows for improved communication, development and community outreach.

In 2019, the Executive Director of LCPC, Tasha Wallis, served as Co-Chair of the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD). The NVEDD completed work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and is poised to further contribute to economic development throughout the Lamoille County region.

The Commission, along with members of the Smugglers Notch Partnership, completed another successful summer of operations at the Barnes Camp Visitor Center. The renovated Barnes Camp at the base of the Notch on the Stowe side, has become a popular spot for tourists exploring the area.

In the fall of 2017, LCPC celebrated with partners the grand opening of the Boardwalk behind Barnes Camp. The completion of this project marks the first universally accessible segment of the Long Trail. Finally, LCPC facilitated a series of beautifully designed interpretive panels and timber framed kiosks in Smugglers Notch State Park. These improved visitor facilities and amenities will strengthen Lamoille County’s tourism and recreation economy.
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through a contract with Vermont Agency of Transportation, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

In this reporting period, the Lamoille County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met nine times, with an average member participation rate of 37.5%. Four outcomes of this year’s TAC activities include:

1. With the help of a guest lawyer, TAC provided a forum for municipalities to discuss legal and right-of-way issues in relation to the Municipal Roads General Permit.
2. TAC meetings acted as forums for public input on three planning efforts: Vermont Long Range Transportation Plan; Morrisville-Stowe State Airport Master Plan; and Green Mountain Transit “Next Gen” comprehensive service and planning study.
3. In addition to engaging in the annual State Project Prioritization Process, TAC was twice provided with a preview of upcoming changes to that process.
4. TAC meetings twice served as a forum of delivering information from State agencies to municipal partners, specifically the VTrans Town Road & Bridge Standards Template and the ANR 3-acre Rule.

The Lamoille County Road Foremen Network has met twice during this reporting period (July 28 and March 29). This group has been very important in communicating across towns throughout the region and heightening awareness of regional planning, road networks and water quality issues.

Other Outreach and Municipal assistance included the two road foremen network meetings, thirty-nine meetings and coordination activities with public transit providers (Green Mountain Transit and Rural Community Transportation), nine public coordination and information meetings, forty-six planning and coordination meetings with various State Agencies and other Partners, and forty-seven meetings and discussions with municipalities to provide coordination and technical assistance on specific transportation issues. LCPC’s Transportation Planner attended a Federal Highway Administration conference in Albany, New York, as part of a small contingency of VTrans and Chittenden County RPC staff representing Vermont.

LCPC Transportation Planner facilitated the Green Mountain Byway Committee in partnership with Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). This grassroots committee recently completed an update to the current Byway Plan and added seven new municipalities (three towns with 4 villages) to the Byway; the expanded Byway is now a 71-mile loop from Waterbury to Stowe, Morristown, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Cambridge, including the Smugglers’ Notch Scenic Highway which takes you back to Stowe.
LCPC staff continues to work with the Smugglers’ Notch Partnership. The Boardwalk at Barnes Camp continues to be a major attraction for locals and visitors to the Notch. LCPC successfully obtained a Northern Borders Regional Commission grant for parking and stormwater improvements for VT108 within Smugglers’ Notch State Park. LCPC also worked with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and Vermont Department of Forests Parks and Recreation to identify the most effective ways to mitigate flood and erosion threats to Route 108 and Park infrastructure, and worked with the VTrans Operations District to submit a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Application to enlarge several culverts under Route 108.

The LCPC conducted or completed road erosion inventories in Elmore, Cambridge, and Johnson, and began preparing for three additional inventories.

LCPC’s Transportation Planner facilitated three elderly & disabled public transit meetings in partnership with Northeast Vermont Development Association, and regularly participates as a voting member to Rural Community Transportation and Green Mountain Transit Boards and sub-committees.

Data collection activities by the LCPC for Vermont Agency of Transportation included at least 40 activities in all towns across the region, including but not limited to bridge/culvert inventories, traffic counts, bike/ped counts, and park-n-ride counts.

The TPI workplan provides several task categories which support municipal planning and technical assistance, and approximately 54% of LCPC’s total TPI budget supports municipal technical assistance. Example projects that fall under municipal technical assistance are:

- **Water Quality**: provided coordination with ANR and facilitated group and individual discussions with municipal staff, boards, and other partners in all 10 towns.
- **Road Erosion Inventories (REI)**: continued providing this service for towns to comply with the Municipal Roads General Permit; continued coordination and software development input with other RPC staff and ANR; combined other funds with TPI budget to optimize resources and outcomes.
- **Planning Studies**: participated in coordination and planning between the Town of Eden, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and VT Agency of Natural Resources regarding the use of court settlement funds from the local asbestos mine for projects with both transportation infrastructure and environmental benefits; facilitated and funded a stream-wetland-floodplain analysis via the Clean Water Block Grant program for a VT Fish & Wildlife Department property located in Wolcott, and prepared for implementation of recommendations from that plan; prepared for implementation of parking and stormwater improvements for Smugglers’ Notch State Park area in partnership with Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and Vermont Agency of Transportation; participated in the “Better Connections” Hyde Park planning study which combines transportation planning and economic development planning; participated in the Green Mountain Transit Comprehensive Planning Study (a.k.a. “Next-Gen” study) and facilitated public input about proposed service changes; participated in the Technical Advisory Committee for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Floodplain Access Study with Vermont Agency of Transportation, University of Vermont and Vermont Agency of Natural Resources;
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State’s four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- The Town of Cambridge utilized the Lamoille River Main Stem Model to evaluate potential solutions for flooding of Pumpkin Harbor Road, located near the so-called Wrong Way Bridge. This flooding isolates residents on Bartlett Hill on a nearly annual basis. After several years of discussion, the Town of Cambridge voted to elevate the road at Town Meeting.
- LCPC worked with the Johnson Planning Commission and the Agency of Natural Resources to update River Corridor maps in Johnson.
- Staff worked with Wolcott to review flood hazard bylaws.
- Prepared a DEC Block Grant Application to alleviate flood and ice jam damage in Wolcott.
- Nine of 10 municipalities in the region currently have a hazard mitigation plan either adopted or under review. Several local hazard mitigation plans in the region expire in 2020 and in FY 19, LCPC began updating the local hazard mitigation plans for Cambridge, Jeffersonville, Wolcott and Hyde Park.
- Ten of 10 (100%) of municipalities in the region currently have an updated local emergency management plan (LEMP).
- The LCPC continued to provide administrative and technical assistance to LEPC#11 (Local Emergency Planning Committee) to host trainings and emergency preparedness discussions. In FY 19, LEPC held presentations on the VEM RACES Radio Program as well as the American Red Cross Supportive Communities Initiative. Additionally, LCPC assisted with administrative work on Tier II reports, worked on the Regional Hazardous Materials Response Plan, and preparation of two Hazchem grant applications.
- LCPC in conjunction with VEM hosted Emergency Management trainings including an Emergency Management Director (EMD) training.
- Aided with Home Elevation assistance and Wolcott Flood Model Planning.
- Assisted the Town of Belvidere with administration and project development of the Bog Road culvert replacement mitigation project.
- Coordinated Smugglers’ Notch Drainage Study to identify alternatives to mitigate flood and erosion damage to Route 108. Based on this analysis, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation completed an immediate mitigation strategy that appears to have successfully reduced flooding and erosion over winter 2018 and spring 2019. LCPC also worked with the VTrans Operations District to submit a HMGP application to FEMA to enlarge several culverts under Route 108. The alternatives analysis demonstrated that these would be cost-effective long-term strategies to protect Route 108.
- Updated E-911 map for the Town of Waterville. Participated in three local liaison activations to assess storm damages in response to State requests.
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES
In addition to enhancing LCPC’s work, our GIS specialists provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Developed Road Erosion Inventory (REI) applications to collect REI information and employed the application in data collection for the towns of Belvidere, Eden, Elmore, and Johnson. Hosted a training on the use of the State Municipal Roads General Permit Road Erosion Inventory Application and employed its use in the County.
- Updated E-911 map for the Town of Waterville.
- Updated parcel map for the Town of Belvidere.
- Hosted a workshop on the Vermont Statewide Parcel Mapping Project.
- Updated Regional Energy Plan maps to reflect all significant regional ridgelines.
- Developed maps for the following:
  - Wind, solar, Hydro power and biomass energy potential maps for the Towns of Johnson and Waterville
  - Town plan map updates for the municipalities of Waterville, Cambridge, Jeffersonville, Elmore and Wolcott
  - Flood hazard maps for towns throughout the region
  - Village Center Designation maps for Elmore and North Wolcott
  - Belvidere culvert inventory map updates
  - Updated Johnson River Corridor mapping
  - Zoning/subdivision map updates for the Town of Elmore
  - Cambridge Trails map updates
  - Cambridge Leased Lands

ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT
A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

In FY 2019, the Department of Public Service certified the Lamoille County Regional Plan for compliance with State energy goals. Additionally, LCPC received two municipal requests for determination of energy compliance and issued the Certificates of Energy Compliance to Stowe and Elmore.

WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT
The Lamoille County Planning Commission works with the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to assist with completion of the EPA required Tactical Basin Plans. The LCPC works closely with ANR and municipalities to assess and implement water quality projects. The LCPC also works with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- As part of the Clean Water Initiative, LCPC conducted outreach on updates to water quality standards, river corridor planning, storm water management, and flood resiliency. The LCPC has
engaged with ANR regarding changes to River Corridor policies and related statewide incentive programs. The LCPC has also conducted outreach and hosted presentations on the new 3 Acre Rule for stormwater management.

- LCPC assisted the Town of Cambridge with grants and project management for the implementation of the Cambridge Elementary School Stormwater Project. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the project on May 13th, 2019. This system, installed in the summer of 2018, will capture 90% of runoff from impervious surfaces on school grounds, which will improve water quality in the Brewster River.

- Assisted the Town of Cambridge in securing an Ecosystem Restoration Grant to develop a Stormwater Master Plan for Jeffersonville and Cambridge Village. The study will focus on preliminary design planning for stormwater runoff hot spots identified by the community.

- Expanded LCPC’s hydrological model to further evaluate flood mitigation options in Wolcott and Johnson.

- Assisted Vermont Emergency Management and ANR in an application to the US Army Corps of Engineers to evaluate strategies to reduce ice jamming in Johnson Village.

- Provided outreach and field verification assistance regarding River Corridors in the Towns of Wolcott and Johnson.

- Provided project development and land owner outreach for floodplain restoration projects in the Town of Cambridge and Jeffersonville Village.

- Secured funds from the Clean Water Block Grant program for project development and land owner outreach for a floodplain restoration project in Wolcott. This project is in partnership with Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy to provide improved water quality, reduced flooding and ice jam damages, and safe passage for wildlife under a state highway bridge.

- Provided assistance to Eden, Johnson, and Waterville in applying for grants from the Better Roads Program to conduct road erosion inventories in accordance with requirements of the Municipal Roads General Permit. LCPC conducted or completed inventories for Cambridge, Belvidere, and Elmore in Fiscal Year 2019, and began preparing to conduct inventories in Wolcott, Johnson, Waterville, and Eden.

- Worked with Village of Jeffersonville on updating flood hazard regulations to mirror recommendations from the Lamoille River Flood Modeling Study.

- Assisted with outreach and mapping updates for the Town of Johnson to explore adopting River Corridor bylaws.

**SPECIAL PROJECTS**

The Lamoille County Planning Commission specializes in taking the planning process from concept through to implementation and construction. In Cambridge and Jeffersonville, ongoing severe flooding was addressed through analysis and then construction of a new bridge in Jeffersonville and a new culvert under Route 15 in the village of Jeffersonville. Modeling the Lamoille River was a key element from planning to implementation.

In Smugglers’ Notch, construction of a new boardwalk was completed after years of collaborative planning with many partners.
Creation of a Model of the Entire Main Stem of the Lamoille River Through Lamoille County

Between 2015 and 2017, LCPC in partnership with the Town and Village of Cambridge, Village of Jeffersonville, Town and Village of Johnson, and Town of Wolcott, received a grant from the High Meadows Fund. A major component of this grant is creation of a model of the entire main stem of the Lamoille River through Lamoille County. The model is designed to show floodwater levels during various-sized storm events. The model can also show the impacts of structures, such as roads and bridges, on upstream and downstream flood levels. A similar model developed several years ago in Jeffersonville identified alternatives with the potential to reduce flood levels by more than a foot-and-a-half in the Village. While this may not sound like a significant decrease, had these mitigation measures been in place, the 30 plus residents of the Jeffersonville Senior Housing would not have needed to evacuate their homes during the spring 2011 floods.

The model continues to be used to test possible alternatives to reduce flooding throughout Lamoille County. The Town of Cambridge used the model to evaluate how high Pumpkin Harbor could be elevated without displacing floodwaters downstream into Cambridge Village. The US Army Corps of Engineers will utilize the model as part of the ice jam analysis they will be completing in the Village of Johnson. Through its Brownfields Program, LCPC will also be further refining the model to be used as a tool for critical redevelop sites in Johnson Village. The model is also being expanded by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife to evaluate floodplain restoration options on Department owned land in the Town of Wolcott. The model is a public document available to any community. Every time the model is used for a community project, additional data is added, making it more accurate and valuable for the Region.

Jeffersonville Route 15 Flood Bypass Culvert
LCPC worked with the Village of Jeffersonville and Vermont Agency of Transportation to install a large flood bypass culvert under Route 15. Prior to the installation of the culvert, the Route 15 embankment prevented floodwaters from the Brewster from flowing out of the Village. The culvert was installed over a single weekend in November 2018. As with other mitigation projects in Jeffersonville, LCPC served as the project manager for the culvert.

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING
The Commission continually updates internal financial processes and procedures to ensure compliance with all federal, state and grant requirements. The LCPC recently updated both the Personnel and Procurement Policies to be in conformance with all State and Federal statutory changes. The LCPC is audited on an annual basis. The Organization received a clean audit for 2018, conducted a fraud risk assessment and reviews all policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

The Commission continued to actively engage in Board recruitment resulting in more board seats being filled from a diversity of municipalities and a newly energized and engaged board. The Commission also updated the new Board Member Handbook and assisted in training new Board members.

The LCPC receives most of its funding through grants, and through performance-based contracts with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding.

Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50
percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant & Northern Vermont Economic Development District).

For the 2019 fiscal year, the LCPC’s total projected revenue of approximately $980,000 dollars was derived from a mix of regional project grant funding, municipal project grant funding, EPA brownfields funding, state performance contract funding, non-profit organization grants and a small amount from town assessments.

Virtually all of the LCPC’s revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures. The commission’s performance contract with the state is also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable us to work with municipalities on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, water quality, energy, and natural resources.

‘AT WORK’ MAP
The map depicting the range of services provided by the LCPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.