

## Vergas Comprehensive Plan 2024 Progress Review

### Land Use & Built Form

**Goal:** Capitalize on in-fill opportunities and direct growth to new areas where infrastructure is planned to be cost-effective and sustainable

**Strategies:**

- When considering expansion options, prioritize expansion that follows a set of guidance developed through a growth and management plan.
- Investigate annexing shorelines across bodies of water when landowners are favorable to the request

Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
Develop tiered system for expansion based on Vergas water & sewer capacity, EMS services and other public services & facilities.	Water/Sewer Committee is developing a tiered system for expansion based on capacity.	
Identify possible annexation areas and contact owners.	Planning Commission looking at W. Lake Street	
Pay close attention to and abide by shoreline regulations governed by the state.	Planning Commission changed permit process and updating shoreline management ordinance	
Participate in preserving the health of lakes and surrounding wildlife.	Storm water runoff being discussed	

**Goal:** Land use and build form decisions support and celebrate the existing character of the town

**Strategies:**

- Encourage land uses that strengthen Vergas' reputation as a family-friendly, safe place with a small-town charm.
  - Limit land uses that allow for big box stores, chains, large processing plants or other developments that have short-term gains and long-term losses of community character and environmental protection.
  - Ensure that any land use involving light industrial development has a plan for maintenance and accessibility.
- Encourage or offer tax incentives for parking for new construction.

Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
EDA/HRA develop incentives to encourage uses identified above.		
Planning and Zoning develop policies regarding use identified above	Planning Commission updating zoning map with review and modification of city ordinances.	
EDA identify areas appropriate for light industrial development.		
Explore above and underground parking.	Parking lot identified and planned for OTC building site.	

### Housing

**Goal:** Identify affordable housing lots that can be developed with the next 5 years

**Strategies:**

- Develop partnerships with Otter Tail Co. to share county-level resources with local developers and future residents via existing incentives and initiatives.

Conduct and inventory and promote lots available.		
Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
EDA develop a fact sheet regarding available assistance programs		
Utilize city website by adding housing resources comparable to neighboring cities		
<b>Transportation</b>		
<b>Goal: Make Vergas accessible for all modes of transportation and for people of all abilities</b>		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key places across the city that can improve handicap accessibility.</li> <li>Communicate and market existing transportation services.</li> <li>Identify additional locations for downtown parking.</li> <li>Construct handicapped parking spots and sidewalks along Co Rd 4.</li> <li>Explore advantages and disadvantages of rerouting Co Rd 4 through downtown to reduce thorough traffic on Main Street.</li> <li>Explore options for reducing stopped trains and subsequent stopped traffic.</li> </ul> Promote programs for ridesharing networks and services		
Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
Conduct an ADA audit or other type of evaluation to identify key areas for improvement across the city.		
Create short reference guide for residents and visitors describing local and regional transportation options.		
Work with Planning Commission to determine if vacant or undeveloped property could serve as space for new parking lots, and potential diagonal parking.	Parking lot planned for OTC building property that was acquired by the city.	
Contact Canada Pacific to explore moving the exchange.		
Streets, sidewalks and yard waste committee review possibilities of collaboration with OTC Highway Department.		
<b>Goal: Increase connectivity between Vergas and regional trails</b>		
<b>Strategies:</b> Consult entities, like MN DOT, DNR, WCI and Partnership 4 Health, about pursuing grants for planning and infrastructure for a trail connection.		
Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
Work with OTC to pursue grant funding to connect the Heartland Trail along Co.Rd 4.	Feasibility study conducted for Heartland and Heart of Lake trails. Approved by Council and plan for Heart of Lakes trail connected with Co. Hwy 35 project	
Add multi-use path to the update of the 2019 Capital Improvement Plan to ensure that it is included in future city budget.		
<b>Business &amp; Economic Development</b>		

<b>Goal: Maintain the small business atmosphere</b>		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise local businesses regionally</li> </ul> Review and update city laws and ordinances that support small business owners		
Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
Work with neighboring Chambers of Commerce to advertise and access resources	OTC Lakes Country Magazine	
Collaborate with the Community Club to identify opportunities and resources to market regionally.	Facebook on ongoing bases features a Vergas business, and hosts events to promote businesses, i.e new event Shops n’ Hops. Vergas advertising and featured highlights in OTC Lakes Country Magazine. Established a full Vergas/lakes billboard that features map of area and Vergas hosted Events. Also have a brochure with Vergas events that was distributed and in stores for ongoing access and have full size posters in the businesses that shows 2023 events. Weekly TV3 Vergas show that highlights Vergas	
Submit stories, ads, and updates to surrounding local papers.	Frazee Forum has featured a number of Vergas stories, i.e. Maple Syrup Fest, Art Camp, Vergas Art Program. Ads in Frazee forum on an ongoing basis.	
Invest in enhancing the City website		
Preserve existing protections within city laws and ordinances		
Explore state and federal incentives for small businesses, especially those making positive impact in nearby communities.		
<b>Goal: Invest in Human Capital</b>		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in local childcare options</li> <li>• Create opportunities for socializing, connecting, creative placemaking year-round.</li> </ul> Provide opportunities for retirees to utilize their knowledge and experience and increase social connection.		
Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
Connect with OTC Early Childhood Coordinator to identify needs and resources.		
Improve marketing of existing community activities, from small socializing to large events.	As above, Facebook, OTC Lakes Country magazine, event brochure and billboard	
Identify gaps in existing community programming and recruit volunteers to host one and/or recurring events.		

Explore development of spaces for families to recreate and your specific activities.	Detroit Lakes water ski club practicing Long Lake city park and offering ski shows	
Identify and invite volunteers to join planning and implementation projects.	Ongoing. Is part of event planning to reach out for volunteers.	
<b>Goal: Prioritize business development that provides daytime and evening activities for residents</b>		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create more opportunities to recruit local businesses, especially where gaps in existing services</li> </ul> Increase awareness of state and regional resources for small business owners and entrepreneurs.		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
Work in partnership with Vergas EDA to integrate public feedback into business development and expansion strategies		
Host a business and entrepreneurship fair in partnership with OTC with targeted outreach based on survey results and public input.		
Leverage partnerships with existing programs; i.e WCI, MN DEED, SCORE business mentors, Vergas Community Club, West Central Small Business Development Center, Women's Ventures, OTC Small Business Coaching.		
<b>Goal: Develop and expand job opportunities</b>		
<b>Strategies:</b> Maintain and increase number of visitors Pursue opportunities for light manufacturing Support digital entrepreneurs and remote workers		
<b>Action item</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
Advertise business and recreational opportunities and events regionally.	As noted previously; Facebook, OTC Lakes Country magazine, TV3 Vergas show.	
Pursue and invest in trail development.	Feasibility study conducted to examine Vergas connection to Heartland and Heart of Lake Trails	
Cultivate more year-round attractions and events.	Year round event calendar, 9 of 12 months community event. This does not include events by other businesses and groups.	
Identify land available for development and purchase.	City purchase of 8 lots from OTC foreclosed land (Eva/Diane street)-Sunny Oaks. OTC to build 4 Senior living housing units in the development.	
Offer the Event Center as coworking space by appointment.	Event Center improvements and updates being made to make the space more visibly appealing and marketable.	

	Hired part time Event Center Coordinator to promote event center space.	
Maintain and develop broadband capabilities.		
Connect with neighboring communities to participate in county-wide networking opportunities. (host pre-existing groups for a meeting).	Regional Mayor meetings , Regional City Clerk meetings	
<b>Public Services and Facilities</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Maintain adequate pubic facilities and services to meet the health, safety, education, and leisure needs of all Vergas residents.		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize infrastructure investment based on existing facilities with deficiencies first, and retrofitting of facilities second, and future facility needs third.</li> <li>Engage in strategic partnerships to ensure that Vergas is identified as a community for investment in fiber optic cable to increase broadband access.</li> </ul> Conduct a needs assessment to understand more about the barriers and opportunities to improve resident access to medical facilities. (transportation, awareness).		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
Encourage various committees to complete prioritization exercise.	Water Sewer Committee is working on prioritizing needs by making a project list.	
Explore expanded services, particularly MN DEED Border-to-Border Broadband opportunity.		
Collaborate with EDA/HRA to oversee a needs assessment.		
<b>Goal:</b> Ensure highest quality standards and services for public safety given Vergas' existing resources and staff capacity.		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure safety of navigation throughout city streets and sidewalks.</li> </ul> Make Long Lake Park a desirable location for recreation year-round.		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review, update, and publicize the city's planning and zoning maps to accurately indicate which city sidewalks are to be maintained by the city vs residents.</li> </ul>	Planning Commission updating zoning maps	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a parking study.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the possibility of a MNDOT Complete Streets project for Vergas.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renovate and upgrade public restroom facilities at Long Lake park.</li> </ul>	Park improvement proposal developed, park board working with NDSU, which includes improved facilities. Painting and lighting improvements to restroom. Loon Art for the park fundraising event to support park improvements. Community feedback on plan at the Loon Art for the Park event.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to work with rental company for non-motorized watercraft.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider snowshoe rental companies.</li> </ul>		

<b>Goal:</b> Ensure that services and facilities allow residents and visitors of 55 years or older to age in place.		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure safety of navigation through city streets and sidewalks.</li> </ul> Work to develop a full spectrum of transitions in senior housing needs, from accessibility options to access of services and skilled nursing.		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
Develop handicap parking spots		
Work with ED/HRS to conduct a needs assessment and feasibility study for expanded senior housing options.	Have 2021 Comprehensive plan, 2019 EDA/HRA Housing study and working with OTC Housing & Redevelopment	
<b>Parks &amp; Open Spaces</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Support Community Art and arts programming		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of displays of interactive art around town, in parks, and open spaces.</li> </ul> Increase community education arts programming.		
<b>Action Items</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a directory of local artists.</li> </ul>	Studio Crawl is planned for Sept 23, 2023 and this is step in the direction to create a directory. VCC has local artist creating loon pieces placed around Vergas.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to offering summer youth art camp.</li> </ul>	Continues to grow. In 2023 had 126 youth art Youth pottery classes available	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a listing of events on city website.</li> </ul>	On City website, VCC Facebook, and posters Established a Vergas Arts Program, aligned with VCC. Hosted 3 performing arts (Chmielewski band, Tony DeBlois, and Siama Story Teller).	
<b>Goal:</b> Update public facilities at Long Lake Park		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue working with NDSU to develop concept designs for Long Lake park.</li> </ul> Communicate with county and regional stakeholders in parks and recreation the desire to pursue state and federal funding.		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 Progress</b>	<b>2024 Progress</b>
Follow guidelines and budget in Capital Improvement plan for restroom facilities specifications and budget.		
Park Board present ideas to Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council for implementation.	Park Board presented park improvement plan	
<b>Goal:</b> Leverage existing amenities to create a culture that celebrates physical activity and community-based sports that are complementary to school sports schedules.		
<b>Strategies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create opportunities for sports and physical education.</li> <li>Begin offering adult leagues for baseball, softball etc..</li> </ul> Explore opportunities for additional recreational space development.		

Action Item	2023 Progress	2024 Progress
Example; Offer lessons for pickleball, classes for local fitness trainers, dance classes.	Lakes Fit offers classes and pickleball has classes for beginners	
Coordinate community education for implementation.	Continue to collaborate with Frazee community education for Vergas swimming lessons	
Conduct a feasibility study for soccer fields and/or frisbee golf.		
Planning and Zoning identify sustainable areas.		