

FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN VILLAGES AND DOWNTOWNS



Market Veggies | ©Denise E Photography



Windsor Potter | ©Peanutroaster



Randolph Restaurant | ©First Light Studios

THE IMPORTANCE OF VERMONT'S DOWNTOWNS AND VILLAGE CENTERS



Randolph / ©First Light Studios

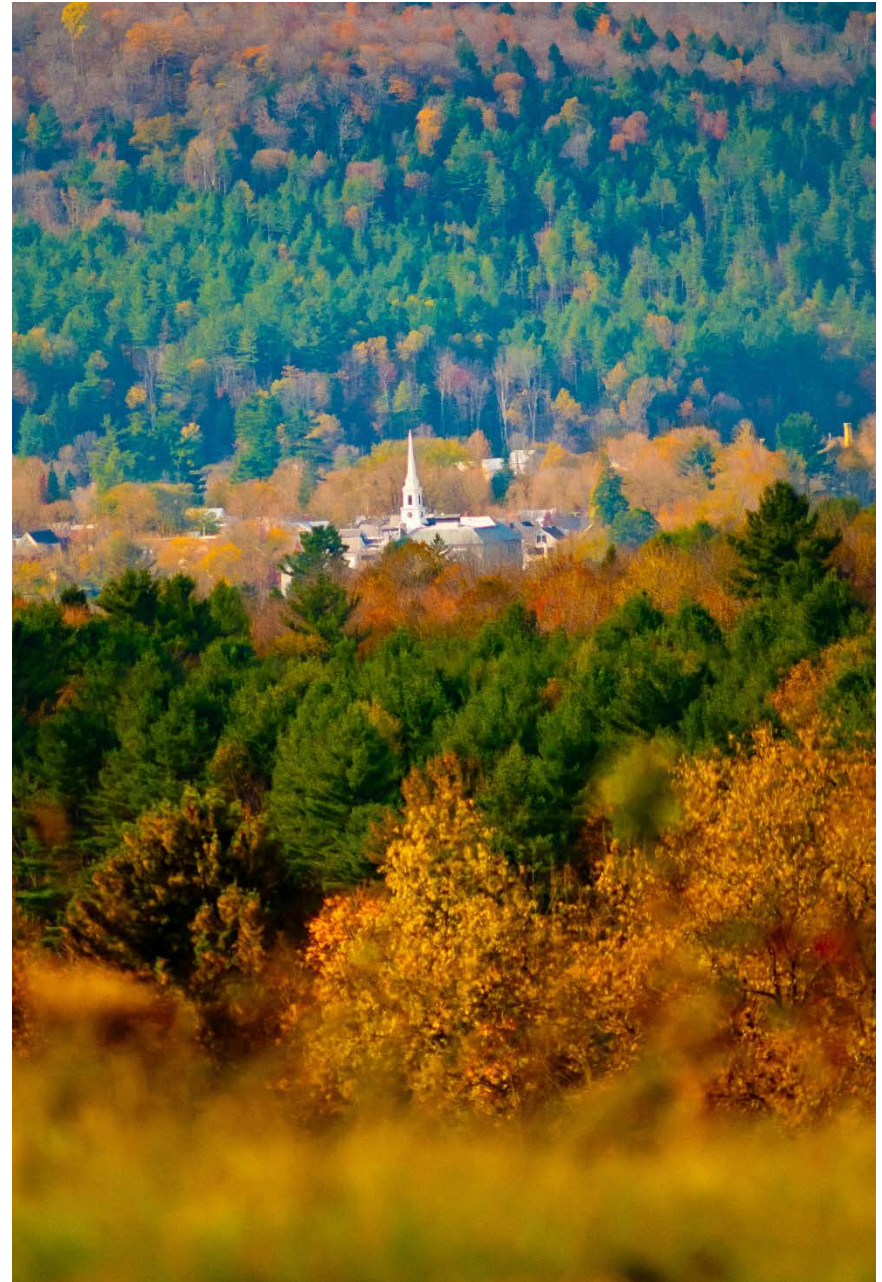
Vermont's downtowns and village centers provide a distinct contribution to Vermont's brand and identity.

While economic activity can occur anywhere in a town, communities that have a discernable, historic center – even if just a few commercial establishments and civic buildings – have a special community asset.

BENEFITS OF DIRECTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO DOWNTOWNS AND VILLAGE CENTERS

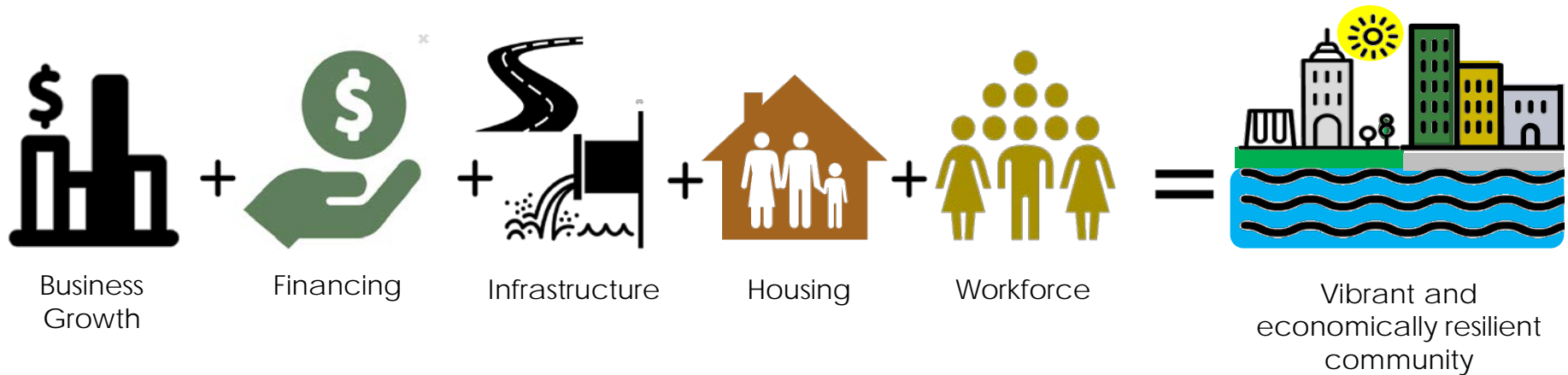
- **Compact development** creates neighborhoods, not subdivisions and sprawl that erode our working landscapes.
- **Re-investment** in downtowns and village centers removes blight and adds value to the Grand List. Aged and underutilized commercial/industrial buildings (brownfields) are typically concentrated in downtowns or village centers.
- **Efficient use** is made of existing infrastructure, and open lands needed for agriculture, forestry, and recreation are retained.

Compact development: Retail, service, entertainment and civic uses placed in close proximity to each other and housing.



Long View of Randolph/ ©First Light Studios

WHAT CREATES AND SUSTAINS A VIBRANT AND ECONOMICALLY RESILIENT COMMUNITY?



- Each community is unique and has different qualities and needs. Some issues will be worked on at the regional level, such as workforce development; while some issues can be addressed locally, such as storefront improvements.
- For small towns, business growth may consist of a general store, and an investment in infrastructure may mean “human infrastructure” – the volunteers and non-profit organizations that improve the community, and make it a better place to live.



Business growth can be done in several ways:

- Retain & expand existing businesses
- Provide support for start-ups and entrepreneurs
- Recruit new businesses



Financing tools include:

- **Municipal Bonds**
- **Targeted tools** — Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and special assessment districts
- **Investment tools** — tax credits and angel investor funds
- **Access to Capital Lending Tools** — revolving loan funds, loan guarantees, microenterprise financing, and Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) programs
- **Support tools** — Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) funds, State Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund, and local tax stabilization





Investments in infrastructure lay the foundations for economic development and growth. Examples of infrastructure needs include:

- **Transportation** (*Roads, Bike Paths, Sidewalks, Rail, Aviation, Bridges*)
- **Energy** (*transmission and storage*)
- **Solid Waste** (*collection and management*)
- **Water Supply** (*maintenance and distribution*)
- **Wastewater** (*disposal and treatment*)
- **Information/Communication** (*storage and distribution*)
- **Human Infrastructure** (*the people, committees, and organizations that facilitate community development*)

A mix of housing options in or adjacent to a community's commercial/civic center creates a mutually-supporting relationship between residents and businesses.



- **Low and Moderate-income Housing** (*Available to households earning less than 80% of the area's median income, with rents or housing costs that don't exceed 30% of the household's income*)
- **Workforce Housing** (*Rented or owned housing that meets the affordability threshold – less than 30% of household income – for households making between 80% and 120% of the area's median income.*)
- **Market Rate Housing** (*Rented or owned housing, not restricted to any income level*)



An educated and skilled workforce attracts and retains business and industry in a community:

- Plans for economic development at the local level should consider the availability of workforce development programs, usually undertaken at the State or regional levels.
- Good workforce development efforts match job-seekers and current workers with the skills local employers need.
- Workforce development programs also assist workers with getting jobs requiring those skills.



Terry Hendee / ©Lovejoy Tools, Inc.



Rachel Eggum/ ©Ottawaquechee Health Partnership

How does a community create an economic development plan?

1. Conduct a Community Assessment
2. Develop a Shared Community Vision
3. Identify Community Goals and Objectives
4. Map out the Future
5. Identify Priority Action Items

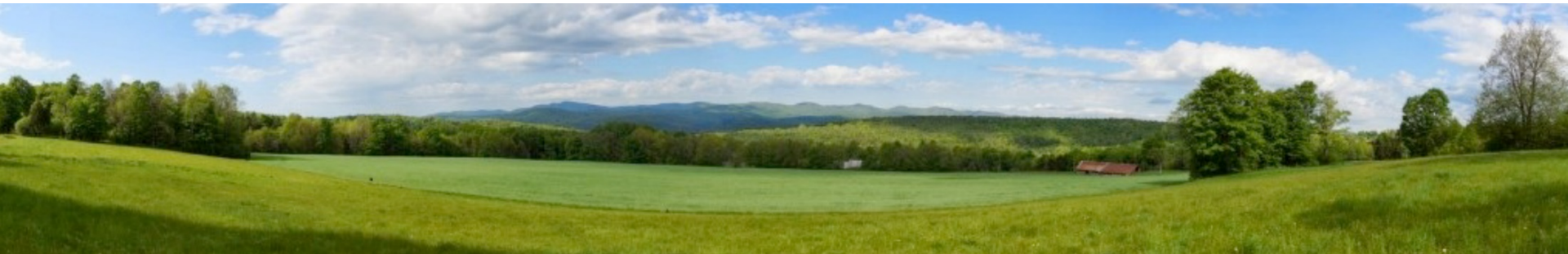
A great resource for starting the process is the Vermont Council on Rural Development's "Community Visit" process.

It helps to get residents and diverse business organizations involved, identifies talents, and educates residents of available resources for economic development.



RESOURCES FOR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Municipal Planning Grant.** Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
- **Community Visit Program.** The Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Vermont State Designation Programs.** Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
- **The Preservation Trust of Vermont.**
- **Vermont Community Development Program.** Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
- **USDA Rural Development.**
- **Vermont Housing & Conservation Board.**



Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) Program.

Awarded annually, the MPG program funds local planning and revitalization initiatives that support statewide planning goals.

Community Visit Program. The Community Visit Program provides local leaders with the resources they need to build capacity for their communities as they look to the future. This program offers a way for towns to:

- Engage residents,
- Set common goals and directions, and
- Access resources needed to be successful.

The Community Visit Program is ***provided at no cost to communities.***

For more information, contact VCRD at 802-223-6091 or info@vtrural.org.

<http://www.vtrural.org/programs/community-visits>

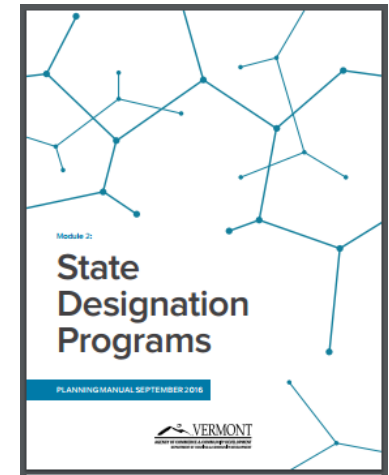


Vermont State Designation Programs. The designation programs recognize compact centers and provide incentives to encourage communities to maintain and augment them.

The five designation programs are: downtown, village center, new town center, neighborhood development area, and growth center designation.

Towns with designations are provided with incentives for both the public and private sectors:

- Tax credits for historic building rehabilitation and code improvements
- Permitting benefits for new housing
- Funding for transportation-related public improvements
- Priority consideration for other state grants



For more information contact Chris.Cochran@vermont.gov

<http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs>

FY2017 Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits in the TRORC Region:

- **4 Randolph Avenue, Randolph** – This property in the Designated Downtown will be rehabilitated for use as an office by Catamount Solar. This local company formed in 2011 and currently employs six people. This project will provide space for the company's continued growth. Total Project Cost: \$267,400; Tax Credits awarded: \$9,125
- **23 Alexander Place, South Royalton** – South Royalton's historic library is undergoing a long-planned expansion. Tax credits will support the project which includes construction of a new addition and installation of a LULA elevator that will make the building fully accessible. Additional façade and code improvements are also planned. Total Project Cost: \$700,000; Tax Credits awarded: \$95,541
- **241 South Main Street, White River Junction** – This building is planned as a mix of studio and market-rate apartments. A total of 36 new units will help meet the need of this community's growing population. This project will support ongoing revitalization efforts in White River Junction. Total Project Cost: \$3,000,000; Tax Credits awarded: \$97,346

The Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV). PTV is a statewide non-profit organization which assists communities in saving and using historic places.

PTV

- Works with communities to support local development initiatives and build capacity.
- Partners with the Vermont Downtown Program to support revitalization efforts in designated downtowns and village centers.
- Provides project development and technical assistance grants,
- Administers the Historic Places revolving fund, and
- Provides major grants for preservation-related projects.

A couple of the program available to our region are:

- The Robert Sincerbeaux Fund which provides matching grants up to \$500 to municipalities and community organizations for hiring consultants to provide technical assistance for preservation projects.
- The Historic Places Revolving Fund provides support for acquiring at-risk properties and then works to find new owners and new economic uses for them.

For more information, visit <http://www.ptvermont.org/index.php#>



The Preservation Trust of Vermont
Continuing Support for Vermont Communities Since 1980

104 Church St., Burlington, VT 05401 • 802-658-6647 • www.ptvermont.org

The Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP). VCDP assists communities on a competitive basis by providing funding through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and by offering technical assistance to identify and address local needs in the areas of:



Economic Development	Public Facilities	Housing	Handicapped Accessibility Modifications	Public Services
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Examples of application types that may be funded:

Planning Grants (PG) (Grant Range: \$3,000-\$40,000) Examples: Conduct feasibility studies and marketing plans, produce architectural and engineering plans, etc. for IG projects.	Implementation Grants (IG) (Grant Range: \$50,000-\$1,000,000) Examples: Create or rehabilitate housing units, build infrastructure, create or assist childcare and senior centers etc.	Accessibility Modification Grants (AM) (Grant Range: \$5,000-\$75,000) Example: Bring municipally-owned buildings and libraries into compliance with state and federal accessibility requirements.	Scattered Site Grants (SS) (Grant Range: \$50,000-\$1,000,000) Example: Rehabilitate scattered site housing projects.
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VCDP funds must primarily benefit persons of low and moderate income.

USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD). USDA-RD is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. USDA-RD offers a variety of programs of loans, grants, and loan guarantees to support essential services such as:



- Economic Development
- Health Care
- Water, Electric, Communications Infrastructure
- Housing
- First-responder Services and Equipment

USDA-RD also provides technical assistance to help communities undertake community development programs.



Rural Energy for America Program Grants: Businesses apply for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB).

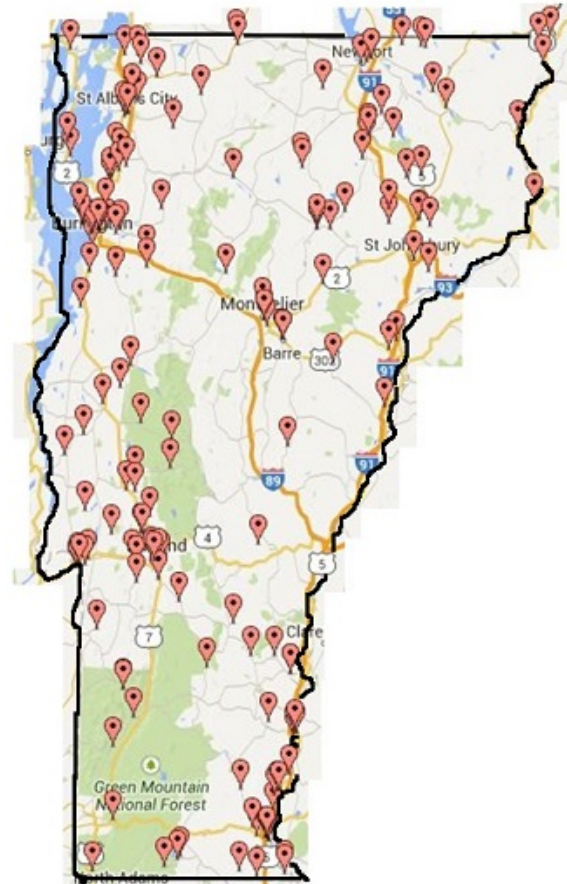
VHCB works toward two goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont's land and historic properties that are of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life.

Through its Housing Program, VHCB makes deferred loans for the acquisition, rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing by nonprofit housing organizations.

Through its Conservation Programs, VHCB helps to preserve the state's rural landscape and character through conservation efforts on agricultural land, recreational land, natural areas, and historic properties. VHCB also works with towns, municipalities, non-profit conservation organizations and state agencies to provide public access to conserved land.



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board



Vermont Healthy Homes: As of March 31, 2015, VHCB and its partners have completed projects in 182 homes as shown on the map to the right.



Royalton Green | ©First Light Studios

A community vision, a shared plan, funding and teamwork is a common element in revitalization – the State of Vermont and TRORC are committed to working with each other and with you to enhance economic development in your town and to revitalize your village centers and downtowns.

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