

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024

S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

1. Grow the Grand List

There are two factors in growing the Grand List. We must attract new residents to Town and stop the attrition of our younger citizens. Job creation, leisure activities and workforce housing are the critical catalysts.

Specific: Aim to increase the grand list by 3% (\$18.72 million) through targeted strategies, such as using our competitive advantages to attract new business and residential development and encouraging property owners to both improve dilapidated properties and consider accessory dwelling units. Increases in the grand list due solely to reappraisal will not count toward this goal.

Measurable: Track the percentage increase in the grand list and the number of new properties or assessments added. Track the number of new units and their percentage increase to the grant list.

Achievable: To achieve this there needs to be a collaboration between the Town, and our key partners (Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC), Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), Springfield on the Move (SOM), Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC), State of Vermont, relators, and private developers.

Relevant: Aligns with the town's financial and budget goals and the need for increased revenue and resources for community services.

Time-bound: Aim to achieve this goal by targeting workforce housing opportunities by the end of 2025.

2. Grow the Population and Support Current and Elder Citizens

Specific: Focus on a population increase of 3% (272 people) and improve the Town's recreation center and Senior Center.

Measurable: Track population statistics through census data (9,062 in 2020).

Achievable: To achieve this goal, we need to continue to support our aging and youth populations, so they remain here. We also need to promote Springfield's assets to attract new business and residents.

Relevant: Align with the town's goals for community development and enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

Time-bound: Aim to see population growth by 2027.

3. Grow Businesses, Seize Advantage of Global Opportunities

Specific: Promote current infrastructure availability and other business assets, such as; high speed internet, proximity to I-91 and growth space at the industrial park. Explore local, regional, statewide and global opportunities.

Measurable: Track the number of new businesses both on Main Street and town-wide.

Achievable: Create an economic development program to target businesses and entrepreneurs that would succeed in Springfield.

Relevant: This goal aligns with Springfield's economic development strategy, focusing on local growth and expanding market opportunities for businesses.

Time-bound: Aim to increase the number of businesses in Springfield by 2027.

4. Increase Workforce Housing

Specific: Focus on the creation of new and reclaimed housing units specifically for the workforce. Identify opportunities through realtors and developers.

Measurable: Track the number of new house listings and the allocation between low-, middle-, and upper-income units.

Achievable: Collaborate with local developers, improve code enforcement, identify zoning change opportunities and work in conjunction with economic development partners to support housing development.

Relevant: This goal addresses the critical need for affordable housing to support the local workforce, contributing to community stability and economic growth.

Time-bound: Set a clear deadline for the completion of the housing units by the end of 2027.

5. Support Competitive Advantages by identifying and defining Springfield's Unique Competitive Advantages to Guide Future Economic Development.

Specific: Conduct a market analysis and community assessment to clearly define Springfield's competitive advantage in terms of economic opportunities, workforce potential, and lifestyle appeal.

Measurable: Gather input from residents, local businesses, and key stakeholders, and complete a detailed report outlining Springfield's top three competitive advantages.

Achievable: Partner with local organizations (such as SRDC and BRIC) to facilitate the research and analysis, while involving the community through surveys and focus groups.

Relevant: Understanding Springfield's unique strengths will allow the town to attract the right businesses and residents, tailor marketing strategies, and make informed investment decisions.

Time-bound: Complete the market analysis and report within 12 months, by the end of 2025.

A. Downtown and Commercial Development

A1. Continue implementation of the Main Street Master Plan.

Specific Projects:

1. Review and prioritize the projects in the Main Street Master Plan.
 - a. Complete Northern Gateway Scoping Study. **ACTIVE**
 - b. Construction AFTER Water Project on River Street.
2. Complete Clinton Street Scoping Study. **ACTIVE**
 - a. Construction AFTER Water Project on Clinton Street.
3. Perform scoping study for Main/South/Clinton Intersection. **ACTIVE**
4. Renovate Town Hall Entrance/Parking **PRIORITY**

A2. Improve Valley Street Gateway to Downtown.

Many people access Downtown via Valley Street. There are structures on Valley Street that need repairs, revitalization, or other improvements. Due to flood zone limitations, this area is unlikely to provide an opportunity to expand the downtown. It would benefit the Town greatly to improve this gateway. There may be flood hazard emergency funds to purchase some of these buildings. Buying out the owners and razing structures are possible options where redevelopment is not feasible.

Specific Projects:

1. Continue cooperative efforts with outside law enforcement agencies to address illicit activities. **PRIORITY**
2. Work with State of Vermont through the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program as a funding source for property acquisition and remediation to protect the Downtown. **ACTIVE**

A3. Lower Park Street Development.

With the opening of the vista from Main Street across the Black River, Park Street has become a more visible part of Springfield's commercial landscape. It is located in a central location and cannot be ignored.

Specific Projects:

1. Continue working with Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC) on the redevelopment of 33 Park Street. This includes securing funding for brownfield remediation. **PRIORITY**
2. Renovate Factory Street Parking Lot, including collaborating with SRDC to address issues and opportunities with the Marsh lot. **ACTIVE**

A4. Improvements to the Community Center on Main Street.

Specific Projects:

1. Make a final determination as to whether to keep the community center and, if keeping it, determine best use of the property. If the decision is to relocate Parks & Recreation, start marketing the current Center for possible mixed use.

PRIORITY

2. Research possible funding sources for renovation if property is kept.

PRIORITY

A5. Focus on Downtown.

It has been estimated that roughly 10,000 vehicles travel through our downtown each day. Continue prioritizing Downtown so that the Town makes a good first impression.

Specific Projects and Interim Dates:

1. Review the Main Street Master Plan and identify the opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle amenities. Also identify locations for people to congregate. **ACTIVE**
2. Work with our development partners to develop a plan for implementing electrical improvements, such as adding 3 phase electric power for the northern section of Main Street. Determine funding opportunities if a design and build is required **ACTIVE**

B. Economy and Business

B1. Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development

It is critical that the Town Plan, Land Use Development Ordinance, and the Strategic Plan are mutually supportive. The Town prioritizes community and economic development and sees Planning & Zoning as instrumental in effecting positive changes.

Specific Projects:

1. Review and enhance the development review process with updated State laws. Create one-stop shop development review and approval by centralizing zoning, highway, water, and wastewater permitting into one easy to navigate process. Work with economic and community development organizations to communicate Springfield's permitting process to interested developers. **ACTIVE**
2. Implement Town Plan recommendations that call for greater flexibility in land use development. Encourage the Planning Commission to make the land use development ordinance more cost-efficient to administer and easier for the average citizen or developer to understand. Engage MARC to assist with overhauling the land use development ordinance so it complements regional priorities and complies with state directives. The Town must use this ordinance as a tool to incentivize economic and community development. **ACTIVE**
3. Code compliance is an invaluable community development tool. Code compliance can revitalize neighborhoods, remove impediments to redevelopment, and reduce activities that burden emergency services. Code compliance is only successful when done in a multi-jurisdictional capacity engaging police, fire, health, and zoning as well as state agencies such as the Vermont Divisions of Fire Safety (i.e., building codes) and Environmental Conservation (i.e., environmental standards). **ACTIVE**

B2. Professional Marketing Plan.

There are many reasons why Springfield is a desirable location to work, live, and operate a business. A professionally produced marketing plan covering all of Springfield, that addresses the specific reasons for people and businesses to move here, and includes measurable objectives and timeframes for evaluation purposes, should be produced. These efforts should be coordinated with all of our partners. It would also be appropriate to include in this marketing campaign a list of all the buildings available for development including those available through SRDC, plus the opportunities for businesses to locate in the Industrial Park in North Springfield.

Specific Projects:

1. Continue to work with our local economic development partners (SOM, Mount Ascutney Regional Commission, SRDC, Commerce) and other interested parties. **ACTIVE**

2. Identify funding sources for marketing. ACTIVE
3. Create list of town and regional assets. PRIORITY
4. Marketing efforts should include specific efforts to attract and encourage recreational businesses that would appeal to youth and young adults to encourage population growth and businesses.
5. Marketing efforts should include specific efforts to attract and encourage new and innovative industry and light manufacturing. Businesses that create in Springfield but sell outside of Springfield will bring revenue to town.
6. Develop knowledge of current global opportunities that match Springfield assets.
7. Develop Mission, Vision, and Competitive Advantage statements. ACTIVE

B3. Support innovation

Housed in the former Park Street School, the Black River Innovation Campus (BRIC) is a tremendous asset. The Town would benefit from supporting BRIC. Technology is constantly evolving. Park Street School has the opportunity to become a business innovation hub.

Specific Projects:

1. Continue meeting with BRIC and SRDC officials to determine opportunities for the Town to support BRIC. ACTIVE
2. Continue working with private investors and SRDC to see how the Town can support their efforts not only at the old Park Street School, but also their efforts between Main Street and Park Street School.
3. Complete \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant for code improvements at 60 Park Street. ACTIVE
4. Determine which, if any, Town services might be relocated to 60 Park.

B4. Address Labor Shortages

The businesses in town, including the Town of Springfield, have experienced, and continue to experience, difficulty attracting and retaining employees. This is preventing economic growth in the private sector and causing difficulty in providing expected services in the public sector. Should this trend continue, it will negatively impact economic development and the level of services that the Town can provide. The town, working with business leaders, needs to develop a plan to attract and retain quality employees in order to be a growing full-service community.

Specific Projects:

1. Participate in the Working Communities Challenge. ACTIVE
2. Create competitive Town compensation packages ACTIVE
3. Reach out to our state senators and representatives to encourage the removal of barriers to hiring employees, especially from out of state.
4. Work with community partners to develop a strategy for attracting quality employees to town. This is connected to marketing, workforce housing, and schools.
5. Support legislation for the creation of project-based Tax Incremental Financing.

B5. New Access Road to Industrial Park.

Continue researching the access to the Industrial Park in North Springfield. A new access road directly to the park would help attract new businesses and would shield local neighborhoods.

Specific Projects:

1. Review Previous Plans for New Access Road. ACTIVE
2. Begin Search for Funding.

C. Neighborhoods and Parks

C1. Neighborhood Redevelopment.

Neighborhoods that have potential for commercial (such as neighborhood grocery and convenience stores) and residential development or redevelopment, should be provided assistance to realize their potential for attracting new residents and local businesses. Existing neighborhood associations and other neighborhood organizations (such as the North School Preservation Society) should be engaged to assist in this effort.

Specific Projects:

1. Develop Freedom Park neighborhood and use code enforcement to drive development of the neighborhood. This will involve interagency cooperation. **ACTIVE**
2. Work with Project Action to support neighborhoods.
3. Develop a relationship with the North School Preservation Society aimed towards redeveloping the North Springfield School and getting their facility occupied.
4. Improve the walkability of the town by improving sidewalks and enforcing existing ordinances to keep sidewalks open for unencumbered pedestrian use.
5. Research the benefits of securing a Neighborhood Development Area designation. **ACTIVE**

C2. Outdoor Recreation including Muckruss State Park.

Riverside Park is a wonderful, heavily used, and aging asset that attracts both residents and out of town visitors. It is greatly in need of renovation. Freedom Park is a very underutilized asset. Hartness Park and the Toonerville Trail also see a great deal of use. Muckruss State Park is an enormous and underutilized asset for the Town of Springfield. The Selectboard needs to get the Town engaged in moving the State to promote, advertise and develop Muckruss State Park.

Specific Projects:

1. Develop a vision for Riverside Park, including an evaluation of the types of recreation activities that will occur at the park. **PRIORITY**
2. Develop a plan for addressing the capital needs of Riverside Park that is consistent with the long-range vision of the park. **ACTIVE**
3. Create a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and present to the Long-Term Capital Planning Committee. **ACTIVE**

4. Work with the Springfield Trails and Rural Economy to promote and encourage the use of the many trails and class 4 roads throughout the town, including Muckruss.
5. Actively work to ensure that interchange improvements to trails maintain safety and desirability.

D. Housing

D1. Workforce Housing.

The Town of Springfield needs to expand its housing portfolio to ensure that there is a variety of housing stock available for all residents of Springfield. These efforts will help the Town of Springfield attract more residents with disposable incomes that will support the Town's economy. The Town should encourage residential development, especially where the Town's excess water and sewer infrastructure could be used. The Town of Springfield will work with the local housing agencies, and developers both private and public to accomplish the specific projects.

Specific Projects:

1. Work with the Springfield Housing Authority, Windham and Windsor Housing, and other housing developers to add and improve our residential housing stock. **ACTIVE**
2. Work with Mount Ascutney Regional Commission on a Municipal Planning Grant that will focus on the development of Workforce Housing.
3. Create Neighborhood Development Area designation. Such designation encourages municipalities and/or developers to plan for new and infill housing in the areas within walking distance of a designated downtown or growth center. It provides incentives for needed housing to support the commercial establishments in the designated centers. **ACTIVE**
4. The entire Town is an Opportunity Zone through 2028. This could provide funding to possible housing projects.
5. Create a Housing Inventory of Vacant Houses and determine reason for vacancy, if possible. **PRIORITY**
6. Work with existing Housing Continuum to create Workforce Housing Taskforce. **ACTIVE**
7. Leverage what other towns are doing concerning housing, possibly considering regional solutions in addition to municipal solutions.

D2. Large Scale Housing

Specific Projects:

1. Investigate where Large Scale Housing developments of 75 to 100 units could be sited (multiple locations totaling 75-100 units).
2. Understand Act 181 and its impact on large housing projects.
3. Be open to mixed use (housing/commercial) projects.
4. Reconsider restricting zoning.

5. Focus on privately funded projects.
6. Investigate if and how Tax Increment Financing can be used for Housing.

E. School System

The schools are extremely important to the Town's redevelopment efforts and are a key component for promoting the Town.

Specific Projects:

1. Meet with the School Board Members to collaborate with them on priorities of the Selectboard, and to determine which ones should have joint participation.
2. Specifically determine how our schools can be included in our marketing of the Town and our long-term strategy to attract new families and businesses. We need to improve our district's reputation and image.
3. Consider how we might work with the private entities, including the Alumni Association, the Booster Club, and Parent/Teacher Associations, to promote and enhance our schools.
4. Continue monthly meetings between Town and School administrations to share information on projects that impact both Town and School, such as traffic flows and facility sharing. Share board packets. **ACTIVE**

F. Infrastructure

F1. Asset Management Planning

The Town should develop a Master Plan to address infrastructure including roads, sidewalks, town owned buildings, bridges/culverts, dams, retaining walls, etc. The Town has a Road Surface Management System (RSMS) for paved roads. We should have a similar plan for all infrastructure items.

Funding all these capital items will be a challenge and will involve very difficult decisions regarding priorities. Regularly available resources include a Class 2 highway grant of up to \$200,000 (every other year), a structures grant of up to \$200,000 most years, and Grants In Aid funds most years. The Town also includes funds in the budget for capital improvements that is supplemented with funds specifically appropriated for paving and sidewalks.

Specific Projects:

1. Identify priority projects that require design and/or engineering in order to make the projects shovel ready and search for funding to complete these plans. **ACTIVE**
2. Begin search for funding to complete construction. If adequate grant funding isn't available, apply for bonds for the larger projects.
3. Create Long-Term Capital Planning Committee **ACTIVE**

F2. Develop Operational Maintenance Plan

F3. Stormwater

The Town was developed before stormwater was a major concern. As a result, the Town has a number of situations where stormwater control has become a significant challenge, both for the Town and private property owners.

1. Consider adding a stormwater department under public works. **ACTIVE**
2. Pursue grant funding to address major stormwater issues identified by staff and the engineer. **ACTIVE**
3. Update transportation and land use regulations to ensure a no-net-increase discharge standard.

F4. Cemeteries

Cemeteries provide important connections to our past, both as a community and for the many families that have ancestors buried in them. It is important that our cemeteries are honored and maintained.

Specific Project:

1. Work with the Cemetery Commission to determine if the Town has an adequate number of available lots for future needs and to develop long range plans to remediate any deficiencies and determine funding sources to complete these plans.

G. Grants & Funding

The Town needs to work with our redevelopment partners, including the Springfield Housing Authority (SHA), to achieve our goals and secure the necessary funding for the projects in our strategic plan. The Springfield Housing Authority (SHA) should be included among the Town's Partners, especially because its expertise goes beyond just dealing with subsidized housing. Some of the recommended projects in the Strategic Plan (such as facility and infrastructure improvements) will require substantial funding to implement. The Town should explore ways to enlist additional help with researching and applying for funds.

Specific Projects and Interim Dates:

1. Discuss with partners strategies for researching and applying for various funding. Identify specific funding sources and specific projects.
2. Applying for and managing grants is very time-consuming. In order to have sufficient staff capacity and competence, the Town should consider hiring or contracting for a grants manager/specialist.
3. Investigate TIF opportunities for the Town of Springfield. **ACTIVE**