

## Vergas Comprehensive Plan 2025 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 and 2024 Progress	2025 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 <b>Zoning map identified potential expansion.</b>	<b>Potential expansion/annexation areas identified</b>
Pay close attention to and abide by shoreline regulations governed by the state.	Planning Commission changed permit process and updating shoreline management ordinance. <b>Updated Shoreline Management ordinance.</b> <b>Discussing Shoreline Management inspection services with Otter Tail County.</b>	<b>Agreement in place for Otter Tail County Land and Resource Management to oversee all construction within 1,000 feet of lakeshore.</b>
Participate in preserving the health of lakes and surrounding wildlife.	Storm water runoff being discussed <b>Widseth Engineering evaluated water drainage issues in downtown main street alley ways.</b> <b>Vergas was the recipient of the Dave Neiman Source Water Protection Award.</b> <b>Updated Local Government Unit Wetland Conservation Act information. Working with East Otter Tail Soil &amp; Water Conservation and State of MN (BWSR).</b>	<b>Working with East Otter Tail County Soil and Water Management for planting of flowers and trees in parks.</b> <b>The Vergas Long Lake Association conducts water testing looking at phosphorus, chlorophyll, &amp; clarity.</b> <b>Energy &amp; Resilience Advisory Board has prioritized reiew and action directed at building infrastructure, environment &amp; green infrastructure and lake/water systems</b>

**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 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
EDA/HRA develop incentives to encourage uses identified above.	Ordinance already in place that restricts big box stores	<b>HRA signed purchase agreement for property to be developed into daycare.</b> <b>City Energy &amp; Resilience Advisory Board looking at environment/green space.</b>

Planning and Zoning develop policies regarding use identified above	Planning Commission updating zoning map with review and modification of city ordinances. <b>Zoning map updated and approved. In the process of conducting codification of all ordinances.</b>	<b>Continuing codification of all ordinances.</b>
EDA identify areas appropriate for light industrial development.		
Explore above and underground parking.	Parking lot identified and planned for OTC building site. <b>Plan to pave parking lot and alley ways. Informational meeting was held with those affected. Call for bids to go out in spring.</b>	<b>Completed parking lot project adding 140 E Linden for parking. Added Handicapped space behind liquor store.</b>

### Housing

Goal: Identify affordable housing lots that can be developed with the next 5 years		
Strategies:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop partnerships with Otter Tail Co. to share county-level resources with local developers and future residents via existing incentives and initiatives.</li> </ul> Conduct and inventory and promote lots available.		
Action Item	2023 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
EDA develop a fact sheet regarding available assistance programs	<b>Pamphlet for Sunny Oaks Properties with County/City incentives.</b>	<b>Pamphlet for Eva/Dianne Properties with County/City incentives.</b>
Utilize city website by adding housing resources comparable to neighboring cities		

### Transportation

Goal: Make Vergas accessible for all modes of transportation and for people of all abilities		
Strategies:		
<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 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
Conduct an ADA audit or other type of evaluation to identify key areas for improvement across the city.	<b>Cross walks placed at intersections on Main Street.</b>	<b>2 handicap parking spots added to downtown. Itched crosswalks added to downtown intersections.</b>
Create short reference guide for residents and visitors describing local and regional transportation options.		<b>As part of City of Vergas Trail Feasibility Study; Vergas was connected to the Heart of Lakes regional trail.</b>

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. <b>Parking lot area available with plan to asphalt in spring.</b>	<b>Parking lot was paved and parking lot lines provided.</b>
Contact Canada Pacific to explore moving the exchange.	<b>Working with County, State and CP Railroad on notification process to identify and track delays and issues. Communications with CP broadly advertised. Ultimate goal is to move track switch.</b>	<b>Met with CP and their engineers are reviewing design process of moving the track switch.</b>
Streets, sidewalks and yard waste committee review possibilities of collaboration with OTC Highway Department.	<b>Working with OTC Highway Dept. on identifying handicap parking locations and signage for downtown.</b> <b>Working with OTC Highway Department on main street sidewalks with future Hwy 4 road work.</b>	<b>2 handicap parking spots added to downtown.</b>
<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.		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 Progress</b>
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 <b>Plan to connect with future Hwy 35 road work.</b>	<b>Trail completed on Hwy 35 connecting to the Pelican/Perham the Heart of the Lakes rail.</b> <b>Working with Hobart Township and Otter Tail County to connect to Heartland regional trail to Frazee in 2031.</b>
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> • Advertise local businesses regionally Review and update city laws and ordinances that support small business owners		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 Progress</b>
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.	<b>VCC continues strong facebook and promotions presence and has Vergas in the Ottertail Lakes country publication. This is ongoing. Would close.</b>

	Weekly TV3 Vergas show that highlights Vergas <b>Ongoing. Vergas Community Club is active in regional marketing. Has Facebook site with high volume access.</b>	
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. <b>Ongoing. Vergas events routinely featured in Frazee Forum and DL paper.</b>	<b>Events and stories regarding Vergas are consistently featured in Frazee and DL papers and Vergas TV3 . This is ongoing.</b>
Invest in enhancing the City website		<b>VCC and City of Vergas looking at website improvements</b>
Preserve existing protections within city laws and ordinances		<b>City Planning Commission is reviewing all ordinances in terms of relevancy and currency to ensure accurate and up to date</b>
Explore state and federal incentives for small businesses, especially those making positive impact in nearby communities.	<b>EDA Grant program with OTC Community Fund and CEDA money. Business Facade Improvement Program being offered.</b>	<b>Business Facade Improvement program remains in place. Continue to have a CEDA representative with EDA/HRA providing ongoing information to potential incentives.</b>
<b>Goal: Invest in Human Capital</b>		
Strategies: <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.		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 Progress</b>
Connect with OTC Early Childhood Coordinator to identify needs and resources.	<b>Meetings and discussions are being held with OTC and WCIF regarding childcare needs in Vergas.</b>	<b>HRA received grant from RCCIP and developed a daycare committee.</b>
Improve marketing of existing community activities, from small socializing to large events.	As above, Facebook, OTC Lakes Country magazine, event brochure and billboard <b>Ongoing.</b>	<b>Continue promotion of events regardless of the size on Facebook, OTC Lakes Country magazine, event brochure /flyer and city billboards</b>
Identify gaps in existing community programming and recruit volunteers to host one and/or recurring events.		<b>VCC and Art Club have implemented new events to draw in different crowds; as Puzzles/Pizza/Pounders and Kids/family Bring in Spring event. Volunteers routinely recruited.</b> <b>VCC is reinstating a community welcoming outreach to new residents and businesses to inform and engage in volunteering.</b>
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 <b>Improvements made to Vergas Event Center and future improvement plan for Long Lake Park.</b> <b>Community events are family oriented and hosted at various sites throughout the community as event center, long lake park, ballpark and main street</b>	<b>Ongoing from prior years where events and activities are held at a variety of venues conducive to family participation.</b>

Identify and invite volunteers to join planning and implementation projects.	Ongoing. Is part of event planning to reach out for volunteers. <b>Ongoing process with city events.</b>	<b>City has engaged residents to participate in surveys and participate in city committee's. Surveys in 2025 included Energy &amp; Resilience and City Siren. VCC routinely solicits volunteers to assist with the planning and implementation of events. VCC has established a volunteer recognition program.</b>
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**Goal: Prioritize business development that provides daytime and evening activities for residents**

**Strategies:**

- Create more opportunities to recruit local businesses, especially where gaps in existing services

Increase awareness of state and regional resources for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 Progress</b>
Work in partnership with Vergas EDA to integrate public feedback into business development and expansion strategies	<b>EDA is working with CEDA for a business retention and expansion plan. First impressions report and survey with businesses regarding their needs. Local Business Facade Improvement Grant established.</b>	<b>Continue with CEDA contract to support city and business development and expansion. In 2025 priority given to a daycare in the community.</b>
Host a business and entrepreneurship fair in partnership with OTC with targeted outreach based on survey results and public input.	<b>Digital Marketing workshop held for businesses.</b>	<b>Continue to host an annual EDA/HRA meeting with encouraged attendance by the community where education and opportunities are highlighted.</b>
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>Established partnerships related to receiving energy grant. Partnerships with CERTS, ESMC, RSDP, University of Minnesota Architecture program, Green Cities, and WCIF in pursuing Municipal Building energy efficiencies and integration of clean energy. Working with OTC Lake Shore Management on lake shore inspection services. Work with CEDA Rural Capacity Program.</b>	<b>Continue to strengthen and establish partnerships as noted in 2024. In 2025 establishing partnerships in assessing and implementing a daycare.</b>

**Goal: Develop and expand job opportunities**

**Strategies:**

Maintain and increase number of visitors  
Pursue opportunities for light manufacturing  
Support digital entrepreneurs and remote workers

<b>Action item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 Progress</b>
Advertise business and recreational opportunities and events regionally.	As noted previously; Facebook, OTC Lakes Country magazine, TV3 Vergas show. <b>Ongoing. Continue to utilize a number of resources in advertising.</b>	<b>Ongoing as previously noted.</b>
Pursue and invest in trail development.	Feasibility study conducted to examine Vergas connection to Heartland and Heart of Lake Trails <b>City Council approved feasibility study. Heart of Lakes Trail to align with OTC Hwy 35 project.</b>	<b>In 2025 Vergas connected to the Heart of Lakes Regional Trail with the Hwy 35 project.</b>

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. <b>Vergas Community Club has an established calendar of events throughout the year. Other organizations also host events. I.e. Lions club and churches and local businesses.</b>	<b>Between VCC , Businesses, Lions, Churches and clubst here are events throughout the year.</b> <b>In addition to events have outdoor activities as swimming/boating in summer and fishing/snowmobiing in winter.</b> <b>Newly adding a Vergas Story Book Trail where story will be posted along the long lake trail to add interest when walking.</b>
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. <b>Three new housing developments and EDA are active in the sale of Sunny Oaks lots.</b>	<b>27 Sunny Oak available lots were available for purchase. 1 lot remaining unsold.</b>
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. <b>Updating kitchen at VEC. Lions 170 hours of volunteer hours at the Event Center. Vergas Community Club provided over \$20,000 in donations.</b>	<b>VEC kitchen update completed.</b> <b>New LCD projector installed to support large group meeting projection needs</b>
Maintain and develop broadband capabilities.	<b>Maintain internet access inside and outside VEC for community use.</b>	<b>Internet access established. Close</b>
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>Continue active participation with the Region 4 Mayors Network, Regional City Clerk meetings and Otter Tail Lakes Country Association. League of Minnesota Cities hosted a regional meeting in Vergas and OTC Commissioners hosted an open house in Vergas.</b>	<b>Vergas Council met with Frazee Council to discuss ideas and plan for annual meetings. Continue to be involved with regional and state meetings.</b>

### Public Services and Facilities

**Goal:** Maintain adequate pubic facilities and services to meet the health, safety, education, and leisure needs of all Vergas residents.

**Strategies:**

- Prioritize infrastructure investment based on existing facilities with deficiencies first, and retrofitting of facilities second, and future facility needs third.
  - Engage in strategic partnerships to ensure that Vergas is identified as a community for investment in fiber optic cable to increase broadband access.
- Conduct a needs assessment to understand more about the barriers and opportunities to improve resident access to medical facilities. (transportation, awareness).

Action Item	2023 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
Encourage various committees to complete prioritization exercise.	Water Sewer Committee is working on prioritizing needs by making a project list. <b>Revised community zoning map approved.</b>	<b>As part of the annual budget process, the city committees and programming entities prioritize current and future needs</b>

Explore expanded services, particularly MN DEED Border-to-Border Broadband opportunity.		
Collaborate with EDA/HRA to oversee a needs assessment.	<b>EDA business survey conducted regarding their needs.</b>	<b>Working with West Central SBDC to support businesses.</b>
<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> <p>Make Long Lake Park a desirable location for recreation year-round.</p>		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 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>	<p>Planning Commission updating zoning maps  <b>Revised community zoning map approved.</b>  <b>Clarification provided on sidewalks.</b></p>	<b>Completed in 2024.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a parking study.</li> </ul>		<b>Handicap parking review conducted by OTC DOT</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the possibility of a MNDOT Complete Streets project for Vergas.</li> </ul>		<b>Submitting LRIP (Local Road improvement Program) to OTC for reconstruction of West Lake Street.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renovate and upgrade public restroom facilities at Long Lake park.</li> </ul>	<p>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.  <b>Long Lake Park improvement plan devised and reviewed with the community. Includes new bathhouse. Funding raising in process.</b></p>	<b>Long Lake Improvement plan includes new restroom facility. Funding an issue in completing plan. Request submitted to MN state legislature to institute a 0.5% local retail sales tax specific to the Long Lake Improvement plan. If approved, will be on November 2026 elections ballot.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to work with rental company for non-motorized watercraft.</li> </ul>		<b>Local business, Wild Fire Fur, has initiated rental of lily pads.</b>
<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> <p>Work to develop a full spectrum of transitions in senior housing needs, from accessibility options to access of services and skilled nursing.</p>		
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>2023 and 2024 Progress</b>	<b>2025 Progress</b>
Develop handicap parking spots	<b>Streets Committee is working with OTC to identify handicap parking locations and signage.</b>	<b>Added 2 handicapped spaces in the downtown.</b>
Work with EDA/HRA 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>OTC has 2 lots in Sunny Oaks Development for senior housing complex.</b>

## Parks & Open Spaces

**Goal:** Support Community Art and arts programming

**Strategies:**

- Increase the number of displays of interactive art around town, in parks, and open spaces.
- Increase community education arts programming.

Action Items	2023 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a directory of local artists.</li> </ul>	<p>Studio Crawl is planned for Sept 23, 2023 and this is step in the direction to create a directory.</p> <p>VCC has local artist creating loon pieces placed around Vergas.</p> <p><b>Active Vergas Arts Club and has the annual Studio Crawl which identifies local artists. Club has been applying for grants and received funding for Pert Near Sandstone band at Shops and Hops event.</b></p>	<p><b>A Vergas Arts Club established and working with local artists and has ongoing programming. Embedded in the community and would close from specifically tracking.</b></p> <p><b>The Artisan Inn Studio will be opening later summer and will offer Craft retreats, Artist teaching, local artist gallery. This includes event lodging for up to 20.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to offering summer youth art camp.</li> </ul>	<p>Continues to grow. In 2023 had 126 youth art Youth pottery classes available</p> <p><b>Continue to have youth art camp each year in June. Have held since 2020. Youth play production and Viking Library production offering.</b></p>	<p><b>An annual established event. Will close from specifically tracking.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a listing of events on city website.</li> </ul>	<p>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).</p> <p><b>A VCC website was established that city website has links to.</b></p> <p><b>City website continues to provide a listing of community events.</b></p>	<p><b>City Websit, VCC facebook and website on an ongoing basis has listing and dates of events. This is well established and will close from specifically tracking.</b></p>

**Goal:** Update public facilities at Long Lake Park

**Strategies:**

- Continue working with NDSU to develop concept designs for Long Lake park.
- Communicate with county and regional stakeholders in parks and recreation the desire to pursue state and federal funding.

Action Item	2023 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
Follow guidelines and budget in Capital Improvement plan for restroom facilities specifications and budget.	<b>Park improvement plan priority is a new bathhouse at the beach.</b>	Priority in the Long Lake Part improvement plan.
Park Board present ideas to Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council for implementation.	Park Board presented park improvement plan <b>Long Lake Park improvement plan broken down master plan into phases. Fundraising in process.</b>	<b>Long Lake Park Improvement plan established. Looking at a local retail sales tax to fund.</b>

**Goal:** Leverage existing amenities to create a culture that celebrates physical activity and community-based sports that are complementary to school sports schedules.

**Strategies:**

- Create opportunities for sports and physical education.
  - Begin offering adult leagues for baseball, softball etc..
- Explore opportunities for additional recreational space development.

Action Item	2023 and 2024 Progress	2025 Progress
Example; Offer lessons for pickleball, classes for local fitness trainers, dance classes.	Lakes Fit offers classes and pickleball has classes for beginners <b>Pickle ball Association has offered lessons and has held events as women's night &amp; during Looney Days.</b>	<b>Pickelball lessons in place and classes available for fitness, swimming, and yoga. North Star ski show has offered ski lessons</b>
Coordinate community education for implementation.	Continue to collaborate with Frazee community education for Vergas swimming lessons <b>Continue to collaborate with Frazee community education for Vergas swimming lessons and summer youth play.</b>	<b>Continue to collaborate with Frazee community education for Vergas swimming lessons, baseball, summer youth play.</b>
Conduct a feasibility study for soccer fields and/or frisbee golf.		
Planning and Zoning identify sustainable areas.		<b>As part of the Energy Grant and GreenStep City recognition program, the Energy &amp; Resilinece Advisory Board looking at building infrastructure, environment &amp; green space and lake/water systems.</b>