

## **2024 Johnson Town/Village Municipal Development Plan Implementation Recommendations**

Below are the implementation recommendations for the 2024 Johnson Municipal Plan. Each chapter of the plan contains its own recommendations.

### **Demographics and Housing**

#### **Implementation Recommendations**

##### Short-term

1. Explore extending the boundaries of the Designated Village Center to promote new housing development outside the 500-year floodplain and expand access to state tax credit and incentive programs.
2. The Town and Village should actively solicit interest in utilizing the Johnson Revolving Loan Fund with a focus on investment to improve the appearance, structural integrity and flood resiliency of buildings along the major travel corridors in Johnson Village.

##### Medium-term

3. Explore options for extending Form Based Code to other areas of Johnson Village to increase the number of properties in the Village that are eligible for state tax credits and state incentives programs.
4. Explore funding options and the feasibility of locating a senior living facility in Johnson.

##### Long-term

5. Work with developers and regional partners such as the Lamoille Housing Partnership and Habitat for Humanity to identify funding opportunities for rental housing improvements and new housing developments.
6. Work with developers and regional partners to explore opportunities for brownfields clean up and redevelopment of brownfields properties in Johnson.

### **Economic Development**

#### Short-term

1. Explore opportunity to “swap” Sterling Market property (owned by Pomerleau) and Jewett Property (owned by TOJ).
2. Design and implement solutions to better interconnect the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and the Village Center. These solutions include new directional signs, placement of sharrow signs along Railroad Street, and signage promoting downtown Johnson at critical junctures of the Rail Trail and town roads.

3. Expand the boundary of the Designated Village Center district to encourage revitalization, facilitate economic opportunities and strengthen the vibrancy of the village center.
4. Encourage and support citizen committees and groups that strive to enhance Johnson's economic base.
5. Support Economic Development with matching grant funds, LCPC and LEDC assistance, etc. in efforts to bolster community development and planning efforts in Johnson Village and Town.
6. Engage with Lamoille Fibernet Communications Union District (CUD) to promote improvements to broadband coverage in Johnson Village and Town.

### **Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources**

#### **Implementation Recommendations:**

##### Short-term

1. Work with interested landowners interested in the FEMA Buyout Program to restore riparian and forested habitat and increase public greenspace in Johnson where possible. Work with interested local business owners to increase and enhance greenspace in Johnson Village.
2. Include resources on the Johnson Municipal website to educate landowners about programs and funding that could support restoration of stream buffers, conserve habitat, and other conservation practices.
3. Promote the Vermont Use Value Appraisal Programs (Ex: Current Use Program) to encourage landowners to have a Forest Management Plan and consider the long-term management of priority forest blocks and habitat connectors.
4. Annually review and prioritize fixes for streambank failure and road erosion concerns along municipal roads in the Town right-of-way and restore vegetation in priority eroded streambank locations.
5. Encourage Conservation and River Corridor Easements in Johnson and help connect interested landowners with local resources (Ex: Vermont Land Trust, Vermont River Conservancy, Vermont DEC).

##### Medium-term

6. Identify lands desirable for conservation and/or public greenspace and recommend what actions might be taken to conserve identified lands.
7. To maintain scenic views and promote roadside vegetation, the Johnson Shade Tree Committee should work with interested landowners to finalize the Johnson Shade Tree Preservation Plan.
8. Explore opportunities to establish scenic pull-offs in Johnson.

## Enhanced Energy Plan

### Implementation Recommendations:

#### Short-term

1. Conduct regular energy audits and upgrade old heating and cooling systems in municipal buildings.
2. Implement low-cost weatherization and energy conservation practices in municipal buildings.
3. Improve signage and advertise public charging stations in Johnson.
4. Promote carpooling/ride sharing services on municipal websites and Front Porch Forum.

#### Medium-term

5. Explore funding opportunities for siting solar facilities on municipal buildings/properties.
6. Explore funding for feasibility study for siting a biomass plant in Johnson and the implication of its emissions.
7. Explore energy storage systems for municipal buildings and utilities.
8. Encourage municipally/utility owned or neighborhood/community solar cooperatives in Johnson.
9. Continue to participate in the Lamoille TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) and work with Vermont State University-Johnson and Green Mountain Transit to survey Johnson residents' commuting patterns and promote a bus stop in Johnson Village to connect to Morrisville and Jeffersonville commuter lines.
10. Promote Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and its connectivity to Johnson Village Center.
11. Explore locations and potential funding for a Park and Ride in Johnson Village.
12. Investigate funding for high-speed charging stations to be located in the downtown shopping area, in areas accessible for residents and visitors.
13. Work with the Lamoille Housing Partnership as opportunities arise to promote solar and energy efficiency in affordable homes in Johnson.

#### Long-term

14. Study the costs and benefits of switching the Village's electric system voltage from 2400/4160V to 7200/12470V and continue to upgrade existing poles and wires outside the substation.
15. Explore the feasibility of establishing a municipal local tax incentive for new construction and renovations to assist property owners in upgrading energy efficiency standards as outlined in the Vermont Energy Code.

## Transportation

### Implementation Recommendations:

#### Short-term

1. Continue to encourage the State to fund needed bridge and culvert repair and replacement projects.
2. Support road maintenance training opportunities for highway crew employees in order to address the State's water quality requirements mandating reductions of road erosion, and sediment and stormwater runoffs.
3. Explore funding opportunities to install high speed Electric Vehicle chargers in Johnson.
4. The Town should make an effort to survey and maintain Class 4 roads as a Town asset.
5. Update or create Johnson trails maps and recreation guides.
6. Identify ways to safely interconnect the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail with the Village Center in order to enable pedestrians, bicyclists and snowmobilers to access to downtown amenities and services.
7. Consider painting and maintaining "sharrow" bicycle signs on paved roads frequently used by bicyclists. Examples of these roads are Pearl Street, School Street, and Railroad Street.

#### Medium-term

8. Maintain and update infrastructure inventories including but not limited to conditions of road surfaces, town rights-of-way road widths, bridges and culverts, retaining walls and other structures, stormwater facilities, sidewalks and curbs, signs, etc., and develop a capital plan to repair and replace these assets.
9. If a proposal exists to alter the location of a town road, the Town should confirm the location of the road right of way and connect with landowners to establish consensus about the road relocation.
10. Identify parcels that can serve as commuter park-and-ride lots and/or public transit bus stops.
11. Explore funding to enhance trail networks and connectivity around Johnson.
12. If Light Industrial Park will contain residential development and/or "Sterling Market", explore funding for pedestrian infrastructure around Rt 15.

#### Long-term

13. Explore traffic calming measures along Main Street in Johnson Village including a traffic study to assess stoplight / blinking light at Main St/Pearl St or Main St/Railroad St.

## **Public Services and Community Facilities**

### **Implementation Recommendations:**

#### Short-term

1. Continue to regularly update emergency planning documents.

#### Medium-term

2. Develop and regularly update a comprehensive Capital Improvement Program for all major Town / Village equipment, infrastructure and public investments.
3. Evaluate and consider the expansion of dry hydrant installations; pursue dry hydrant grant funding to implement expansion if deemed necessary.
4. Consider locating at least one Emergency operations Center (EOC) outside the floodplain.

#### Long-term

5. Explore flood resiliency alternatives including relocation for critical facilities out of the floodplain to reduce future flood damage.

## Education

### Implementation Recommendations:

#### Short-term

1. Support initiatives to develop childcare facilities where a need has been proven.
2. Continue to provide representation from Johnson on the Board of Directors for the Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District.
3. Accelerate efforts to build the relationship between Johnson Town, Village, and the Vermont State University- Johnson Campus.

#### Medium-term

4. Collaborate with community partners, regional workforce organizations, educational facilities, local employers, and the business community to evaluate workforce development needs, strategies, and trends.

## Recreation

### IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Short-term

1. Priority tasks identified by the Planning Commission in 2023 are:
  - a. Create and maintain access to all municipally owned recreational resources.
  - b. Improve signage to municipal recreational facilities.
  - c. Improve river access for paddlers, anglers and the community at large.
  - d. Publicize recreation/community events that take place in Johnson.
  - e. Explore funding opportunities to increase/enhance community greenspace in Johnson.
  - f. Explore funding opportunities to support floodplain restoration projects to provide outdoor recreation opportunities that mitigate flooding.
2. Explore opportunities for enhanced access / recreational options at VSU-J.

#### Medium-term

3. Periodically review recommended implementation tasks outlined in the 2005 Recreation Facilities Plan, update as needed and, where applicable, determine which are feasible for implementation.

#### Long-term

4. Explore funding for lights for the ball fields at Old Mill Park

## Flood Resiliency

### Implementation Recommendations:

#### Short-term

5. Ask the State to reevaluate the delineation of River Corridors in Johnson. Unless local - on the ground - conditions are considered, these river corridor maps should not be used for regulatory purposes, but may serve as a guide for identifying areas for further study.
6. In order to ensure that Johnson property owners remain eligible for flood insurance, regularly review and update as needed the Town and Village Flood Hazard Regulations to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Consider incorporating a requirement for one or two feet of freeboard into the regulations to provide additional protection against larger flood events, and conditions not considered in NFIP Minimum Standards, such as ice and debris jams.
7. Consider updating the criteria for Johnson's revolving loan fund to include elevation and flood proofing of existing structures within the floodplain, with priority given to structures located in Johnson Village.
8. Investigate constrictions or chokepoints along the Gihon and Lamoille Rivers that contribute to flooding. Evaluate the most effective measure of mitigating these constrictions.
9. Participate in regional flood resiliency discussions.
10. Identify and prioritize undersized bridges and culverts located on Town Roads; identify funding sources for upgrades.
11. Annually review and prioritize fixes for streambank failure and road erosion concerns along municipal roads in the Town right-of-way and restore vegetation in priority eroded streambank locations.
12. Explore flood resiliency alternatives including relocation for critical facilities in the floodplain to reduce future flood damage.
13. Consider revising the Johnson Form Based Code to allow for exemptions for installing flood resiliency measures.
14. Install a light/siren pole warning system throughout town to warn residents/visitors of a flood, fire, tornado, etc.

#### Medium-term

15. Consider participating in the Community Rating System (CRS) as a tool to reduce flood insurance premiums. Evaluate whether the reduced flood insurance premiums available to property owners through the CRS program justify the expense of the additional administrative requirements.
16. Identify organizations (either local or regional) to take the lead in implementing the restoration projects identified in River Corridor Management Plans, and flood modeling studies.
17. Work with interested landowners in the Forest District to maintain large blocks of unfragmented, upland forest.
18. Work with landowners interested in Buyout Programs to restore riparian and forested habitat and increase public greenspace in Johnson where possible. Work with interested local business owners to increase and enhance greenspace in Johnson Village.

19. Include resources on the Johnson Municipal website to educate landowners about programs and funding that could support restoration of stream buffers, conserve habitat, and other conservation practices.
20. Support Conservation and River Corridor Easements in Johnson and help connect landowners with local resources (Ex: Vermont Land Trust, Vermont River Conservancy, Vermont DEC)
21. Continue to revisit and prioritize actions from the Johnson Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Long-term

22. Begin long-term flood resiliency planning efforts focused on relocating the “Town Center” out of the floodplain and reimagining the current downtown area.
23. Continue to make investments including relocation, that reduce the vulnerability of the Village sewer and water systems and municipally owned buildings (Johnson Municipal Building, Fire Station, Library, Wastewater Treatment Plant) to flooding.



## Land Use

### Implementation Recommendations

#### Short-term

1. - Expand the boundary of the Designated Village Center district to encourage revitalization, facilitate economic opportunities and strengthen the vibrancy of the village center.

#### Medium-term

2. - Utilize existing development controls and state regulatory proceedings in an effort to implement the vision, and address the needs, conclusions and policies of this plan