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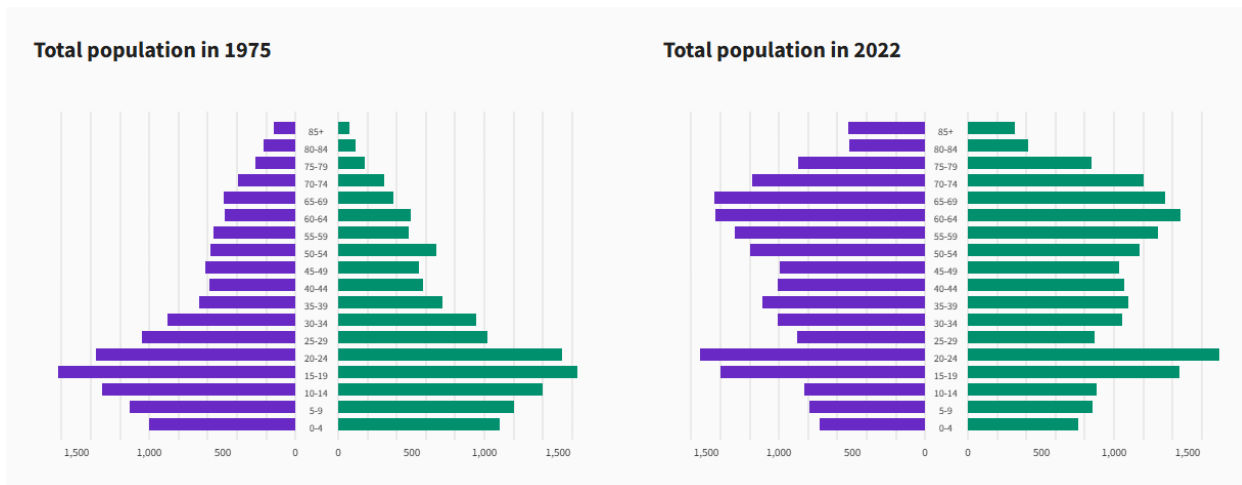
Existing Conditions

Demographics & Workforce

Addison County has a population of 37,497, making up about 5.8 percent of Vermont's total population.¹ The region's population density remains low at 48.9 people per square mile in 2023, compared to Vermont's overall population density of 70.2 people per square mile. Growth in Addison County has stagnated since the turn of the century. This is best demonstrated by the population increase of approximately 10,000 people from 1975 to 2000 in contrast to the barely 2,000 person increase from 2000 to 2025.

In addition, the demographics of this population have shifted significantly. In just the decade between 2013 and 2023, the largest age group switched from 45- to 54-year-olds to 55- to 64-year-olds, with the average age increasing from 42.3 to 44, an upward trend that has persisted for decades and is likely to continue.²

Figure 1³



The racial make-up of the region has also shifted in recent years. While the majority group has remained “white monoracial,” this population has actually decreased by 3.41 percent since

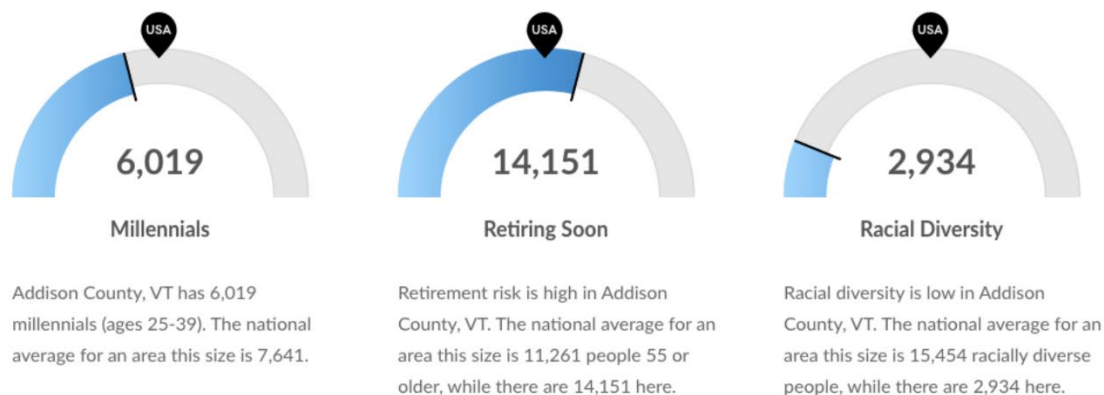
¹ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Age and Sex," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0101*, accessed on August 14, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S0101?q=Population&g=050XX00US50001>.

² Ibid.

³ “Addison County, VT Population by Year, Race, & More.” *USAFacts*, 3 Oct. 2025, usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/vermont/county/addison-county/.

2013. All other racial groups increased during this period leading to a doubling of the POC community. Now, people of color make up 12.02 percent of the population compared to 6.25 percent in 2013.⁴ While racial diversity has increased substantially, Addison County's racial demographics remain significantly more homogenous than the nation as a whole as demonstrated by Figure 2.

Figure 2⁵



Education

Educational attainment in Addison County, and Vermont generally, exceed the rest of the country, especially when comparing high school graduation rates for the adult population over 25, which stands at 89.8 percent in the US, 94.5 percent in Vermont, and 95.1 percent in Addison County.⁶ The county tends to perform at similar rates to the rest of Vermont in higher education attainment with 24.3 percent of adults in both Addison County and statewide holding

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, "HISPANIC OR LATINO, AND NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO BY RACE," *Decennial Census, DEC Demographic and Housing Characteristics, Table P9*, accessed on August 14, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDHC2020.P9?q=race&g=050XX00US50001>.

⁵ Targeted Demographics of Addison County, 2024. Lightcast, Economy Overview: Addison County, 2024, as cited in, Spett, Emma. Rep. *Third Annual Data Services Report to the RDCs Addison County*. Burlington, VT: UVM Office of Engagement, 2024.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Educational Attainment," *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501*, accessed on August 14, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S1501?q=S1501:+Educational+Attainment>.

bachelor's degrees and 17.5 percent of Addison County adults holding master's degrees compared to 17.4 percent in Vermont.⁷

As Vermont's population stagnates, K-12 class sizes have shrunk, leading several elementary schools to shut down completely. Education spending in Vermont is uniquely funded by property taxes, which drives inflation in education costs as class sizes shrink and schools close. In Addison County, Addison Central School closed in 2022 followed more recently by Ripton Elementary School in 2025. Closure of Ferrisburgh Central School was also considered, but voters ultimately decided to keep it running in 2019. These retired school buildings are now being repurposed into community centers as planning efforts commence to evaluate their highest and best uses for the future. These large facilities present considerable challenges to the communities who take ownership of them and become responsible for their future use and potential redevelopment. With an aging population, and lowering birth rates, Vermont and our region will continue to grapple with this issue in the coming years.

Income

The median household income (MHI) of Addison County was \$88,478 in 2023 which was \$7,267 higher than the Vermont MHI and \$10,759 higher than the US MHI. However, mean income in Addison County was \$107,877, only \$1,946 higher than Vermont and \$1,283 less than the US mean.⁸ Since higher mean income, as compared to median income, is generally driven by a few very wealthy individuals, the fact that Addison County's median and mean incomes are relatively close, speaks favorably on the distribution of wage rates in the Region.

Pay Gaps

In Addison County, the "female median income" was 20.40 percent less than the "male median income" in the 2023 Census. Although substantial, this difference changed drastically from 2013's 33.49 percent gap. On the other hand, Vermont's gender pay gap went from 24.55 percent in 2013 to 16.38 percent in 2023 – a smaller improvement, but a better outcome. The country's gender pay gap has been far more stubborn: 28.98 percent in 2013 to 27.52 percent in 2023. Addison County has ample room for improvement compared to the rest of the state in

⁷ Economic & Labor Market Information Division, Folena De Geus, Ben Kidder, Richard Willey, Kevin Stapleton, and Mathew Barewicz, Economic & Demographic Profile §. ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE SERIES (2024).

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)." *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1901*, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1901?q=median+income&g=050XX00US50001>. Accessed on 14 Aug 2025.

overcoming gender income inequality, though the county has performed well relative to the nation.⁹

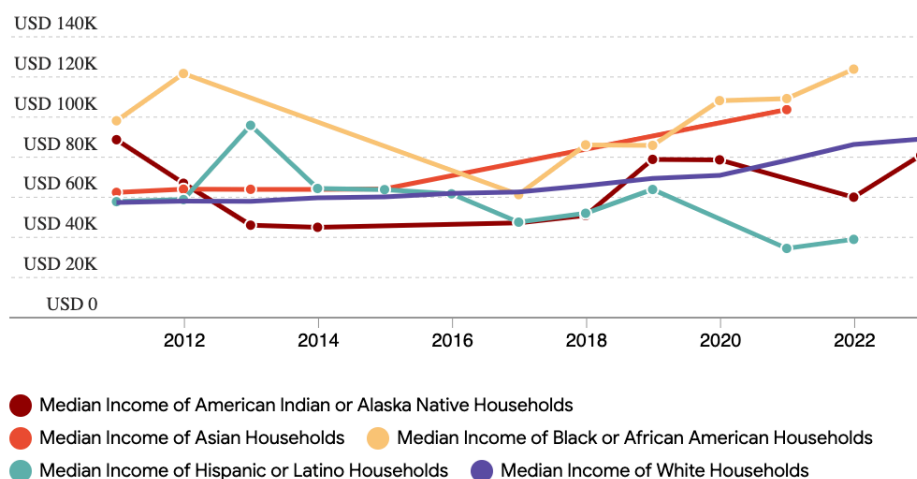
The gender pay gap has many complicating factors. The difference in pay can be attributed to general prejudice, as well as cultural differences. The types of occupations women tend to pursue, and the likelihood of women to demand higher pay or promotion, both affect this gap. It is also important to acknowledge the unpaid labor traditionally performed by women such as housework and childcare which are not accounted for in the pay gap.

Census data for Median Household Income by race is lacking. Due to gaps in data collection and the historically low rates of racial diversity in Addison County, the numbers are likely to be skewed and should be viewed critically. Small sample sizes can experience great changes - as seen in Figure 3 - that do not necessarily reflect the reality of the population. The conclusion that racial pay discrimination does not exist for certain groups should *not* be drawn from this data. A reliable source of racial pay disparity data is not likely to exist at the county level.

Figure 3¹⁰

Median household income by race in Addison County

Source: [census.gov](https://data.census.gov) • [Show metadata](#)



⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) of Workers by Sex and Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings by Selected Characteristics," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2002*, accessed on August 15, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S2002?q=median+income+of+men>.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Median Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1903*, accessed on August 15, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1903?q=median+household+income+by+race&g=050XX00US50001>, as cited in REDS Dashboard

Poverty

The region maintains relatively low rates of poverty, comparatively. At 7.4 percent, Addison County's poverty rate falls below the statewide rate of 9.7 percent and the national rate of 12.5 percent. Census data for racial disparity in poverty is more stable than that of income. While the White, non-hispanic population has a poverty rate slightly below the average at 7 percent, other racial groups are in the double digits: 18.8 percent Black or African American, 10.6 percent Two or More Races, and 25.4 percent Hispanic or Latino.¹¹

It is a similar case when comparing the rate of earners making up to 300 percent of the poverty rate wage threshold: 34.81 percent in Addison County, 37.54 percent in Vermont, and 44.21 percent in the US.¹² This is a measurement widely used to demonstrate financial insecurity and often determines eligibility for federal aid programs. Which explains the correlation with federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipient data: 8.6 percent of Addison County households receive SNAP benefits compared to 10 percent in Vermont and 12.2 percent in the United States.¹³

Vermont has a minimum wage comparable to that of other states at \$14.01. This is well above \$7.73, the poverty wage for two working adults with two children in Addison County, as well as \$7.52, the poverty wage for one working adult with no children in Addison County. However, the living wage for the former group is \$34.75 and \$24.51 for the latter.¹⁴ This is a similar case for the state as a whole. Vermont's cost of living has increased substantially in recent years, though wages have not kept pace leaving many families behind.

Homelessness & Substance Misuse

Vermont has the 5th highest rate of homelessness per capita in the country. In Addison County, 78 people in 59 households were experiencing homelessness during the 2023 Point-In-Time count. While this number is below the 2021 peak of 117, it represents a consistently elevated rate of housing insecurity in the area. Several groups such as sexual & domestic violence

¹¹ United States Census Bureau. (n.d). 2020 Decennial Census- Addison County, Vermont. <https://data.census.gov/all?q=Addison%20County,%20Vermont>

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701*, accessed on August 15, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1701?q=poverty&g=050XX00US50001>.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2201*, accessed on August 15, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S2201?q=poverty&g=050XX00US50001>.

¹⁴ "Living Wage Calculator." Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Addison County, Vermont. Accessed August 14, 2025. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/50001>.

survivors, people of color, veterans, and those struggling with mental illness are more likely to be unhoused.¹⁵

The unhoused population has largely been supported by the State's hotel-motel voucher program, however, this COVID-era program was discontinued for the majority of participants in the 2025 legislative session by Governor Phil Scott. Scott and opponents to the program argue that it does not effectively combat homelessness and has a high cost associated. There are several alternative temporary housing shelters in the region: John Graham Shelter in Vergennes, which has 16 family beds, and 16 adult-only beds; Charter House Coalition in Middlebury, which has 26 beds; Counseling Service of Addison County in Middlebury, which has 9 beds including one family.¹⁶ However, waitlists are often extensive for these facilities.

Substance misuse is both a contributor and a symptom of homelessness. This issue worsened significantly during the COVID pandemic. This not only affects the social well-being of a community, but also the productivity through "turnover and absenteeism, poor school performance, and increased costs related to public assistance and criminal justice."

For more information regarding the housing crisis and the rising unhoused population, see Subchapter Existing Conditions: Infrastructure, section Housing or Chapter 3, Population & Housing.

Disability

15.5 percent of Addison County has a disability. This exceeds both the state level, by 1.2 percent, and the country's level, by 1.9 percent. This number increased by nearly 3 percent during the period 2013 to 2023.¹⁷ This correlates to the region's aging population which potentially explains the changes. Those with a disability are less likely to be in the labor force with a 47.5 percent labor force participation rate, and less likely to be employed with 4.6 percent unemployment rate.¹⁸ These higher rates represent untapped workforce potential

¹⁵ Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont (HHAHV), Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, and Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care. *2025 State of Homelessness in Vermont Report*, July 2025.

¹⁶ West Central Vermont CEDS Strategy Committee. "West Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy." West Central Vermont Economic Development District, February 1, 2023.
<https://www.westcentralvt.org/ceds-final-material>.

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Disability Characteristics," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1810*, accessed on August 15, 2025,
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1810?q=disability&g=050XX00US50001>.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Disability Status by Employment Status for the Population 20 to 64 Years." *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B23024*,
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2023.B23024?q=disability&g=050XX00US50001>. Accessed on 3 Oct 2025.

during a labor shortage. It also indicates a possible misalignment between employers and the disabled population in terms of worker needs.

Health

Health and healthcare significantly impact economic development, as workforce health and healthcare costs shape local economies. In Addison County, health outcomes and factors—measured by the County Health Rankings—are slightly better than Vermont's average and above the national level.¹⁹ For example, Addison County has a high life expectancy at ##, whereas the national average is ##. Nonetheless, challenges remain: 10% of adults recently reported poor physical health for two weeks or more, 15% cited poor mental health, and 33% experience loneliness at least sometimes. Chronic diseases like diabetes, COPD, and cancer are on the rise.²⁰ Issues such as costly childcare, housing shortages, income disparities, and long commutes further affect community health.

Healthcare access is mixed; while Porter Medical Center offers strong services through its affiliation with a larger network, residents face difficulties due to shortages in primary care and psychiatry, long waitlists and high insurance costs, which strain employers, businesses, and families.

The same is true for aging facilities. The recent opening of the updated Vergennes Grand Senior Living facility marked a huge improvement in housing and healthcare, with a total of 88 beds becoming available. Elder care services are becoming increasingly in demand as the population ages. While many people receiving these services are retired, the families that take care of them are of working age. By freeing up their time, and freeing up housing for new Vermonters, the workforce can grow.

Economy

Addison County's Gross Domestic Production (GDP) was \$2,156,287,000 as of 2023, making up 5.04 percent of Vermont's total GDP.²¹ While GDP is a helpful measure in many regards (e.

¹⁹ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2024). Addison, VT. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/vermont/addison?year=2024>

²⁰ "2024 Community Health Needs Assessment." *University of Vermont Health*, Porter Medical Center, 2024, www.uvmhealth.org/locations/porter-medical-center/community-impact.

²¹ "Gross Domestic Product: All Industries in Addison County, VT." FRED, December 4, 2024. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPALL50001>.

economic activity, comparative growth), many critique its limits. Factors like environmental externalities, population health, and home labor are not accounted for within the measurement. There are a number of more recently developed economic growth measures, however, these are typically designed on an international scale.

The region's unemployment rate is among the lowest in the State at 2.2 percent as of June 2025.²² The labor force participation rate was 64.2 percent, 2 percent higher than the country, but 0.7 ²³ lower than the state average.²⁴ The size of the labor force was 20,634 in 2022 which is a decrease from 2011 by just 9 people, demonstrating^{24, 25}

Employment by Supersector

By far, the human services industry, including educational services, and health care and social assistance, employs the most people in Addison County. At 4,375, this supersector makes up 28.44 percent of the region's jobs,²⁶ reflecting three of the four largest employers of the county: Middlebury College, Porter Medical Center, and Counseling Services of Addison County. The largest employer, Collins Aerospace, represents the second largest supersector, manufacturing. Following close behind are retail trade and construction industries.

This has been the trend for the past few decades, with a larger trend up in Health Care and Social Assistance as well as Educational Services. There has also been a slight uptick in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting Industry, however, the number of farms has started to dip. There was a peak in 2012 of 814 farms in the county which, as of 2022, has shrunk to 751.²⁷ The area seems to be facing an overall trend of farm consolidation partially due to the lack of succession plans and declined youth interest in farming.

Other job trends seem to follow the past growth industries. According to one measure of 2024 job listings, Registered Nurses are largely in demand, followed by Social and Human Service

²² "Labor Market Data by County." State of Vermont Department of Labor. Accessed August 15, 2025. <https://labor.vermont.gov/labor-market-information/county-data>.

²³ "Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Accessed August 15, 2025. <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm>.

²⁵ Spett, Emma. Rep. *Third Annual Data Services Report to the RDCs Addison County*. Burlington, VT: UVM Office of Engagement, 2024.

²⁶ De Geus, Kidder, Willey, Stapleton, and Barewicz, Economic & Demographic Profile.

²⁷ Ibid.

Assistants and Retail Salespersons. See Figure 4. This is largely corroborated by another measure from 2019-2024 that indicates similar skill demand growth. See Figure 5.

Figure 4²⁸

Occupations		Active Job Ads
SOC	Occupation	
29-1141.00	Registered Nurses	541
21-1093.00	Social and Human Service Assistants	166
41-2031.00	Retail Salespersons	159
41-1011.00	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	156
49-9071.00	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	143
11-9111.00	Medical and Health Services Managers	132
37-2011.00	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	117
31-1122.00	Personal Care Aides	110
51-9199.00	Production Workers, All Other	100
29-2061.00	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	98

Figure 5²⁹

Skills	Postings	% of Total Postings	Profiles	% of Total Profiles	Projected Skill Growth	Skill Growth Relative to Market
Merchandising	1,052	7%	111	1%	+15.0%	Growing
Nursing	789	5%	74	1%	+20.1%	Rapidly Growing
Cash Register	620	4%	38	0%	+21.4%	Rapidly Growing
Auditing	606	4%	135	2%	+21.8%	Rapidly Growing
Housekeeping	548	4%	17	0%	+13.3%	Growing
Food Safety And Sanitation	526	4%	29	0%	+11.7%	Growing
Inventory Management	476	3%	151	2%	+12.6%	Growing
Finance	467	3%	190	2%	+27.3%	Rapidly Growing
Food Services	465	3%	61	1%	+16.4%	Growing
Effective Communication	431	3%	15	0%	0.0%	

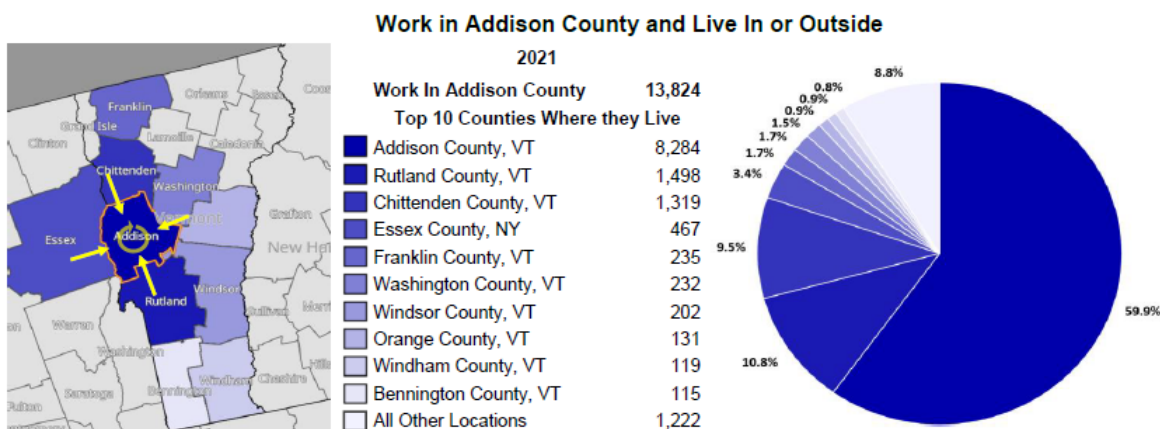
Commuting Patterns

²⁸ Figure 3. Top Job Postings between May 2023-May2024 in Addison County, VT. Retrieved from Chmura's JobsEQ Real Time Intelligence Job Posting Analytics, 2024, as cited in, Spett, Emma. Rep. *Third Annual Data Services Report to the RDCs Addison County*. Burlington, VT: UVM Office of Engagement, 2024.

²⁹ Figure 6. Job Posting Analytics for Top In Demand Skills in Addison County, VT, May 2019-2024. Retrieved from Lightcast, 2024, as cited in, Spett, Emma. Rep. *Third Annual Data Services Report to the RDCs Addison County*. Burlington, VT: UVM Office of Engagement, 2024.

About half of Addison County's 16,564 workers commute outside of the county. 5,540 workers travel into the region totaling 13,824.³⁰ Of these incoming commuters, most come from Rutland County and Chittenden County then Essex County, New York. While this high rate of county cross pollination boasts the interconnectivity of Vermont, it can be harmful to workers and employers. Long commutes are linked with worse physical and mental health, including higher rates of obesity, stress, and depression.³¹ Employers also suffer from high turnover and employee dissatisfaction, and the public is affected by more air pollution, congestion, and climate change.

Figure 6³²



Tax Receipts

Between 2010 and 2020, gross sales tax receipts in Addison County grew by 26 percent. More recently, between 2020 and 2023 gross sales tax receipts grew from \$888,062,840 to \$1,422,136,821, representing a 60 percent increase.³³

Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zone designation indicates a municipality is a center of regional employment and contains infrastructure that enables future economic growth (e.g., water, sewer, broadband).

³⁰ De Geus, Kidder, Willey, Stapleton, and Barewicz, Economic & Demographic Profile.

³¹ Halonen, Jaana I et al. "Commuting time to work and behaviour-related health: a fixed-effect analysis." *Occupational and environmental medicine* vol. 77,2 (2020): 77-83. doi:10.1136/oemed-2019-106173

³² De Geus, Kidder, Willey, Stapleton, and Barewicz, Economic & Demographic Profile.

³³ "Sales and Use Tax Statistics." Agency of Administration Department of Taxes. Accessed August 15, 2025. <https://tax.vermont.gov/data-and-statistics/sut>.

This designation offers tax benefits to investors who temporarily defer tax on capital gains if they invest those gain amounts in a Qualified Opportunity Fund.³⁴

Addison County is home to only one Opportunity Zone, Vergennes, that received no investment. Opportunity Zones 2.0 was recently established by the Trump Administration. Designations are yet to be made by the Governor's office.

Infrastructure

Housing

Vermont is currently facing a housing crisis, and Addison County is no exception. The average home in the county cost \$350,000 in 2023 - \$25,000 higher than the state average - and sold in a mere 57 days. The high price of new homes and scarcity of existing houses has driven up the cost of housing significantly. The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) estimates an additional 41,184 homes are needed in Vermont, of which 1,978 are needed in Addison County, to stabilize the housing market and alleviate persistent homelessness. Currently, the county is only on track to build 564.³⁵

Housing development has been at the forefront of legislature with funding and incentives directed towards affordable and market rate building. An example of this is Project-based Tax Increment Financing which just passed as part of bill S.127 in the 2025 session. However, this is an uphill battle due to the high cost of development. In 2023, a single apartment in a multifamily building had an average construction cost of \$500,000. In fact, construction costs have increased by 30 percent every year since 2020.³⁶

Another concern beyond housing development is the preservation of existing housing. Despite increased flooding and unpredictable weather conditions, Addison County homes have been fairly resilient. Even manufactured homes, the most vulnerable, have undergone minimal damage. However, houses in the region are slightly older than the State average, leading to higher maintenance and energy costs. On top of this, the Vermont Housing Needs Assessment estimates that over 4,000 households are cost burdened in the region.³⁷ To be cost burdened means that over 30 percent of the household income goes to housing costs.

³⁴ "Opportunity Zones." *Internal Revenue Service*, Apr. 2022, www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones.

³⁵ Vermont Housing Finance Agency, and Carrington Community Development Services, Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2025-2029 § (2024).

³⁶ Anna Bouchard, "ACEDC Housing Strategy." August 2025.

³⁷ Vermont Housing Finance Agency, and Carrington Community Development Services, Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2025-2029.

A tight housing market has a strong effect on the local economy, from straining the cost of living for residents, to limiting workforce expansion for business. These effects are partially responsible for the rise in homelessness discussed in Subchapter Existing Conditions: Demographics & Workforce.

Childcare

Access to childcare is a top concern of regional workers. Currently, there is a need for 578 *additional* childcare slots needed to meet demand. This can be broken down to 295 infants, 138 toddlers, and 145 preschoolers.³⁸ The Otter Creek Child Center is currently expanding to provide an additional 77 spots, however the problem persists. This issue greatly affects the economy, especially in a time of low unemployment, because parents cannot re-enter the workforce with childcare restrictions.

Broadband and Telecommunications

Historically, Addison County and Vermont have been behind in internet access. Vermont, ranking 48th in internet speed in 2020, and Addison County having the slowest internet in the West-Central Region.³⁹ However, great strides have been made bringing 84.73 percent of residents to the level of fast connection (100/100 Mbps). 14.96 percent of residents have poor to moderate internet speed (25/3 Mbps or 100/20 Mbps) and just 0.32 percent are underserved (4/1 Mbps).⁴⁰ Connectivity is becoming increasingly important as remote work is a post-COVID norm.

Transportation

Addison County is generally served by adequate local roads and state highways, but lacks access to the interstate highway system, constraining its businesses' ability to access markets. It has a

³⁸ Horwitz, J., Salina, K. (March 2024). *Stalled at the Start Vermont's Child Care Challenge*. Burlington, VT: Let's Grow Kids.

³⁹ West Central Vermont CEDS Strategy Committee. "West Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy." February 1, 2023.

⁴⁰ "VT Data Broadband Status 2024." *Vermont Open Geodata Portal*, Telecommunications & Connectivity Division Vermont Department of Public Service, 2024, geodata.vermont.gov/datasets/vtspd::vt-data-broadband-status-2024/explore?location=43.841051%2C-72.457621%2C7.99&showTable=true.

north south rail corridor that provides some access to freight, but lack of local sidings and other infrastructure in addition to supply line delivery demands limit its use.

Route 7 is the most significant driving route connecting the region to the North and South of Vermont. Another substantial North to South route includes the 22A which branches off Route 7. Route 125 and Route 17 are important East to West connections that reach Central Vermont and New York where many Addison County workers live. Intercounty transportation is vital to a county with an abundance of commuters.

Tri-Valley Transit is the largest public transportation provider in the area which provides bus, van, and car services within and around the county. They focus largely on commuter routes to support the county's workforce. The region also added an AmTrak stop in Middlebury and Vergennes, both in 2022. These extensions provide additional labor transit as well as support for the tourism economy. There is one ferry crossing that connects Shoreham, VT to Ticonderoga, NY. There are a number of small airports in the region. One State airport in Middlebury and three private airstrips in Cornwall, Ferrisburgh, and Vergennes. See Chapter 6 for more information regarding the county's transportation infrastructure.

Municipal Water and Wastewater Treatment

Vermont has some of the oldest infrastructure in the country and this is well reflected in the state of water and wastewater systems. Currently, Vergennes and Middlebury have wastewater capacity and are in process of improving their wastewater treatment plants. Bristol has no additional municipal capacity. Shoreham, Orwell and Addison also have small systems with some capacity. Virtually every other community in the Region lacks municipal wastewater systems. Water systems are more widespread, but many have issues with the ability to provide new services. See Chapter 7, Section 1: Water Supply, Wastewater, and Solid Waste for more details. Insufficient water and wastewater systems can stifle economic development. New businesses may choose another community if their needs cannot be met, and expanding businesses may need to relocate. Even more pressing, it will be nearly impossible to add housing in the densities needed to reach our targets without expanded municipal systems.

Energy

Energy is vital to the economic health of a region. High costs or low access can severely limit growth. Chapter 7, Energy, provides data and insight into Addison County's energy use:

Addison County residents live with an energy burden equal to about 10% of the median income on average, reflecting around \$7,300 in household annual energy expenses... Of Addison County household average energy costs, nearly half (45%) is spent on

transportation, followed by heating (33%), then electricity expenses (22%). Nationally, an energy burden greater than 6% is considered high and is correlated with a “greater risk for respiratory diseases, increased stress and economic hardship, and difficulty in moving out of poverty” (ACEEE).

Energy burdens affect the workers and the consumers. Lower disposable income means less economic activity. It is not only individuals who suffer from high energy costs, but the business community as well. Every business relies on energy in some form, adding to their operating costs substantially.

Working Lands

Land is an important production factor for many industries and has a complex relationship with economic development. While land use for business is often criticized in relation to conservation, Addison County maintains a strong cultural connection to the land through working land enterprises. Preservation efforts are elaborated on in Chapter 4, Natural Resources.

The most significant economic tie is agriculture. Addison County is considered the top agricultural county in the State by some measures. Approximately 36 percent of the land in Addison County is used for agriculture. The region also has the most farms (751) in the state.⁴¹ However, the number of farm operations in Addison declined (-7.7 percent) between 2012 and 2022 according to the US Agricultural Census as discussed the Employment by Supersector section.⁴² Still, agriculture remains an essential aspect of the county’s economy, with the total net cash farm income at \$89.8 mil.⁴³

Economic development can create pressure for land use change. One way that Vermont has resisted undesirable change is the Use Value Assessment (UVA) Program. As a mechanism for fair taxation, the UVA Program enables eligible private landowners who practice long-term forestry or agriculture to have their land appraised based on the property’s value of production

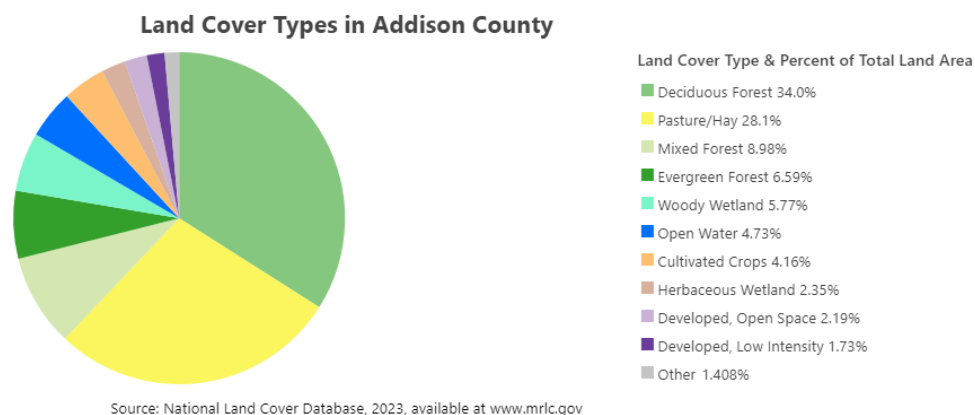
⁴¹ “2022 Census of Agriculture - County Data.” United States Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistics Services. Accessed August 15, 2025.
https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Vermont/st50_2_001_001.pdf.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

of wood or food rather than its residential or commercial development value. As of 2023, 42 percent of land in Addison County was enrolled in Current Use (25 percent for agriculture and 17 percent for forestry).⁴⁴

Figure 7⁴⁵



Brownfields

The remediation of contaminated sites has positive environmental and human health impacts while promoting smart land-use practices. Repurposing historically productive properties supports infill development and promotes community and economic growth by increasing the tax base and revitalizing blighted areas.

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission operates a brownfield program using grant funds obtained from the US EPA for assessment related work only. Assessment means any work related to identifying recognized environmental conditions (RECs) on-site. Funds for “remediation” of RECs are available from State and Federal sources but not directly from subregional sources at present. Brownfield remediation increases supply of development-ready parcels of land and could improve local health outcomes by reducing potential environmental hazards caused by land contaminants.

There are 11 active brownfields sites that have undergone some level of assessment and one Area-Wide Plan has been conducted in the Vergennes area. There are four more sites in progress and four more potential sites.

Climate Resilience

⁴⁴ Remick, Jill. “Property Valuation and Review 2025 Annual Report.” Vermont Department of Taxes, January 15, 2025. <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/RP-1295-2025.pdf>.

⁴⁵ National Land Cover Database, 2023, www.mrlc.org

There have been 12 FEMA Disaster Declarations in Vermont since COVID in 2020. Of those, six involved Addison County. Most extreme weather in the past decade, including these declarations, have been flood related.⁴⁶ The region has experienced increasingly adverse levels of rainfall throughout the seasons. This has had a negative effect on the county's economy. In the event of harsh weather, people are less likely to shop or go downtown. Businesses are often not equipped to handle extreme weather. While some State and Federal resources are available for physical damages, few funds are available to offset the financial damage of closing for repairs or storm-related customer decline.

⁴⁶ "Vermont." FEMA. Accessed August 15, 2025. <https://www.fema.gov/locations/vermont>.

Vision Statement

Addison County is regionally and nationally renowned as a model for a dynamic and diversified rural economy where local entrepreneurs leverage the area's unique access to natural resources to launch and grow small businesses that contribute to an unmatched quality of life for residents and an unforgettable experience for visitors.

Pillars of the Vision

1. *Dynamic and diversified:* Addison County's economy boasts over 700 farms, more than 150 retail businesses, nearly 1,400 service-based businesses, approximately 70 manufacturers, a prestigious university, a thriving hospital, and a state-of-the-art production facility for a global aerospace company.

This level of diversification ensures economic resiliency while providing employment opportunities for a varied labor force. The goals and objectives of this plan should promote further economic diversification to maximize resiliency and expand opportunity in Addison County.

2. *Unique access to natural resources:* There are 279,228 acres of natural forest in Addison County (54 percent of the County's total land area) and 169,874 acres of active farmland (44 percent of the County's total land area). In addition to 56 miles of shoreline on Lake Champlain, Addison County also holds several rivers and creeks including Otter Creek, Lewis Creek, the New Haven River, and Middlebury River.

Addison County's waterways, forests and farmland fuel the local economy by supplying raw materials to value-add manufacturers, artisans and craftspeople while simultaneously enhancing quality of life by providing residents with access to fresh healthy food and outdoor recreation. The goals and objectives of this plan should promote the responsible stewardship of these resources to ensure they can continue to fuel the economy and enhance quality of life for generations to come.

3. *Local entrepreneurs...launch and grow small businesses:* 99 percent of Vermont businesses meet the Small Business Administration's industry-specific criteria for

small business classification. In Addison County, 82 percent of businesses qualify as micro-businesses, defined as 10 employees or less.

Addison County is home to brilliant, enterprising people who have launched and grown a multitude of businesses. Over 40 percent of Addison County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. Empowering even more community members with tools to channel their creativity into profitable enterprises will power sustainable economic growth, expand opportunity, and improve quality of life in Addison County. The goals and objectives of this plan should promote strategies that seek economic growth through small local enterprise.

4. *Unmatched quality of life:* Addison County ranks in the top three among Vermont counties in both health outcomes and health factors, has the lowest rate of poverty in the state, and ranks in the 90th percentile of all U.S. counties for safety based on a crime rate of 17.82 per 1,000 residents.

Beyond the data, the anecdotal indicators for quality of life in Addison County are hard to miss: easy access to outdoor recreation, quality schools, and tight-knit communities with bustling Main Streets. The goals and objectives of this plan should acknowledge the vital role quality of life factors play in attracting talent and driving economic growth and strive to preserve the unique factors that distinguish quality of life in Addison County.

5. *Unforgettable visitor experience:* The annual economic impact of tourism in Vermont recently reached \$4 billion. From downhill thrills at the Middlebury Snow Bowl to aquatic adventures on Lake Champlain, Addison County offers ample amenities for an unforgettable visitor experience.

With a population of just 37,495, one of the biggest challenges to economic growth in Addison County is its limited consumer base. The simple reality is that for most small businesses in Addison County to survive and grow, they need to sell their goods and services to visitors and consumers outside the county. The goals and objectives of this plan should harbor the positive economic impacts of tourism while prioritizing local needs and consumer preferences.

Goals & Objectives Overview

The following goals and objectives are organized according to four strategic focus areas: workforce development, business development and entrepreneurship, operational infrastructure, and quality of life. These focus areas reflect the goals and objectives set forth in the prior Economy chapter of the Addison County Regional Plan, the West Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and the Addison County Economic Development Corporation's Strategic Plan.

Each focus area is defined by a broad, aspirational goal statement that reflects measurable outcomes to be achieved through a series of objectives and corresponding actions.

The objectives proposed under each focus area represent specific incremental outcomes that contribute to progress toward achieving the ultimate outcomes set forth in the goal statements of each focus area.

Recommended actions represent the detailed steps that should be taken to achieve each objective.

Goals & Objectives

Workforce Development

Goal Statement: Addison County has a robust and expanding labor force that allows employers in all sectors to hire locally and equitably for positions at every level.

Objectives

- I. Addison County's housing stock offers sufficient supply to meet the needs of workers at every income level.

Action 1: Ensure Act 181 future land use mapping maximizes opportunities for developing dense, mixed-income housing in close proximity to jobs and established commercial centers.

Action 2: Launch a project-based tax-increment financing (TIF) program that provides critical financing for infrastructure that supports new housing development.

Action 3: Coordinate with Addison County municipalities to identify appropriate, shovel-ready development sites that can be actively marketed to housing developers.

Action 4: Support Addison County municipalities in drafting applications for municipal planning grants to support updates to land use plans and zoning codes that support increased housing development.

Action 5: Assist property owners in securing State Downtown & Village Center tax credits and grants to support small-scale, adaptive reuse infill housing development.

- II. Addison County's network of vocational training programs and workforce development organizations is nimble and responsive to the ever-changing needs of employers, providing adequate training opportunities that enable local residents to secure and thrive in local jobs.

Action 1: Deploy a Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) workforce expansion coordinator for two years to build partnerships between workforce service providers and area employers in the manufacturing and human services sectors.

Action 2: Use the Addison County Workforce Alliance’s (ACWA) bi-monthly meetings to facilitate conversations between Addison County employers and workforce service providers.

Action 3: Assistance employers and workforce service providers to secure funding for new training programs.

Action 4: Support the long-term viability and effectiveness of Career Technical Education Training for Youth and Adults at existing facilities.

- III. In Addison County, labor force participation rates among historically marginalized and underemployed populations exceed the state and national averages.

Action 1: Deploy a VDOL workforce expansion coordinator for two years to connect residents from three priority populations: youth ages 16-24, adults without a high school diploma, and people with disabilities to jobs in manufacturing and human services. This includes supporting the development of the corresponding action plan to continue efforts after the program’s end.

Action 3: Develop a program that connects New Americans with job opportunities in Addison County.

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Business Development & Entrepreneurship

Goal Statement: Addison County consistently experiences positive annual net growth in the number of small businesses operating in the county and corresponding growth in non-inflation adjusted gross sales and sales tax receipts from these businesses.

Objectives

- I. Entrepreneurs experience low barriers to launching a business and receive easy access to technical assistance and financing.

Action 1: Use existing business needs data to advocate for streamlined State and local administrative processes, where needed, and to promote strategies for lowering business startup costs. Leverage relationships with other economic development organizations throughout the state to advocate for State-level changes and leverage relationships with local municipal leaders to advocate for changes in Addison County.

Action 2: Convene Addison County economic development partners, including but not limited to ACCoC, ACRPC, municipalities, the downtown organizations, and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to coordinate the marketing of local business support services and to maximize the reach of coordinated marketing efforts.

Action 3: Recapitalize the ACEDC's revolving loan funds while seeking new opportunities to provide access to capital for new and expanding business that struggle to access conventional financing.

Action 4: Help create and review business plans for entrepreneurs.

Action 5: Introduce entrepreneurs to peers, service providers, and associated businesses.

- II. Businesses that launch in Addison County choose to grow in Addison County and are able to reach maturity without relocating outside of the county.

Action 1: Work with growing businesses to anticipate and help address their expansion needs including but not limited to: financing and investment, physical expansion or relocation, increased hiring, and access to new markets.

Action 2: Seek opportunities for connecting local businesses with slow capital that allows for sustained growth without the constraints of burdensome debt service.

- III. Addison County is an attractive destination for relocating entrepreneurs, remote workers, and expanding small businesses regionally and nationally.

Action 1: ACEDC will continue working with the ACCoC to administer the "Think Vermont Grants for Relocation Outreach Work" (GROW), which funds efforts to attract and retain new residents to Addison County.

Action 2: Work with local and State partners to promote Addison County as a desirable place to live and work.

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Operational Infrastructure

Goal Statement: Businesses in Addison County benefit from robust and resilient conventional infrastructure as well as accessible operational infrastructure.

Objectives:

- I. Addison County offers adequate industrial and commercial facilities to support new and expanding businesses.

Action 1: ACEDC, in partnership with Middlebury College and the Town of Middlebury, will continue efforts to develop the Phase II and Phase III areas of the Middlebury Industrial Park, providing much-needed new commercial and industrial space for expanding businesses.

Action 2: Work with Stoney Hill Properties and the Town of Bristol to advance new development at the Stoney Hill/Firehouse Industrial Park.

Action 3: Work with the City of Vergennes to plan and facilitate commercial and industrial redevelopment along the N. Main Street corridor as envisioned in the Transportation Oriented Development Master Plan.

Action 4: Continue to explore opportunities to plan and develop a business incubator with a special focus on agricultural businesses and value-add manufacturers.

Action 5: Pursue the recommendations of the Vergennes Planning and Environmental Linkages Study to improve truck traffic and business conditions in downtown Vergennes.

Action 6: Support Maple Broadband and other fiber providers to build an affordable and resilient telecommunications network throughout the region for individuals and businesses.

Action 7: Encourage Green Mountain Power to make distribution upgrades to support continued renewable generation.

- II. Addison County manufacturers, artisans, and craftspeople benefit from adequate facilities for harvesting, processing and storing raw materials, work-in-progress goods, and value-added products.

Action 1: Advocate for responsible timber harvesting and develop strategies for retaining and expanding local lumber mills.

Action 2: Develop and implement strategies for retaining dairy farms in Addison County and ensuring adequate access to processing facilities.

Action 3: Work to expand access to warehousing and storage facilities for local producers and manufacturers, and explore the feasibility for a shared facility with third-party logistics services.

Action 4: Seek opportunities to develop a shared aging facility for local cheesemakers.

Action 5: Support efforts to develop a new grain processing facility in Addison County.

Action 6: Along with efforts to establish a business incubator, coordinate efforts to establish shared commercial kitchen space in Addison County.

- III. Addison County businesses have easy access to distribution networks that allow them to affordably and efficiently deliver their products to local, regional, and national markets.

Action 1: Seek opportunities to expand refrigerated food delivery services in Addison County.

Action 2: Work with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets to seek opportunities for shared distribution among Addison County farm and forest producers and small businesses.

- IV. Expand critical water and wastewater infrastructure in existing villages to support development. Businesses in the region play an active role in planning and, when appropriate, financing the expansion.

Action 1: Engage manufacturers and large industrial and commercial users in discussions on future infrastructure needs.

Action 2: Advocate for zoning and land use planning that promotes mixed-use development, allowing for commercial and industrial users to absorb the cost for upgraded and expanded infrastructure.

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Quality of Life

Goal Statement: High quality of life is regularly cited as the number one reason talent and industry choose to locate and remain in Addison County.

Objectives

- I. A commitment to equity among businesses, municipalities, and civic organizations ensure Addison County's high quality of life is enjoyed by all residents.

Action 1: Refine ACEDC's existing programs to include measurable business startup and entrepreneurial activity among minority populations in Addison County to determine a baseline for monitoring progress in advancing minority and women-owned businesses.

Action 2: Work with lending partners to determine strategies to help minority and women entrepreneurs access capital.'

Action 3: Partner with organizations such as Vermont Professionals of Color (VPOC) and the Vermont Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE Vermont) to establish business training and mentorship programs tailored specifically to marginalized and underrepresented populations in Addison County.

Action 4: Refine ACEDC's programs to ensure they assist marginalized and underrepresented populations with market research, product development, packaging design, distribution strategies, marketing and promotion strategies, and facilitate access to retail partnerships.

Action 5: Refine ACEDC's and others' programs to ensure they link marginalized and underrepresented populations with larger contracts and financial opportunities, potentially including business-to-business (B2B) linkage forums for joint ventures and teaming solutions.

Action 6: Support Maple Broadband and other fiber providers to build an affordable and resilient telecommunications network to support continued renewable generation.

- II. Addison County's businesses, municipalities, and civic organizations work together to preserve and expand access to recreational and cultural amenities.

Action 1: Draft a countywide master plan for municipal forests that includes an economic development chapter supporting the Moosalamoo National Recreational Area Master Plan.

Action 3: Measure the economic impact of outdoor recreation in Addison County. Seek opportunities for capturing increased spending from recreational visitors to Addison County.

- III. A thriving business sector offers residents access to essential goods and services.

Action 1: Conduct a consumer survey to identify gaps in Addison County's retail and service sectors.

Action 2: Proactively recruit businesses that offer goods and services currently missing in the market.

Action 3: Use the market data developed in the Transit Oriented Development market study to identify gaps in Addison County's retail and service sectors.

Action 4: Provide coordinated succession planning for existing Addison County businesses to ensure businesses providing essential goods and services continue to operate after transitions in ownership.

- IV. Addison County maintains high ratings for health factors and health outcomes.

Action 1: Advocate for the vital role that health factors play in sustaining a vibrant and effective local workforce.

Action 2: Work with partners in health and health care, through initiatives like Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) and Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP) to assess and design actions that improve economic mobility for our workforce and economic development for our County, while helping control rising healthcare costs.

Action 3: Explore the feasibility of health-based bond programs such as social impact bonds and development impact bonds to drive local investments in health and wellness.

Action 4: Develop promotional campaigns and marketing initiatives that recognize local employers who invest in the health and wellness of employees.