# Tools and Support for Local Mapmaking

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Creating a good map can make planning easier, strengthen grant applications, and help your community understand local projects. This guide brings together reliable mapping tools and support options now that the original Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation resource is no longer available. VLCT has updated and expanded the information so municipalities can continue to access practical mapping help.

## Getting Started with Mapping Resources

A clear map can show project boundaries, natural features, roads, and other important details. Vermont offers many tools - most of them free - that can help you build maps that fit your needs.

The Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI) is a great place to begin. Their website includes a large collection of datasets and mapping tools. VCGI also hosts the Vermont Interactive Map Viewer, which lets you build custom maps, add layers and shapefiles, and download your map in different formats. This tool is easy to use, even if you are new to mapping.

## State Agency Mapping Tools

Many Vermont state agencies offer online maps and GIS tools that can support planning, research, and grant applications.

- Department of Housing and Community Development – Planning Atlas – Shows planning, development, and historic preservation-related data, such as designation boundaries, basic natural resource and physical features, building footprints, cemeteries, community centers, connectivity data, etc.

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- Agency of Natural Resources – What's My Elevation? – Gives elevation and GPS coordinates for any point in Vermont. If the screen looks blank, type in a town name to load the view.
- Agency of Natural Resources – Maps and Mapping – Includes natural resource data, environmental permit information, and land use data. The Natural Resources Atlas, web maps and the Biofinder Database are accessible through this site.
- Agency of Transportation – Mapping Section Maps - Offers transportation maps useful for base layers and identifying bridges, culverts, and other infrastructure.
- Agency of Transportation – Town Highway Maps – Provides current and historical town highway maps. You can search for maps by county, town, or year.
- Agency of Transportation – Vermont Transportation Flood Resiliency Planning Tool - Helps predict how roads, bridges, and culverts may be affected by flooding, erosion, and other hazards.
- Agency of Transportation – Vermont Online Geodetic Information System (VOLGIS) - Lets users search for survey marks across the state.
- Department of Health – Public Health GIS – Includes reference maps, topic-specific map atlases, dashboard-styled reports, and other public health mapping resources.
- E911 Board – Maps and GIS Data - Provides town map books and atlases for printing, plus an E-911 viewer for locating road names and addresses.

## Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)

Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions each have at least one GIS specialist who can help with mapping and data analysis. RPCs often are the best source for local GIS data.

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You can find contact information for each RPC through the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA).

## Academic Institutions and GIS Consultants

Several Vermont colleges and universities offer GIS classes and programs. Some may provide interns or class-based support for community mapping projects.

VCGI also publishes a voluntary list of GIS consultants who provide services to Vermont communities and organizations. Anyone offering GIS services may request to be added to this list. You can access these lists at https://vcgi.vermont.gov/partners.

## Census Data Support

The UVM Center for Rural Studies hosts the Vermont's Census State Data Center. This center helps communities access and use Census data and other Vermont-specific datasets. They offer free training and technical assistance and can help you learn how to use map viewers that display Census information.

## Building Capacity for Local Projects

Strong maps help communities tell their stories, plan for the future, and make well-supported decisions. Vermont offers many tools - along with knowledgeable partners across state agencies, regional planning commissions, schools, and consultants - to help towns create clear and useful maps. By exploring these resources, your community can build maps that support local projects, strengthen grant applications, and improve communication with residents. As you continue your work, think about which tools fit your project best and who might be a helpful partner along the way.

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