REGIONAL PRIORITY PROJECT PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

PROJECT INFORMATION FORM

IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS REQUIRED FOR ANY RESPONSE OR YOU WANT TO SUBMIT ADDITION DOCUMENTS , CLEARLY IDENTIFY THE DOCUMENTS WITH THE PROJECT NAME AND EMAIL THEM TO FKENNEY@ADDISONCOUNTYEDC.ORG.

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PROJECT NAME:

Vergennes Community Pavilion Project

TYPE OF PROJECT:

- [x] Infrastructure:
  - [ ] Water
  - [ ] Wastewater
  - [ ] Broadband
  - [ ] Transportation
  - [x] Public Facility
  - [ ] Other: Recreation and community use
- [ ] General Development:
  - [ ] Industrial
  - [ ] Commercial
  - [ ] Residential
  - [ ] Mixed
- [ ] Site/Facility Development for Specific Business
- [ ] Workforce Development
- [ ] Business Development
- [ ] Other:

PROJECT SPONSOR:

Organization Name	City of Vergennes
Organization Mailing Address	120 Main St. PO Box 35
Organization Email	manager@vergennes.org
Organization Phone	(802) 877-2841

Contact info for the person submitting project information:

Name	Robyn Newton
Title	Parks & Recreation Committee Member
Mailing Address	180 South Maple St Vergennes, VT 05491
Email	rnewton@anwsd.org
Phone	(802) 233-5754

PROJECT PRINCIPAL(S) (if different than above):

Person 1:

Name	
Title	
Organization	
Mailing Address	
Email	
Phone	

Person 2:

Name	
Title	
Organization	
Mailing Address	
Email	
Phone	

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (5000 Characters):

The City of Vergennes Parks & Recreation Committee, in collaboration with the Vergennes Partnership, is preparing to launch Phase II of the Vergennes Community Pavilion project at Veterans Memorial Park. With anticipated construction in summer 2024, this $730,000 capital investment in the City's outdoor recreation infrastructure will complete the work that began in 2020 under Phase I, with the construction of a new engineered basketball court and ice rink (completed in 2021). Since the first skaters took to the ice last winter, nearly 300 Vergennes Union Elementary children, and hundreds more community members have benefited from a safe, accessible place for hockey games, summer concerts, pickleball, and more. To maximize the benefits of this local recreational hub, the Committee will build a pavilion over the court/ rink, increasing the space's safety and year-round use. The project was initiated in response to Vergennes residents' priortiization of recreation spaces for local development and community-building resources.

The Vergennes Community Pavilion will provide sheltered space for three basketball courts, three pickle ball courts, and a universally accessible shuffleboard court. During the winter months, the court surface is transformed into a 160' x 70' ice skating rink. This multipurpose space will be a community resource with uses far beyond basketball and ice skating. The flexible design will provide a venue for picnics, events, performances, birthday parties, educational workshops, exercise classes, and an unlimited range of community enrichment and engagement activities, most of which will be open to the public at no cost.

The metal pavilion structure was selected to accommodate the large surface of the court/rink, using materials and construction that are both less expensive and have lower long-term maintenance than a similar wooden structure. The pavilion will provide shelter from sun and inclement weather, enabling residents to enjoy fun and physical activity without the limitations of weather conditions. Last winter, more than 100 volunteer hours were spent shoveling and snow blowing the new ice rink to maintain the ice for skaters and hockey players. With a roof to protect the ice rink in the winter, skaters will have more days with optimal conditions, and the whole surface will be protected, extending its usability for decades. Lighting throughout the space will allow for extended evening recreational activities. All necessary permits and permissions are in place.

PROJECT LOCATION (3000 characters):

Provide the physical location of the project and/or the area to be served by the project

The Vergennes Community Pavilion will be located at Veterans Memorial Park, a 2.7 acre municipal park that serves as a central hub for recreational activities, including the Sam Fishman Swimming Pool, two tennis and pickleball courts, a skatepark, the Outdoor Classroom Trail System, sports fields, and an 18-hole disc golf course. The pavilion site is centrally located within the Vergennes downtown, and owned by the City of Vergennes. The site is adjacent to Vergennes Union Elementary School on East Street, and is in daily use by teachers and students for physical education and other school activities. The opportunity to use the court/rink for physical education classes ensures frequent use, with ice skating ranking high on the list of students' favorite winter activities. The park is also enjoyed by residents from neighboring towns including Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND BENEFITS (3000 Characters):

Describe the purpose and benefits to the region of the project. Describe if/how the project builds capacity within the region for improved regional development/economic development/ community development, including: advancing workforce development; expanding entrepreneurship efforts; supporting or enhancing existing business clusters, or other economic impacts within the region.

The Vergennes Community Pavilion Project will benefit community and economic development in the city and region, with lasting economic and social value for nearby communities. Within the City of Vergennes, there are no recreational spaces that are suitable for year-round use outside of school gymnasiums, leaving a gap for the community. A citywide survey conducted in 2015 revealed that recreational facilities were a priority for Vergennes residents. Prior to 2020, the existing Veterans Memorial Park basketball court/skating rink was in disrepair. The surface was unlevel and unsafe, rendering it unsuitable for quality recreational programs and activities.

The pavilion project responds to these issues, and will benefit people of all ages and backgrounds:

Ø Outdoor recreation is an engine of community vitality. Vibrant year-round outdoor recreation opportunities are directly connected to the economic health of downtown businesses including restaurants, grocery stores, and retailers. The Vergennes Community Pavilion's location is only a short walk from nearby shops, making it convenient to play, eat, and shop locally. For small communities like Vergennes, providing community spaces that meet residents' needs translates to stable property values, and increases the patronage at local businesses. By adding a pavilion to the basketball court/ ice rink, the project will extend the useable season by providing a shelter for the recreational area, and will extend the hours of the day during which the facility can be used with lighting for evening use.

Ø Recreational investments have a ripple effect for kids, families, and communities. The visible signs of growth and economic vitality in Vergennes over the last two decades have given the city positive momentum toward a hopeful future. According to current census data, about half of Vergennes residents have a low or moderate income (48.7%), and roughly one in three Vergennes Union Elementary School students are eligible to receive free or reduced cost lunches based on their family income. Access and equity are at the heart of the pavilion project, which will provide a place for people to gather, strengthening the bonds of community and sense of belonging. Research has shown that recreational spaces benefit communities by enhancing quality of life, and reducing juvenile justice involvement from crime and vandalism.

Ø Addison County residents say they want more ways to " strengthen community connections " including through more free healthy lifestyle events such as guided hikes, group bike rides, community dinners, gardening education, and outdoor yoga. The pavilion will be universally accessible, and aligns with these recommendations by supporting activities such as ice skating and pickleball that are enjoyed by people at every stage of life. Likewise, the pavilion will serve as a place for community gatherings and events, bringing residents together to build pride in their community.

PROJECT TIMELINE, MILESTONES, AND STATUS (3000 Characters):

Describe the project timeline, the current status of the project, and impediments to proceeding. Include factors such as site control, engineering and design, financing/funding identification and commitment, and permitting. Clearly identify where the project is in the timeline and what work remains.

The project has been designed to be carried out in two distinct phases. Phase I was completed in 2021, and included the construction of the basketball court and ice rink surface. In 2020 and 2021, the Committee completed a $300,000 capital campaign to support this phase. With a two-to-one match challenge grant of $200,000 from a local philanthropic foundation, the project raised an additional $105,000 from individual donors, businesses, and community events in only three months. Notably, no state or federal funding was sought to support this phase of the project --100% of funds came from local support. The construction of the new level, insulated, reinforced concrete "Alaskan Slab" surface was completed in 2021. More than a traditional outdoor basketball court or other paved surface, this design was selected for its stability from heaving from freezing and thawing; multi-use opportunities; and safety and durability. The surface was engineered to support the proposed pavilion structure.

Following on the successful completion of Phase I, community fundraising for the second phase of the project has continued. Approximately $100,000 has been raised to-date, including $50,000 in funds committed by the City of Vergennes. The Vergennes Parks & Recreation committee has developed a fundraising strategy, including seeking grants from a variety of state agencies, businesses, and philanthropic sources. Fundraising events including community concerts, an annual Fun Run, raffles, and possible golf and pickle ball tournaments provide opportunities for the whole community to participate in the project at a variety of donor levels. With fiscal sponsorship by the Vergennes Partnership, the project has the ability to receive charitable gifts and grants.

The City of Vergennes will apply to the Agency of Natural Resources VOREC program this year for funds to support the construction project.

The construction timeline is flexible, with a goal to be completed in the next year. All necessary permits have been obtained and the committee is eager to begin construction as soon as the majority of funding is in place.

PROJECT PRINCIPAL EXPERIENCE/PARTNERSHIPS (3000 Characters):

Describe project principal(s) experience, ability to complete the project, and describe any projects partnership(s) and how the partnership(s) will help ensure success.

The Vergennes Community Pavilion project is being carried out by the City of Vergennes Parks & Recreation Committee, which has a mission is to provide quality recreational facilities, parks, and programs which are safe, diverse, affordable, accessible, and enriching to the community. Committee members are volunteers who are appointed by and report to the city council. The Committee advises the City Council and city manager on the operations and maintenance of recreational programs, facilities, and parks, including by determining recreational needs and submitting recommendations for goals, programs, budgets, and facilities. In 2022, Vergennes hired a full-time recreation manager, demonstrating a long-term commitment to building and sustaining high-quality programs and facilities.

The Parks & Recreation Committee has recently completed several high priority projects to enhance recreational facilities, in accordance with the municipal plan. In addition to completing Phase I of the Community Pavilion project, the committee oversaw two large projects in the last two years:

Vergennes received a Vermont Agency of Natural Resources 2022 Recreational Trails Program grant of $159,000 to build the Connector Trail, connecting community resources and businesses with a pedestrian friendly trail from New Haven Road to Monkton Road. The project included conducting archaeological and wetlands surveys, and construction of a wetland boardwalk. Construction of the new trail was completed last year.

The City received a grant from the Vermont Buildings and General Services Recreational Facilities grant program resurface the skate park (located in Veteran's Memorial Park, adjacent to the Community Pavilion site). The grant program provided half of the $13,000 project cost and the Committee raised half from local events and fundraisers.

Throughout Phase I of the Vergennes Community Pavilion project, the Recreation & Parks Committee, City administrators, and the Vergennes Partnership collaborated on a range of planning, facilities management, financial administration, and community engagement processes that led to the successful completion of the first phase. Members of the Recreation & Parks committee worked closely with contractors to leverage donations and discounts to keep

PROJECT SUPPORT AND REGIONAL NEED (4000 Characters):

Describe how the project is consistent with identified local and regional goals, advances regional needs identified in plans, reports or public forums, and describe the community support and engagement. Include reference and link to the municipal and/or regional plan, report, or forum identified. Also describe how the project leverages regional human, social, financial, cultural, and/or physical capital, and supports, compliments, or enhances existing efforts.

The Vergennes Community Pavilion Project aligns with local and regional planning goals, including the City's Master Plan and Municipal Plan:

- The Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan was adopted in 2016, and establishes three goals, one of which is "Developing the Basin's draw as a recreation destination." The site located just one block outside of the Plan's Central Downtown Business District, ensuring that the project will be mutually beneficial for a variety of economic and community development needs and projects. Beyond the larger recreational goal in the Master Plan, the project fits within plan goal #4, to Stimulate the Local Economy, which includes an infrastructure goal to "Stimulate private investment and activity through public investment in infrastructure and maintenance (i.e., sidewalks, bicycle facilities, wayfinding, parking improvements, etc.)." Among all of the plan's priorities, infrastructure goals were identified as having the highest level of priority, including to support recreational amenities and spaces.
- The Vergennes Municipal Plan 2020-2028 was adopted in 2020 and identifies three goals, including a goal to "Develop and maintain the city as an economic, industrial, and public service center for northern Addison County." Under Section 3.2 of the plan, goals include "Developing and maintaining City facilities and services in accordance with the needs of the community," and "Better utilizing existing spaces for recreation." By enhancing the facilities at Veterans Memorial Park, the project responds to these goals. Under Section 3.3, specific recommendations include to "Maintain, enhance, and expand existing public parks and recreational facilities and activities," "Maintain and improve access to public parks, trails, playgrounds, and other facilities," and "Improve and develop Veteran's Park for year-round use."

These plans were developed through a comprehensive community engagement and assessment conducted in 2014 and affirmed annually through a variety of formal and informal community engagement processes. The success of the Phase I fundraising and construction of the multi-use surface that will serve as the foundation for the pavilion is strong evidence that these plans align with the community's desires for accessible, centrally located, recreational facilities that can serve a variety of community development purposes.

Vergennes Downtown-Basin Master Plan 2016:
https://acrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Vergennes_DowntownBasin_MasterPlan_2016.pdf

Vergennes Municipal Plan 2020-2028: https://cms8.revize.com/revize/vergennes//Vergennes%20Municipal%20Plan%202020-adopted.pdf

As described above, the project is being led by members of the Parks & Recreation Committee in close collaboration with City administrators, the Vergennes Partnership, and the local elementary school. The committee has leveraged resources from numerous community entities, obtained discounts and donations from contractors working on the project, and expects to raise a substantial proportion of the money needed to fund the pavilion construction from private grants, donations, and fundraising events.

PROJECT COST, IDENTIFIED AND COMMITED FUNDS/FINANCING, AND FUNDING GAP:

Provide the total project cost and complete the simple sources and uses chart.

Total Project Cost: $ 730,000

Sources:

Source	Amount
City of Vergennes	$ 50,000
Fundraising events	$ 100,000
State & Private Grants	$ 300,000
Total Sources:	$ 450,000

Uses:

Use	Amount
Construction	$ 549,372
Site Preparation (Install Piers)	$ 45,200
Electrical	$ 50,685
Fire safety permit	$ 6,800
Engineering	$ 2,000
Fit up (Hoops)	$ 12,000
Total Uses:	$ 666,057

Funding Gap: $ 216,057

Note: Uses must exceed sources or there is no funding gap

Budget Narrative (3000 Characters):

Describe the amount of funds/financing that have been identified and include a clear status of the funds (Received, committed, applied for, identified, etc.) including the dates of receipt, commitment, application, expected distribution, etc. Clearly identify any funding gap.

To date, approximately $100,000 has been received for Phase II, including funding allocated by the City of Vergennes and grants and contributions totaling roughly $50,000. All other fundraising is pending and will continue throughout the next several months as dictated by the timing of various grant programs. The committee receive a capacity building grant from a private foundation to work with an experienced fund development consultant to identify potential donors and grant programs, and to support application processes.

The projected $730,000 budget includes a 10% contingency allowance (not reflected in the above estimated budget) as is typical in construction projects. The structure construction estimate was updated by the builder in October 2023.

The funding gap represents the proportion of the project costs that the Committee expects to seek from state or federal funding sources such as the Northern Borders Regional Commission, VOREC, Vermont Buildings and General Services Recreational Facilities program, and other programs that can be used to support community recreation and capital improvement projects. To date, the Committee has met with program administrators at the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities grant and loan program, the Vermont Community Foundation, and a variety of other funding programs.

JOB CREATION (4000 Characters):

Provide the number of full-time jobs to be created and/or retained by the project, a description of the benefits package to be offered to the majority of the new/retained jobs, and the average wage of the jobs to be created/retained.

Because the proposed project represents a one-time capital construction project and key city administration and facilities staff are in place, no new jobs are anticipated to result from the project.

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SUBMIT PROJECT