

# Southern Vermont CEDS

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



2024



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support in the preparation of the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

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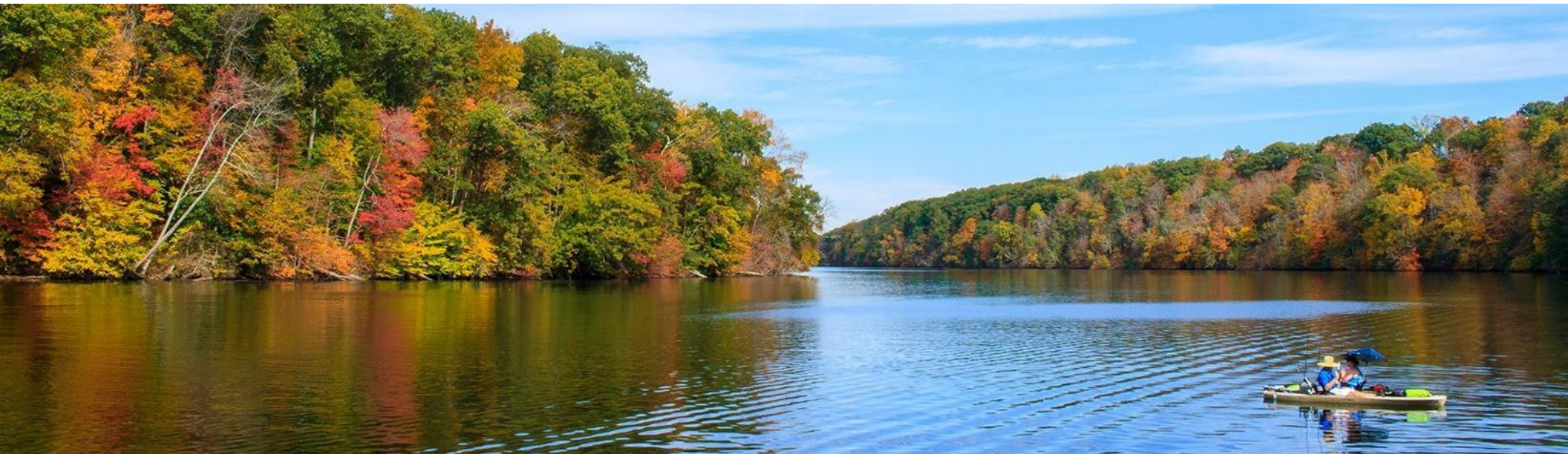
## ATTACHMENTS

A: Action Plan Matrix

B: Existing Conditions Report

C: Background Documents

D: Southern Vermont CEDS 2024 Vital Projects List



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## FOREWORD

In early 2024, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) and the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) initiated an update to the 2019 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

The 2019 CEDS was created with broad participation across Southern Vermont and has been exceptionally well implemented. Accomplishments include creating targeted workforce development programs in collaboration with regional school districts, increasing population through the Refugee Resettlement Program, construction of high-speed internet infrastructure through the region's two Communications Union Districts, supporting unique business opportunities, and making progress in addressing the region's critical housing issues.

There are many positive things in Southern Vermont. People love it because of its iconic natural beauty, welcoming community culture, and small-town lifestyle. However, without continued investment and attention on economic development aligned with community values, the trajectory of Southern Vermont will inevitably be towards greater homogeneity, a quickening pace of disinvestment, and overreliance on a shrinking tax base and pool of talent.

The CEDS is a tool that everyone in Southern Vermont can use. This includes towns and villages looking to make improvements, nonprofit organizations looking to advance their programming, and private companies looking to transition toward the future. The only way that Southern Vermont will be able to continue to make progress will be to work together.

The 2024 CEDS has been designed to identify new opportunities, tackle challenges, and prepare the region for future disruptions. **The vision is to keep moving toward a more resilient economic future for all that aligns with the region's values.**

## NEED FOR ADAPTATION

Over the last five years, the pace of change has created both positive and negative impacts on the larger region and economy. The COVID-19 pandemic, a series of catastrophic flooding events for Southern Vermont, increased domestic and international in-migration, expansion of broadband across the region, changes in the employment base from consolidation and closures, and accelerated trends associated with remote work, artificial intelligence development, and their associated housing and community implications are just a few of the things that impacted the regional economy.

**The rapid pace of innovation, continuing economic resilience to disaster impacts, and trending demographic shifts make it clear that an adaptive approach is needed in Southern Vermont.** The region's challenges are persistent and evolving, requiring a proactive stance to ensure long-term viability and prosperity. While this strategy outlines various initiatives to address specific concerns, the overarching imperative is for the region to embrace a collective culture of adaptation that considers what to do to improve tomorrow and twenty years in the future.

This adaptation encompasses multiple facets of community and economic life. **It involves investing in community infrastructure to withstand and respond to broad increases in environmental impacts, transforming healthcare, restructuring the educational system to align with shifting demographic realities, and supporting businesses in their transition to operating effectively with a constrained workforce.**

The path forward demands resilience, innovation, and unity. By acknowledging these challenges and committing to a flexible, forward-thinking approach, Southern Vermont can position itself to weather current difficulties in the face of future uncertainties. **This strategy is a roadmap for this essential transformation, guiding the region toward a more robust, adaptive, and sustainable economic future.**



# WORK COMPLETED

The following tasks were completed to gain greater insights into the current and emerging concerns and opportunities for Southern Vermont.

## RESEARCH

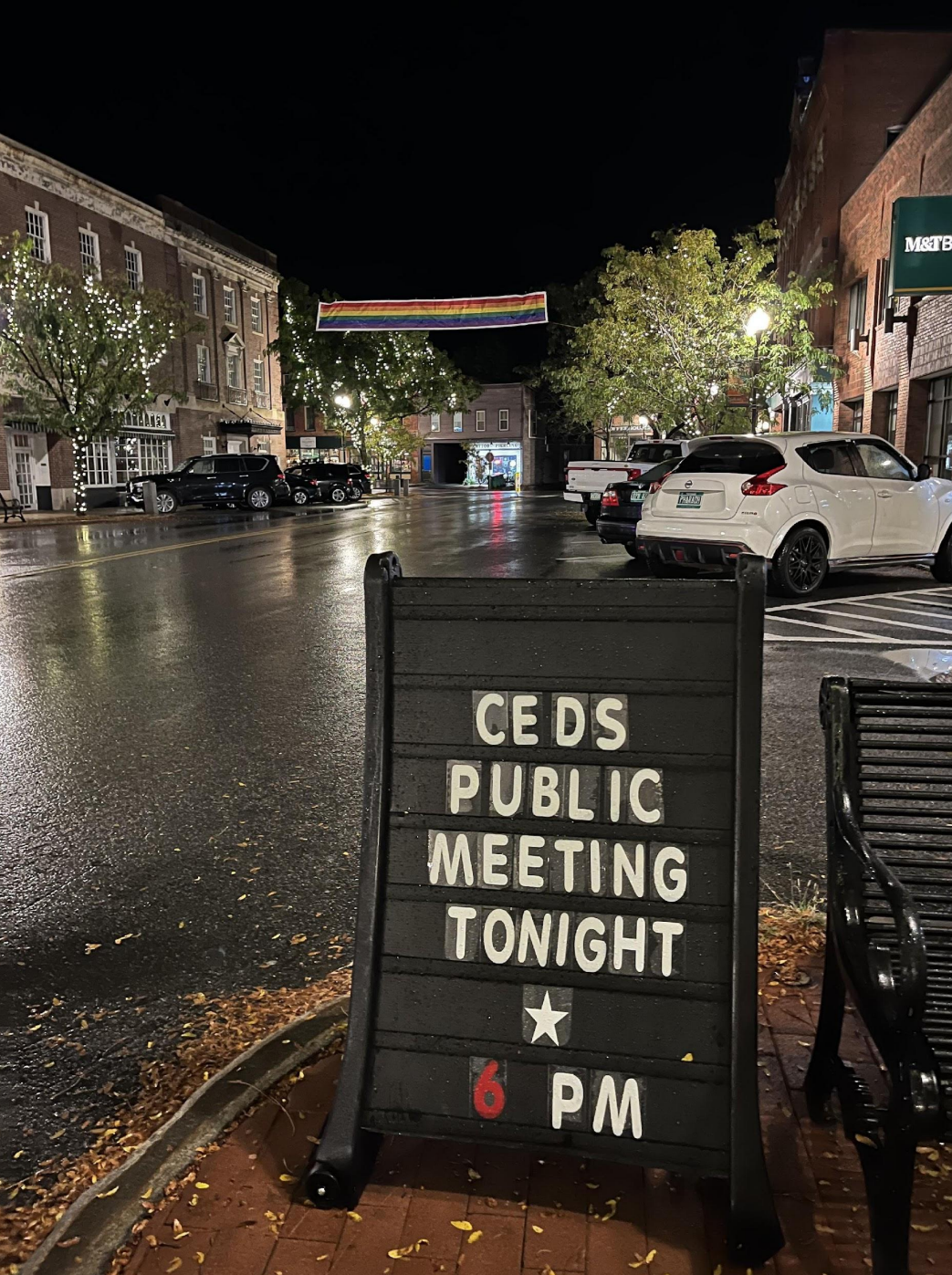
- **Existing Conditions Profile:** A comprehensive data collection and analysis process was conducted to establish an understanding of the economic, demographic, and resilience-related data that is impacting Southern Vermont's ability to be economically successful. The full report is included in Attachment B with key findings outlined in the following section of this report.
- **Review of Other Documents:** The 2019 CEDS was reviewed and discussed regarding progress on implementation. In addition, town plans, housing needs assessments, statewide policy documents and studies, and other materials were reviewed for alignment with the 2024 CEDS. Full list of documents provided can be found in Attachment C near the end of the document.

## ENGAGEMENT

- **Focus Groups:** A series of focus groups covered different topic areas. These included:
  - Workforce Development
  - Local Government
  - Entrepreneurs and Capital
  - Arts/Recreation/Tourism
  - Education
  - Housing
  - Infrastructure
  - Healthcare and Hospitals
  - Manufacturing
  - Agriculture/Forestry





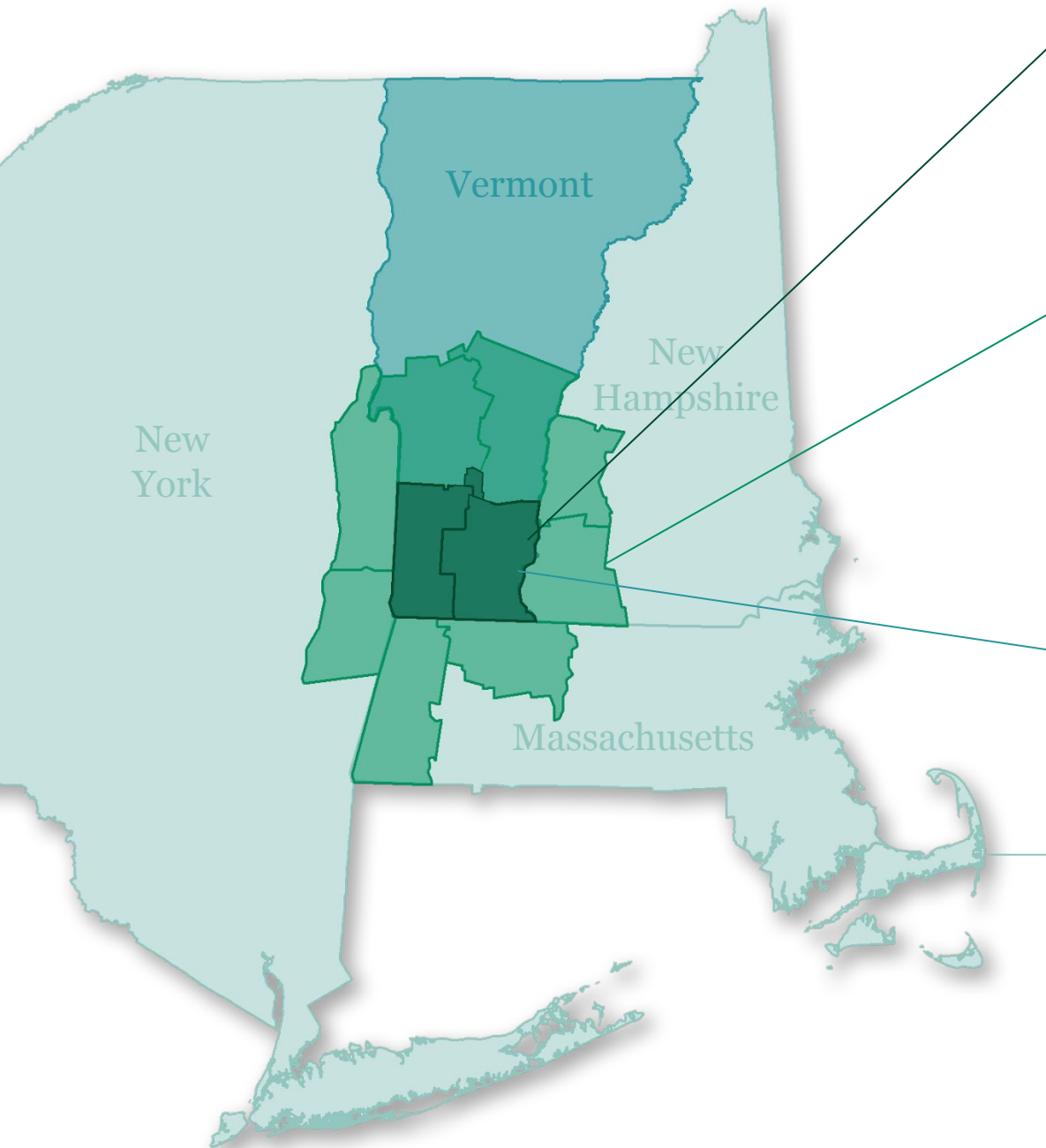


- **Economic Development Summit:** The CEDS process was introduced and discussed at the annual Southern Vermont Economy Summit in May 2024 to receive initial input on direction and critical issues.
- **CEDS Committee Conversations:** Ongoing engagement and discussions with the CEDS Committee to ensure alignment with the regional perspectives and guidance.
- **Town Survey:** Municipalities were surveyed to better understand their perspectives on strengths, challenges, and threats to Southern Vermont's economy. Seventeen survey responses were received.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** In addition to the focus groups, one-on-one interviews were conducted with key individuals in the region, and 10 additional stakeholder interviews were conducted virtually.
- **Public Meetings:** A series of six public meetings were held throughout the region in late September 2024 to present the CEDS Objectives and Strategies and receive input. These meetings were held throughout the day and included five in person meetings and one virtual option.

Fifty people participated in the public meetings and provided insights on what key issues are impacting their community, ideas on opportunities for collaboration, and detailed ideas for tactics and projects. During these sessions, a call for CEDS projects was also made to invite residents, businesses, municipalities, and non-profit organizations to submit their projects for inclusion in the document. Full list of projects submitted will be included in attachment C, Background Documents.



# REGIONAL MAP



## SOUTHERN VERMONT

Southern Vermont (referred to herein as Southern Vermont or SoVermont) is shown in green on the map and defined as the area within Bennington County, VT, and Windham County, VT.

## REFERENCE REGION

The Reference Region includes the counties within Southern Vermont as well as neighboring counties. The Reference Region comprises the following counties: Berkshire, MA; Franklin, MA; Cheshire, NH; Sullivan, NH; Rensselaer, NY; Washington, NY; Bennington, VT; Rutland, VT; Windham, VT; and Windsor, VT.

## VERMONT

The state of Vermont was used as a benchmark for the Southern Vermont Zone.

## 4-STATE REGION

The 4-State Region includes Vermont, as well as its three neighboring states, New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

# 2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Existing Conditions Profile thoroughly examines Southern Vermont's economic conditions and trends, providing valuable insights to inform our understanding and guide our strategic approach to developing the 2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

## WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE DATA

**A comprehensive analysis of Southern Vermont reveals a dynamic region undergoing significant demographic and economic transformations.** The full and ongoing effects of the pandemic on regional population is still to be seen. However, the aging population and smaller household sizes suggest ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining younger residents and talent.

The economic landscape is characterized by varied industries, with healthcare, government, and retail trade leading the way. While job numbers have recently declined, the region is poised for future growth in sectors such as healthcare and professional services.

Although income levels in Southern Vermont are lower than in surrounding regions, they are projected to rise. This economic potential and relatively high educational attainment positions Southern Vermont favorably for future growth. Nevertheless, disparities in income and employment trends and the region's distinctive demographic makeup underscore the need for tailored economic strategies.

**It is important to note that the population and industry projections cited in this analysis draw from data collected during the pandemic period, an unusual period that is not necessarily reflective of actual ongoing trends.** While valuable, these projections serve as just one input among many in developing the CEDS, which also incorporates local expertise and on-the-ground insights.

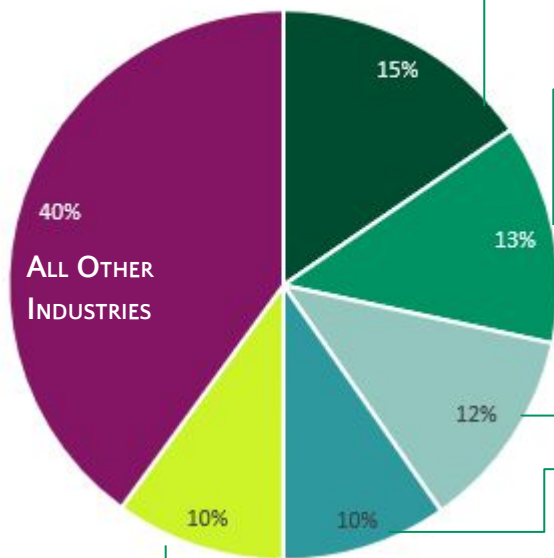
## FINDINGS

1. Recent in-migration has been a positive for the demographic trends, but overall Southern Vermont remains older and distinct from than the broader region.
1. Income levels remain low in Southern Vermont, even as the cost of living rises.
1. Many of the largest industries in Southern Vermont experienced job losses over the last five years.
1. Southern Vermont is struggling to build resilience in all ways.
1. There is a lack of adequate workforce to fill critical roles.



# TOP INDUSTRY SECTORS

Top Industry Sectors in Southern Vermont, 2023



## HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

- The largest sector in Southern Vermont, accounting for over 6,600 jobs and projected to grow.
- Over 550 average openings per year for healthcare-related occupations in Southern Vermont, including over 230 for health-related aides (SOC 31-1100), 160 for counselors and social service providers (SOC 21-1000), and 150 for healthcare diagnosing and treating practitioners (SOC 29-1000).
- Average earnings per job for this sector (\$72,442) is slightly higher than the average for the region.

## GOVERNMENT (INCLUDING EDUCATION)

- Second largest sector in Southern Vermont, with just over 5,550 jobs.
- Experienced some employment reduction over the last five years, driven mostly by losses in State Government (13% reduction between 2018-2023).

## ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES

- Large number of establishments reporting for this sector, with over 315 payrolled in 2023.
- Substantial number of job openings within the Accommodation and Food Services sector, with over 400 average openings per year for the Food and Beverage Serving Workers occupation (SOC 35-3000). Low average earnings per job for this sector at \$35,800 per year.
- Hotels saw the largest decline in jobs within this sector, reporting a 37% loss (812 jobs) between 2018 and 2023.

## RETAIL

- Retail Trade sector accounts for over 5,100 jobs in Southern Vermont or 10% of the total jobs.
- The sector saw losses in total employed people between 2018 and 2023 but is expected to remain steady over the next five years.
- Average earnings per job of just under \$50,000 is lower than the average income for the region of nearly \$65,000.
- Large number of average openings per year of nearly 400 for Retail Sales Workers (SOC 41-2000)

## MANUFACTURING

- Food Manufacturing and Machinery Manufacturing make up the largest segments of the Manufacturing sector in Southern Vermont.
- Metalworking Machinery Manufacturing (NAICS 33351) has a very high concentration in Southern Vermont and earnings of around \$75,000.

Source: Lightcast  
All data as of 2023  
Growth rates from 2018 – 2023

**FINDING 1:** Recent in-migration has been positive for the demographic trends, but overall, Southern Vermont remains older and less broadly representative than the broader region.

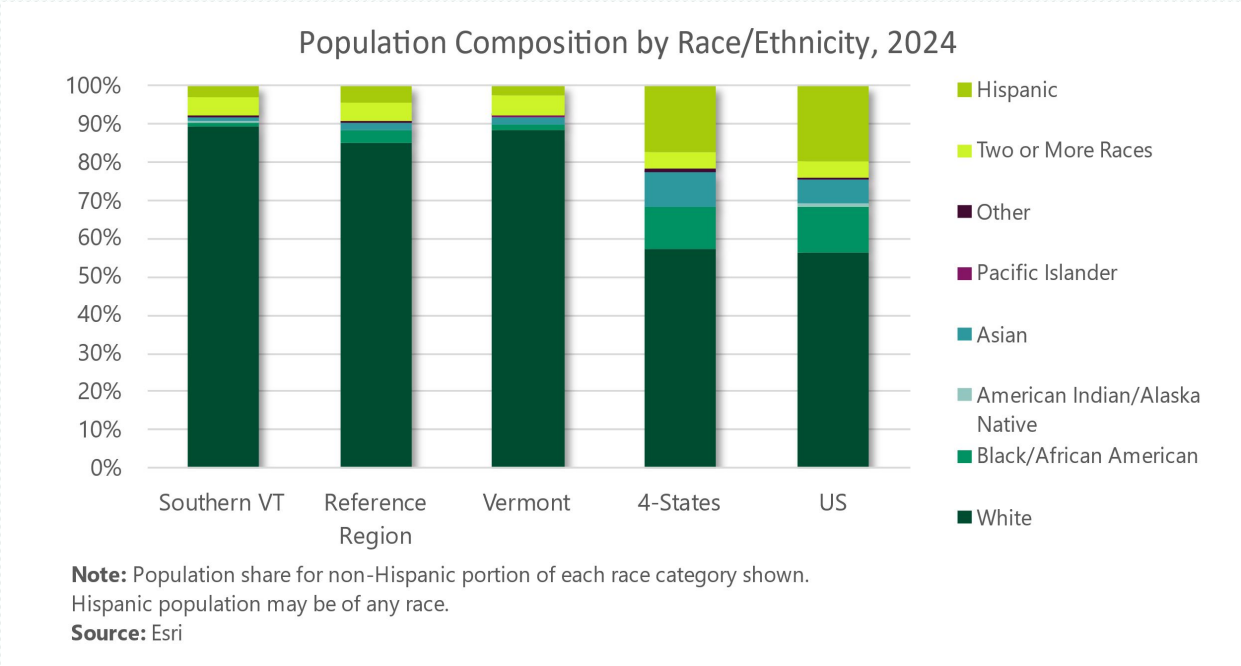
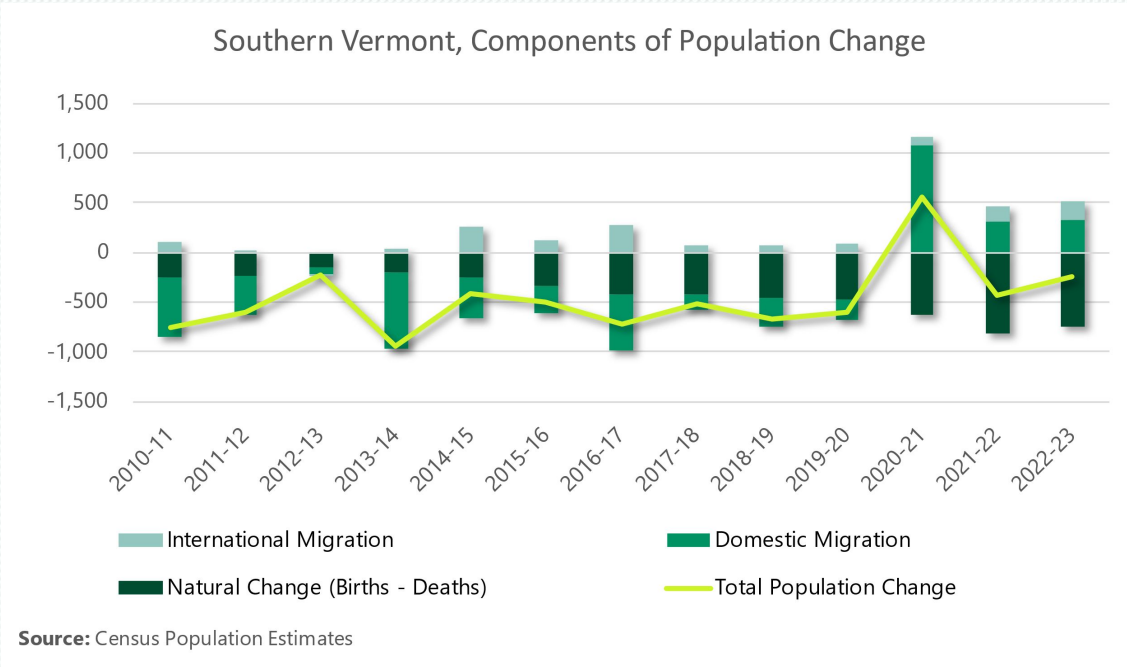
International migration has consistently contributed positively to population growth since 2010, while domestic migration resulted in net losses prior to the pandemic. During the pandemic, domestic migration became the primary driver of population increase in the region. Whether this continues to be the case is still to be seen. Current population models are including impacts resulting from pandemic period migration that are unlikely to continue.

Given the consistently negative natural population change (births minus deaths), the region must prioritize attracting and retaining talent to ensure future population growth. Encouraging the formation of young households is crucial for shifting the balance towards natural increase.

Southern Vermont's demographic profile skews older compared to other analyzed regions, with a median age of 47.8 in 2024, contrasting with 40.1 for Vermont and 39.3 for the United States.

The region's racial composition is predominantly white, with 89% of Southern Vermont's residents identifying as such. This figure stands in stark contrast to the more broadly representative populations of the 4-state region and the nation, where white residents comprise 57% and 56% of the population, respectively.

Refugee resettlement initiatives, young professional networks, and the pandemic-induced shifts in work habits have contributed to population growth and increased increased alignment with the reference region in the region. However, further efforts are necessary to attract and retain younger residents to support continued demographic growth and economic vitality.





**FINDING 2:** Income levels remain low in Southern Vermont, even as the cost of living (including housing) continues to rise.

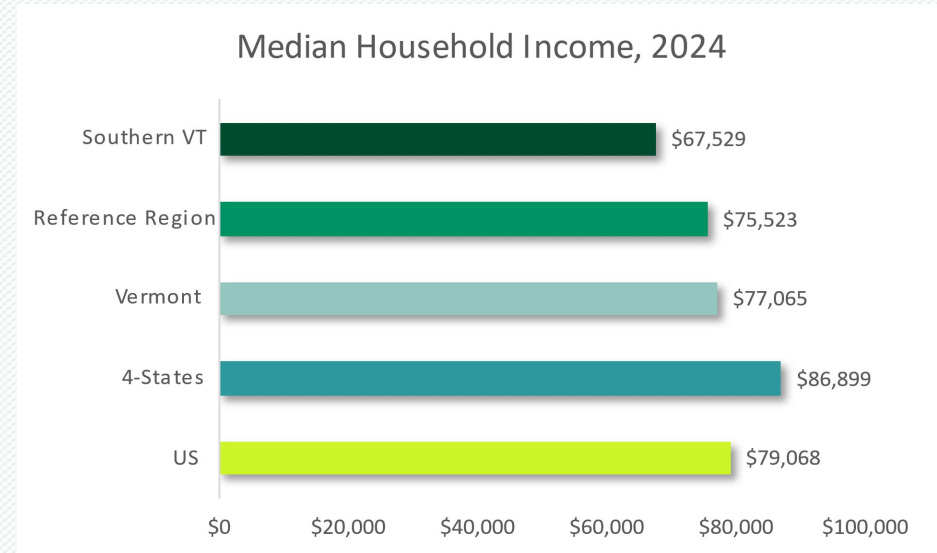
While Southern Vermont wages increased by 30% between 2017 and 2024, this growth rate lags behind Vermont's 33% and the four-state region's 37% increase over the same period.

Concurrently, inflation has driven up the cost of living, resulting in a cumulative change of approximately 29%. The cost-of-living index in Southern Vermont stands at 121 (with 100 representing the US average). Consequently, wage increases in Southern Vermont are barely keeping pace with the rising costs of goods and services.

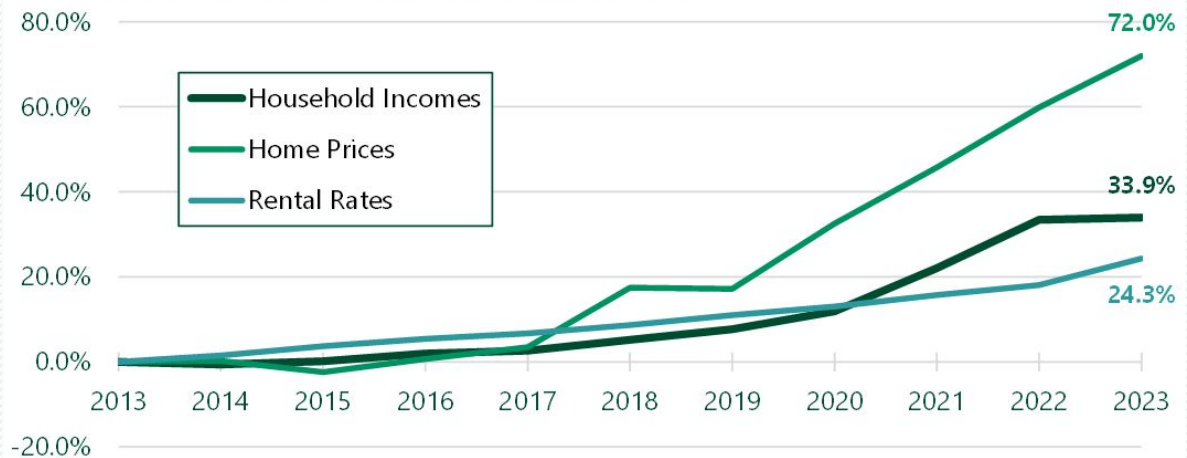
Over the past decade, median household income in Southern Vermont rose by 34%. During the same timeframe, rental rates also showed significant growth, albeit less robust, climbing by 24% from 2013 to 2023. However, far surpassing these increases, the median price of a single-family home in the study area surged by 72%. Much of this increase is due to lack of inventory resulting from decades of underbuilding, focus of public resources on providing for the lowest income levels, and second homeowners.

This sharp rise in home prices has placed property ownership out of reach for many renter households aspiring to purchase a home, as prices are increasing at more than twice the pace of income growth. Further exacerbating the affordability challenge, increased financing costs have pushed homeownership beyond the means of many potential buyers.

**The issues of housing affordability and the widening wealth gap are challenges faced nationwide. Continued efforts to expand economic mobility and housing access for all segments of the population will support a more stable and resilient economy.**



**Cumulative Percent Change in Household Incomes, Home Prices, and Rental Rates for Southern Vermont Since 2013**



Source: Esri, CoStar, HousingData.org, Camoin Associates



**FINDING 3:** Many of the largest industries in Southern Vermont experienced job losses over the last five years.

Of the ten largest sectors by job count in Southern Vermont, eight experienced job losses between 2018 and 2023. Over the next five years, Southern Vermont is projected to recover approximately half of those lost jobs, but an overall decline in employment is still expected for the decade spanning 2018–2028.

As of 2023, 60% of the region's jobs are concentrated in the following five sectors:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Government
- Retail Trade
- Manufacturing
- Accommodation and Food Services

Continued efforts to diversify the economy by focusing on how to support local wealth creation within sectors that rely on external revenue will support more sustainable income growth within Southern Vermont for both business owners and residents. This includes tourism-related sectors such as Accommodation and Food Services, as well as Manufacturing, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and various other aspects of the economy.

Southern Vermont has a rich history and established strengths in the Agriculture and Manufacturing sectors, both of which remain crucial to the overall economy and regional traditions but need additional diversification and modernization to remain relevant.

**Supporting Southern Vermont businesses across all sectors in their efforts to diversify products, markets, and customer bases will encourage greater long term economic resilience. The CEDS is designed to enhance the overall business environment, making it possible for all enterprises to succeed and access the resources they need to thrive.**





**FINDING 3:** Many of the largest industries in Southern Vermont experienced job losses over the last five years.

### Southern Vermont Economic Base by 2-Digit NAICS Sector

NAICS	Description	2018 Jobs	2023 Jobs	Projected 2028 Jobs	Share of 2023 Jobs	2018-2023 Change in Jobs	2023-2028 Change in Jobs	2023 Avg. Earnings Per Job	2023 Location Quotient
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	6,957	6,649	7,039	15%	(308)	390	\$72,442	1.19
90	Government	5,759	5,559	5,773	13%	(200)	213	\$69,087	0.90
44	Retail Trade	5,348	5,119	5,093	12%	(229)	(25)	\$49,134	1.26
31	Manufacturing	4,872	4,302	4,560	10%	(571)	258	\$72,939	1.30
72	Accommodation and Food Services	5,085	4,180	4,014	10%	(904)	(166)	\$35,817	1.17
61	Educational Services	3,561	2,767	2,819	6%	(795)	53	\$54,650	2.64
23	Construction	2,661	2,714	2,736	6%	53	22	\$63,452	1.09
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,168	1,920	1,945	4%	(249)	26	\$37,197	0.91
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,566	1,845	2,047	4%	279	202	\$118,757	0.61
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,973	1,787	1,903	4%	(186)	116	\$64,001	0.69
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,022	1,194	1,351	3%	172	157	\$36,972	1.57
42	Wholesale Trade	1,211	1,077	1,063	3%	(134)	(14)	\$90,211	0.69
52	Finance and Insurance	881	814	793	2%	(67)	(21)	\$110,275	0.46
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	791	759	756	2%	(31)	(4)	\$46,287	1.51
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	662	732	781	2%	70	49	\$72,438	0.97
48	Transportation and Warehousing	686	690	730	2%	4	40	\$67,676	0.37
51	Information	456	520	534	1%	64	14	\$94,886	0.66
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	262	214	213	0%	(48)	0	\$141,684	0.34
22	Utilities	125	107	100	0%	(18)	(7)	\$175,305	0.74
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	24	24	30	0%	0	6	\$101,967	0.16
<b>Total</b>		<b>46,070</b>	<b>42,973</b>	<b>44,280</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(3,098)</b>	<b>1,309</b>	<b>\$64,595</b>	

Source: Lightcast

#### FINDING 4: Southern Vermont is struggling to build resiliency in all ways.

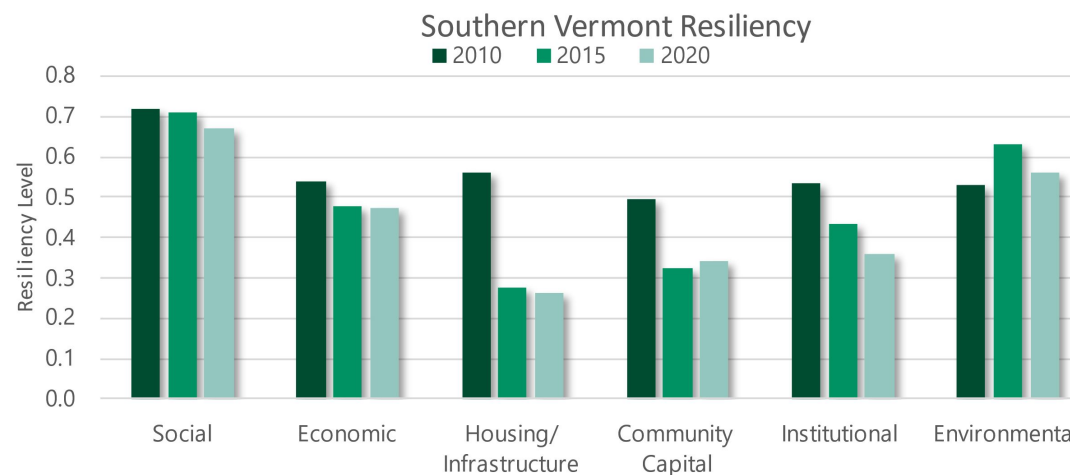
The University of South Carolina's Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (BRIC) Index uses 49 variables across six categories to capture community resilience:

- Human Well-Being/Cultural/Social—physical attributes of populations, values and belief systems (ex: educational equality, food security)
- Economic/Financial—economic assets and livelihoods (ex: employment rate, income inequality, non-dependence on primary/tourism sector)
- Infrastructure/Built Environment/Housing—buildings and infrastructure (ex: housing stock construction quality, temporary shelter, medical care capacity)
- Institutional/Governance—access to resources and the power to influence their distribution (ex: jurisdictional fragmentation, disaster aid experience, population stability)
- Community Capacity—social networks and connectivity among individuals and groups (ex: volunteerism, religious affiliation, attachment to place, political engagement)
- Environmental/Natural—natural resource base and environmental conditions (ex: local food supplies, energy use, perviousness, water stress)

Overall, Southern Vermont's resiliency has been decreasing across most categories since 2010, with the notable exception being Environmental resiliency, which increased between 2010 and 2015.

Though it has slightly decreased since 2010, Southern Vermont's Social Resilience level is the highest among the region's resilience indicators in 2020. It is worth noting that this data predates the pandemic, so the BRIC scores in Southern Vermont and its counties may have further decreased over the past two years based on the trends seen from 2010 to 2020.

**The Southern Vermont economy has had to prove its resiliency through catastrophic floods, the loss of major employers, and international pandemics just in recent years alone. Reinforcing and strengthening the region's resiliency, including for businesses and residents, will enable greater growth and reduce the harm of future disruptions.**



Source: Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (BRIC) Index



## **FINDING 5:** Lack of adequate workforce to fill critical roles.

The lack of available workforce is an issue impacting many industries throughout Southern Vermont. Seventeen occupations face triple-digit openings every year, many of which are in jobs that impact residents' quality of life, including health care, education, counseling, construction, and more. Many of these occupations also have lower than average wages for the region.

Increasing the number and quality of applicants to fill these open positions is necessary to further support the economy in Southern Vermont to provide companies and organizations with the workforce they need to be successful and continue to grow.

### **Southern Vermont Occupation - Top Openings**

SOC	Description	Avg. Annual Openings	Median Annual Earnings
35-3000	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	366	\$ 35,375
41-2000	Retail Sales Workers	348	\$ 33,941
31-1100	Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies, and Psychiatric Aides	202	\$ 34,907
53-7000	Material Moving Workers	196	\$ 37,645
25-2000	Preschool, Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Special Education Teachers	176	\$ 56,560
37-2000	Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	170	\$ 34,531
47-2000	Construction Trades Workers	167	\$ 47,570
35-2000	Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	165	\$ 37,619
11-9000	Other Management Occupations	155	\$ 74,260
53-3000	Motor Vehicle Operators	149	\$ 45,720
43-4000	Information and Record Clerks	143	\$ 40,729
25-9000	Other Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	131	\$ 36,793
21-1000	Counselors, Social Workers, and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	128	\$ 49,633
13-1000	Business Operations Specialists	127	\$ 70,825
51-9000	Other Production Occupations	117	\$ 43,397
29-1000	Healthcare Diagnosing or Treating Practitioners	113	\$ 87,649
39-9000	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	105	\$ 34,295
37-3000	Grounds Maintenance Workers	98	\$ 42,816
25-3000	Other Teachers and Instructors	95	\$ 40,174
11-1000	Top Executives	93	\$ 87,069

**Source:** Lightcast

# ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

## TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Southern Vermont enjoys easy access to Albany, Boston, New York, and other parts of New England. The transportation networks provide prime opportunities for collaboration with the adjacent states and communities.

### ■ ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE:

- **Route 9** is a state highway that runs between the New York/Vermont border and the Vermont/New Hampshire border, and it received major improvements recently. Much of this route is mountainous and can be difficult to travel in poor weather.
- **Route 7** is a US Route that runs from southwestern Connecticut to the I-89 interchange just south of the Canadian border. It is the main artery of Bennington County, and provides access to Rutland and Burlington to the north and the Berkshires to the south
- **Interstate 91** is a highway that runs between Connecticut and Canada, through Windham County. I-91 provides easy access south to population centers of New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, and other points south.
- **Bus transportation** is available locally in the population centers and along major state Routes . There is a growth in micro transit options to expand options in remote areas, although greater access is needed.
- **Ride-sharing services** and other short-term options are expanding throughout the region, with more needed.
- Expanded **bike lanes and pedestrian infrastructure** continue to be built throughout the region.

### ■ TRAIN INFRASTRUCTURE:

- **Amtrak** has daily service on the Vermonter line between St. Albans and Washington DC that stops in Bellows Falls and Brattleboro. The Shires Connector (bus) links Burlington, Manchester and Bennington multiple times per day to Amtrak service to Manhattan and beyond. A new service, the Valley Flyer, has multiple daily trips between New Haven and Greenfield, MA, and is considering expansion to Brattleboro and Bellows Falls.

### ■ AIR INFRASTRUCTURE:

- **Major airports** serving the region include Albany International Airport, Bradley International Airport, Logan International Airport, and Manchester International Airport in New Hampshire.

“The federal funding from the Biden-Harris Administration’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will transform the Brattleboro rail station with new features and upgrades, putting rail travel in Vermont back on track for more travelers. I’m thrilled to see the funds we helped pass through this law go to good use right here in our state and can’t wait to see the project completed. Everyone deserves to have a safe, comfortable, accessible experience while riding on Amtrak, and this project will help provide the Brattleboro station with important improvements to enhance passenger experience for all travelers,” said Senator Welch. (Source: Amtrak)



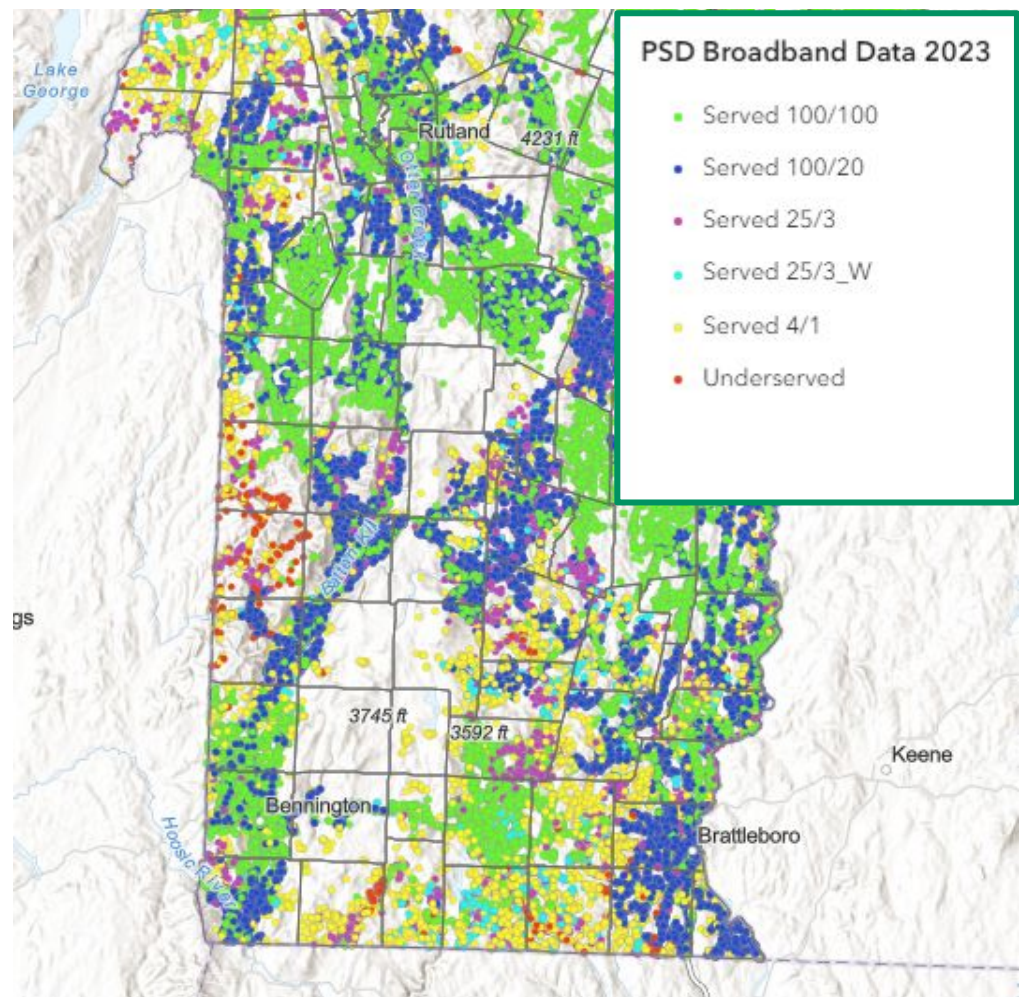


## BROADBAND AND CELL INFRASTRUCTURE

Recognizing access to broadband as a critical quality of life, geographic equity, and economic development issue, the Southern Vermont Communications Union District (SoVT CUD) was established “to bring high-speed Internet service to underserved areas of southern Vermont.” Since its establishment, the SoVT CUD has invested millions of dollars to install broadband in Bennington County, covering 14 towns.

Currently the region is also undergoing investment by DVFiber to expand high-quality internet in 24 towns in Southeastern Vermont and has connected more than 700 new addresses as of Fall 2024.

The map to the right was created by the Vermont Department of Public Service to indicate level of broadband available throughout Vermont. The green dots indicate the fastest download and upload speeds. The key population centers in Southern Vermont of Brattleboro, Wilmington, Bennington, Bellows Falls, and Manchester have speeds between 100/100 Mbps or 100/20 Mbps. The United States Federal Communications Commission defines broadband internet as any connection faster than 25/3 Mbps and the State of Vermont is aiming for universal service at 100/100 Mbps speeds.



Since 2019, broadband access has increased substantially for residents and businesses, but cell service remains challenging in certain parts of the region. Lack of cell service in certain locations (both on roads through the mountains but also in developed areas) was a concern raised through public meetings given its impact on business, talent attraction, and retention.



## CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

Southern Vermont's childcare and education system faces challenges similar to those affecting other sectors of the economy. These include workforce shortages, the impact of a declining and aging population, high levels of regulation, evolving student needs, universal Pre-K, and the failure to continually modernize.

While progress has been made to expand access to childcare, with recent Vermont legislation establishing a 0.44% payroll tax on wages and a 0.11% self-employment income tax to fund childcare and early childhood education, significant challenges remain. There are still insufficient childcare spots available, costs remain prohibitively high for many families, and options are limited for parents/guardians with non-traditional work hours. The lack of adequate childcare is a factor deterring individuals from participating in the labor force, exacerbating workforce shortages. Similarly, childcare centers and education institutions face challenges attracting and retaining workers and must recruit and retain a new generation of talent.

The education system in Southern Vermont continues to grapple with intense challenges. The declining number of students is requiring school closures that are having significant consequences for many. In addition, the education system is struggling to meet the intensified needs of students, cultural dynamics from increased international migration, adapting to changing skill requirements from employers, increasing reliance on local municipalities for funding, and rightsizing facilities and districts in response to the decreasing population. These multifaceted challenges necessitate innovative solutions and strategic planning to ensure the region's educational infrastructure remains effective and sustainable.



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The workforce development system in Southern Vermont faces a complex array of challenges and opportunities in its mission to cultivate a skilled, adaptable labor force. The region's demographic shifts, evolving industry demands, and economic pressures have necessitated a dynamic approach to workforce development.

Many entities are working to address the needs of those looking for jobs as well as the industry partners with job openings. The region's school districts, Community College of Vermont, University of Vermont Extension, regional development corporations, and other workforce partners are working to address the critical needs of job readiness, skills development, retraining and recertification of youth, adults, and New Americans.

Programs emphasizing career and technical education (CTE), such as the Pipelines and Pathways Reality Fair in the Windham region, and a "Career Month" in Bennington County, have received state and national recognition. However, the system continues to grapple with issues such as retaining young talent, upskilling existing workers, and attracting new residents to bolster the labor pool. Limited funding, lack of access to trainers, finding direct pathways to employment, lack of housing or opportunities upon completion, and the geographic realities of being a large and rural region all make training more difficult.

The impact of remote work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has introduced challenges and opportunities. While it has expanded job prospects for some residents, it has also intensified competition for local businesses seeking to retain skilled employees.



# RESILIENCY

## *Natural Disasters and Economic Resilience to Natural Disasters*

Southern Vermont is particularly susceptible to flooding-related disasters and has already experienced significant economic disruptions caused by extreme weather events. Although Vermont is sometimes referenced as a potential safe zone from broader environmental shifts, recent catastrophic flooding throughout the region underscores the need for all communities to strengthen their preparedness for natural disasters. Between 2011 and 2023, Vermont ranked seventh in the nation for the number of federal disaster declarations, with 20 declarations recorded during that period.

As a region, Southern Vermont values its natural environment as a public asset, a buffer against environmental hazards, and a critical foundation for economic development. Given the region's strong reliance on the outdoor recreation industry and cultural tourism, enhancing economic resilience in the face of changing weather patterns is essential. The outdoor recreation sector has implemented several adaptive strategies, including diversifying revenue streams through year-round events and attractions, and investing in facility improvements to maintain long-term operational viability.

Beyond private industry initiatives, local municipalities have found it necessary to make substantial infrastructure investments to address flooding-related issues, such as upgrading roads and bridges, and will continue to need long term solutions to relocate people, homes, and community infrastructure out of flood prone areas.

## *Economic Resilience*

Economic diversification is essential to building economic resilience and requires attracting new industries to the region and supporting existing businesses in diversifying their offerings and markets.

Strategies to enhance economic resiliency for existing businesses include:

- Strengthening regional supply chains
- Evaluating and developing value-added processing opportunities
- Expanding into e-commerce platforms
- Creating a more **varied** portfolio of revenue streams



This diversification effort will support existing core industries and foster an environment conducive to innovation and sustainable growth across various sectors.

## *Individual and Community Resilience*

The resilience of Southern Vermont is intrinsically linked to the ability of individuals and communities to withstand and adapt to significant challenges.

Throughout the region, residents are experiencing substance abuse, periods of homelessness, poverty, and food insecurity. These issues can destabilize families, neighborhoods, and entire communities, diminishing their capacity to handle disruptions or changes.

Communities across Southern Vermont are grappling with various issues, including vacant storefronts, escalating property tax rates, ongoing impacts, from broader environmental shifts, aging infrastructure, and a shrinking workforce to fill critical public employment and volunteer positions.

Addressing these interconnected issues is crucial for building a resilient Southern Vermont that can not only weather current difficulties but also thrive in the face of future challenges.

## ALIGNMENT WITH STATE AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The Southern Vermont 2024 CEDS aligns with many regional and state planning processes.

- **The Vermont State Strategic Plan** includes many similar goals and performance measures with the Southern Vermont 2024 CEDS, including size of workforce, wage growth, employee growth, and housing costs. Implementing the Southern Vermont 2024 CEDS will support the execution of the goals established by the State.
- **A Vermont Resilience Implementation Strategy and Action Plan** is currently being developed but will include a focus on areas that align with the Southern Vermont 2024 CEDS, such as infrastructure design and reinforcement and economic and environmental resilience.
- Efforts by the **Vermont Futures Project** to educate on the critical nature Vermont's need to increase population and workforce housing aligns with the efforts of the Southern Vermont CEDS.
- **Bennington County Regional Commission** [Regional Plan](#) and **Windham County Regional Commission** [Regional Plan](#) are intended to go hand in hand with the Southern Vermont 2024 CEDS. Both are in process of being updated.
- **State and Regional Housing Studies** conducted throughout Southern Vermont are highlighting the mismatch between the available housing and the median income levels. Pursuing efforts to address the lack of housing in these communities will help support the goals of the Southern Vermont 2024 CEDS.

“

### Vermont State Strategic Plan Vision:

“Vision: Vermont's economy is growing faster than the costs of living; our state is measurably more affordable each year for families and businesses; and we are meeting our obligation to protect the most vulnerable.” (Source: Strategicplan.Vermont.gov)

### A Vermont Resilience Implementation Strategy and Action Plan:

Is intended to provide a coordinated and balanced approach to addressing both the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and accelerating efforts to adapt to the consequences of broadly changing environmental impacts. (Source: Vermont.Gov).

”





## SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Based on the interviews, focus groups, data research, and understanding of the region, the following situational assessment provides the opportunity and challenges in Southern Vermont that inform the strategic framework.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND ASSETS

- Reversed population decline through welcoming remote workers and international migration
- Growing broader representation in the regional population
- Abundant natural resources offering recreation, clean environment, and agricultural opportunities
- High quality of life characterized by small-town charm and strong community bonds
- Innovative approaches to flood prevention and mitigation
- Preservation and revitalization of authentic, traditional downtowns
- Enhanced cross-state collaboration with neighboring regions
- Strategic location providing access to tri-state markets (NY, MA, NH)
- Accessible governance structure facilitating nimble policymaking and community engagement
- Strong "Vermonter" identity coupled with distinct local community characters
- Growing recognition of the benefits of regional cooperation and teamwork
- National and international acclaim for Southern Vermont CEDS implementation supporting further investment
- Rich tourism assets, including **varied** cultural and artistic amenities
- Regional solidarity in tackling complex redevelopment projects
- Alignment with consumer trends favoring local, artisanal, and sustainable products
- Culture of entrepreneurship and self-reliance fostering innovation
- Social capital and civic engagement
- Shared commitment to preserving Vermont's environmental and community values



## CHALLENGES

- Demographic shift towards an aging population and uncertainty about what follows
- High cost of living
- Shortage of all types of housing options
- Rising education costs amid concerns over quality, declining enrollment, and an abundance of aging buildings.
- Instability and access issues within the healthcare system
- Insufficient childcare, mental health, and healthcare services
- Constrained entrepreneurial ecosystem and customer base
- Aging and inadequate infrastructure across the region
- Lack of accessible capital for business and community investment
- Insufficient long-term business succession planning
- Small scale of employers and education/training opportunities like apprenticeship programs make it difficult to address workforce size and skills gap in key industries
- Community tension between the desire for progress and resistance to change
- High property tax burden impacting residents and businesses
- Inconsistent cellular coverage and broadband connectivity
- Low awareness of available economic development resources and programs
- Prevalence of substance abuse and mental health challenges
- Scarcity of shovel-ready sites and high cost of construction for housing and economic development
- Increasing extreme weather events, particularly flooding events
- Unique challenges associated with rural development including lack of infrastructure, natural resource protection regulations, and concerns around change of community character
- Regional disparities with regards to access to markets and transportation access
- Geographic distance from Vermont's economic and political center
- Perception that significant economic growth is unlikely or undesirable



## WHAT WE LEARNED FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Through the multi-faceted approach to engagement, a series of informing issues rose to the top, including:



**Workforce** challenges remain a significant hurdle for Southern Vermont's economic growth. The region faces a critical shortage of job-ready individuals with the skills and experience local industries require.



The **demographic** landscape of Southern Vermont poses multifaceted challenges to economic development. The small and aging population reduces the available local workforce, constricts the entrepreneurial base, limits the market, and creates voids in civic engagement and leadership roles.



**Housing** shortages and affordability issues have become critical impediments to economic progress in Southern Vermont. The lack of varied housing options affects workforce retention and attraction, limits population growth, and impacts the quality of life for residents across age groups and income levels.



**Environmental resiliency** planning **has** emerged as pivotal factors in Southern Vermont's economic development landscape. The region's vulnerability to heat and water-related issues poses significant risks to key economic drivers such as the hospitality and recreation industries, as well as to public infrastructure.



**Political divisiveness** can create uncertainty, impede decision-making processes, and discourage investments.



The rise of **remote work** presents opportunities and challenges for Southern Vermont's economic development. Increased domestic migration can bring new talent and economic activity to the region, but it also raises concerns about community cohesion and civic engagement. The influx of remote workers may lead to population growth without necessarily providing the corresponding labor force expansion for local businesses.



Supporting **migration**, particularly the settlement of refugees, represents a vital component of Southern Vermont's economic development strategy. As asylum support efforts mature, they pave the way for family reunification and secondary migration, potentially bringing new skills, broader cultural representation, and entrepreneurial spirit to the region.



The **accelerating pace of technological innovation** poses both opportunities and challenges for Southern Vermont's economic future. Concerns about business and workforce readiness in the face of rapid change highlight the need for adaptive strategies and continuous learning initiatives.



The shortage of existing and high cost to build **commercial and industrial space with adequate infrastructure** that meets the needs of current and emerging businesses, especially those looking to expand and modernize, constrains the growth potential of existing businesses and hinders efforts to attract new enterprises to the region.



## IMPERATIVE FOR ACTION

Southern Vermont is a truly special place that has attracted people for decades. The open vistas, agricultural heritage, recreational assets, cultural offerings, quaint village centers, and fierce independence have long been cherished by both visitors and residents alike.

However, the treasured features of Southern Vermont will be at risk without continued investment and attention to economic development aligned with community values.

Without sustained efforts to address the challenges, the region's trajectory will likely lead to:

- Further population decline and aging and a perpetuation of that decline through lack of investment in the next generation
- Weaker working middle class
- A quickening pace of disinvestment by the public and private sectors
- Ongoing broadly changing weather events and environmental threats to health, safety, and property
- An overreliance on fewer individuals

**Doing nothing is not an option.**





# 3 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

**The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is intended to be implemented by everyone in Southern Vermont, not just economic development professionals.**

The CEDS process facilitated important discussions about the region's future; Southern Vermont has identified opportunities for future growth and investment that leaders from all areas of the region can pursue, including:

## MUNICIPALITIES & SCHOOLS:

- Utilize this document to align plans and initiatives with regional priorities and build resilience
- Enhance access to new and varied funding and collaboration opportunities by networking and engaging with regional partners and submitting proposed projects to the CEDS

## BUSINESSES:

- Gain insights into regional opportunities, strengths, and priorities to align your organization with complementary efforts
- Utilize this plan to understand regional goals and identify opportunities for your organization's role in economic growth and resilience building
- Access funding and partnership opportunities by participating in regional networks and submitting significant projects to the CEDS

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS:

- Engage in collaborative efforts with regional organizations to implement key strategies
- Access funding and partnership opportunities by participating in regional networks and submitting significant projects to the CEDS

## NON-PROFITS & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

- Identify opportunities for your organization to play a role in economic growth and resilience building
- Access funding and partnership opportunities by submitting significant projects to the CEDS initiatives

## RESIDENTS & LOCAL VOLUNTEERS:

- Utilize this plan to understand the region's long-term economic vision
- Support and engage with initiatives that align with identified regional priorities
- Volunteer, participate, and contribute to local, regional, and state initiatives

***Success will require a coordinated effort***

# 4 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The CEDS Strategic Direction builds on findings from the current and emerging trends analysis and incorporates elements from other regional plans and ongoing initiatives. The CEDS Strategic Direction identifies the overall themes and principles, priorities, goals, and strategies to guide the implementation of the CEDS.

In 2030, the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone will be home to a resilient, creative, and broadly representative community in which businesses and people thrive and prosper.

## ✓ ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

The Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy takes a holistic approach, considering not only traditional economic development but also the role of community development, workforce development, and other factors in creating high-quality places where people and businesses want to be. The strategy includes recommendations around:

- **People:** Empower current and future residents to maximize their individual potential and contribute to regional growth.
- **Businesses:** Assist established and emerging enterprises in maintaining viability, enhancing success, and exploring expansion opportunities.
- **Community:** Preserve and enhance the high quality of life while adapting to evolving circumstances.
- **Implementation:** Facilitate regional organizations' capacity to execute the plan, fostering greater collaborative achievements.

## ✓ OUTCOMES OF THE STRATEGY

A coordinated effort to implement the CEDS will lead to progress toward the following outcomes:

- **Population:** Increased population and expansion of the workforce.
- **Business Environment:** Diversified economy that supports job creation, wealth creation, and a sustainable and vibrant economy.
- **Quality of Life:** Improved quality of life, including access to housing, health care, and recreation assets.
- **Workforce:** Expanded quantity and quality of workers in the region.
- **Resilience:** Enhanced investment and ability to adapt to broadly changing environmental impacts.
- **Collaboration:** Tighter integration of cross-region and cross-state efforts.



# SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

The objectives and strategies are summarized below, and specific actions related to each initiative are detailed in the following pages. Attachment B contains the Action Plan Matrix, which includes priority level, timeline, and performance measures for each.

## OBJECTIVE 1

### ADDRESS CRITICAL POPULATION NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

- A. Invest in community assets that are attractive to young people
- B. Create programs to train, retain, and attract people with needed skills
- C. Foster a population increasingly aligned with the reference region
- D. Continue to support policies that improve and strengthen the care and education system

## OBJECTIVE 2

### EMPOWER BUSINESSES TO THRIVE LONG-TERM

- A. Enhance business potential for growth
- B. Strengthen the Southern Vermont entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem
- C. Establish a collaborative regional workforce development system
- D. Increase access to industrial and commercial space

## OBJECTIVE 3

### FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

- A. Invest in infrastructure and system upgrades to adapt to broad changes in environmental impacts
- B. Increase housing options for all
- C. Improve civic and community engagement
- D. Reinforce Southern Vermont's recreation and cultural opportunities

## OBJECTIVE 4

### PROMOTE GREATER REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALIGNMENT

- A. Create and strengthen structures to support CEDS implementation
- B. Work regionally to address critical economic development issues

## OBJECTIVE 1

### ADDRESS CRITICAL POPULATION NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

**Rationale:** Increasing Southern Vermont's population remains a critical objective to address the region's persistent labor shortages. While some progress has been made, the area continues to grapple with attracting sufficient residents to frequent local establishments and fill open positions at businesses, on volunteer boards, and in community organizations. This workforce scarcity is particularly acute in essential fields such as healthcare, mental health, education, and construction trades, impacting not only economic growth but also the overall quality of life in the region. Addressing these population needs is fundamental to achieving sustainable economic development and ensuring the vitality of Southern Vermont's communities.





## 1.A) INVEST IN COMMUNITY ASSETS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

### YOUNG PEOPLE LOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING IN THEIR COMMUNITY:

- Vibrant downtowns & social offerings
- Job opportunities & economic stability and mobility
- Affordable & quality housing options
- Career advancement/purpose
- Quality education systems
- Healthcare access
- Safety & low crime rates
- Cultural amenities & social offerings
- Outdoor recreation & green space
- Work-life balance
- Family-friendly activities
- Public transportation
- Technology infrastructure
- Networking & professional development options

- I. Support and develop local, regional, and state initiatives and policies that improve the quality of life for young people and their families**, including schools, childcare, arts and culture, **varied** nightlife, family-friendly workplace policies, and recreation amenities to create a more nurturing and supportive environment for young people and their families.
- II. Continue to invest in programs and initiatives designed to attract and retain young adults and newcomers** in Southern Vermont. This includes supporting existing programs that offer social activities, networking opportunities, affordable housing options, and career development resources. Explore opportunities to create new programs such as mentorship programs, entrepreneurship workshops, and community engagement initiatives.
- III. Pursue housing to accommodate younger people.** Identify and develop housing options suitable for young adults in size, price, amenities, and location. Including affordable housing projects, encouraging the conversion of existing properties into multi-family units, providing financial support for first-time home buyers, and promoting the construction of new housing developments.
- IV. Develop targeted marketing materials** that highlight how Southern Vermont's lifestyle aligns with young people's values/preferences. Coordinated efforts among multiple organizations are necessary to emphasize the region's natural beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, vibrant arts and culture scene, and strong sense of community to attract a new generation of residents and visitors to the region.

## 1.B) CREATE PROGRAMS TO TRAIN, ATTRACT, AND RETAIN PEOPLE WITH NEEDED SKILLS

### BENEFITS THAT EMPLOYERS CAN OFFER TO BE ATTRACTIVE:

- Competitive compensation packages
- Comprehensive health benefits
- Generous paid time off
- Retirement benefits
- Professional development opportunities
- Career advancement pathways
- Flexible work arrangements
- Family-friendly benefits
- Housing assistance programs
- Work-life balance initiatives
- Employee assistance programs
- Recognition programs
- Student loan repayment assistance
- Commuter benefits
- Technology stipends for remote workers
- Corporate social responsibility programs
- Health & wellness initiatives
- Social events & team building

- I. Identify and prioritize the most in-demand skills and occupations for today and the future** to ensure a sufficient pipeline of qualified talent for Southern Vermont's workforce. Collaborate with workforce development partners, such as local colleges and universities, technical schools, and private training providers, to establish the necessary training programs, educational pathways, and support services. Continue efforts to develop programs and expand existing ones to address the skills gap and create a skilled and competitive workforce that attracts businesses to the region and fosters economic growth.
- II. Increase the public's awareness of the specific skilled workforce needs and sector transition opportunities.** Launch an information campaign focused on Southern Vermont students, residents, families, and educational professionals highlighting the opportunities available.
- III. Create coordinated strategies that blend public and private incentives to make Southern Vermont employers more attractive places to work for top talent.** This could include financial incentives such as loan repayment or forgiveness programs, home-buying assistance, sign-on bonuses, and tuition reimbursement.
- IV. Pursue housing to accommodate the workforce.** Identify and develop housing options suitable for the workforce in terms of size, price, amenities, and location to ensure that Southern Vermont has the necessary housing stock to support economic growth and attract a talented workforce. Consider opportunities to partner with local real estate developers and property management companies to create housing options that cater specifically to the workforce's needs, such as offering rental assistance programs, flexible lease terms, and on-site amenities.
- V. Continue to support affordable transportation** for employees to access their workspace and training programs.



## 1.C) FOSTER AN INCREASINGLY REPRESENTATIVE POPULATION

### POINTS OF CONSIDERATION FOR THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION:

- Access to non-personal vehicle transportation options to access work, goods, services, & entertainment
- Space for social celebrations
- Access to cultural food, goods, & other products
- Encouragement to invite the community to learn about their cultural identity, celebrations, & customs
- Greater language education opportunities, both for immigrants but also Americans who may want to learn different languages

- I. **Elevate collaboration among key organizations involved with refugee resettlement program and immigration efforts** to ensure the continued success and resilience. These discussions should focus on identifying areas for improvement, sharing best practices, and developing strategies to enhance the program's effectiveness. By bringing together representatives from government agencies, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders, we can develop a community-based organization to foster collaboration, address challenges, and ensure that the region's refugee resettlement program continues to provide essential support to newcomers and contribute positively to the community.
- II. **Continue to improve economic and community development expertise and knowledge** to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of economic and community development programs. This includes ensuring that materials are accessible, culturally relevant, and available in multiple languages. Incorporating broadly representative perspectives into the development and implementation of economic and community development programs can help ensure that these initiatives are responsive to the needs of all community members.
- III. **Develop entrepreneurial support targeted to underrepresented communities to meet the needs of an increasingly broadly representative entrepreneurial base.** Build critical resilience among socially and economically disadvantaged individuals within the regional small business/entrepreneurial communities by fostering essential connections, providing culturally appropriate support services, and implementing models of shared capacity building. Foster a supportive and broadly representative entrepreneurial ecosystem by creating mentorship programs, providing access to affordable resources, and advocating for equitable policies. Providing access to affordable resources, such as business training, financing, and workspace, can help entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities launch and grow their businesses. These initiatives can help close the economic gap, create a more equitable society, and foster innovation and growth.
- IV. **Build broadly representative leadership and representation within economic and community development organizations and initiatives.** Creating a supportive and broadly representative work environment is necessary for attracting and retaining broadly representative talent. This involves fostering a culture of respect and broad representation, as well as implementing policies and procedures that promote economic opportunity and geographic equity. Additionally, organizations should ensure that there are opportunities for employees from broadly representative backgrounds to participate in decision-making processes and contribute to the organization's goals.



## 1.D) CONTINUE TO SUPPORT POLICIES THAT IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN THE CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

- I. **Continue to invest in creative solutions to expand access to care (child and elder care),** by supporting programs that facilitate training, funding for starting in-home care programs, and guidance on meeting state requirements. Additionally, explore alternative business models and structures to help offset the economic difficulties faced by these businesses. Focus on increasing the availability of childcare spots throughout the region to enable greater access through regional collaborations like 'Child Care Counts'.
- II. **Pursue innovative solutions to strengthen the health care system (including mental, physical, dental, etc),** including telemedicine, workforce attraction/retention, mobile medicine, small business support services, and greater access. Increasing accessibility through culturally competent care, mobile service providers, interpreter services, and affordable insurance options can ensure that everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, can receive the care they need.
- III. **Participate in conversations about school districts' ability to modernize.** Conversations should consider many aspects of modernizing the system, including investing in technology, expanding educational offerings, providing year-round programming, expanded support for students facing challenges, strategies for educator attraction and retention, shared services, consolidation, and repurposing of closed schools. Continue efforts to provide job readiness curriculum and skills training.
- IV. **Foster greater collaboration among school districts to strengthen schools and improve educational outcomes.** Address challenges like declining enrollment and aging buildings, identify opportunities for reduced costs, increased efficiencies, enhanced programming, and innovative problem-solving. Actively promote the positive work that school districts are doing with their resources to recognize and celebrate achievements to build community support and foster a sense of optimism about the future of education.
- V. **Establish targeted workforce attraction efforts focused on growing the pipeline of care, mental health, and education system needs.** Continue efforts to develop programs that align with specific workforce needs, streamline licensing requirements, and assess the feasibility of offering incentive packages, such as loan forgiveness or signing bonuses, to attract qualified candidates.





## OBJECTIVE 2

### EMPOWER BUSINESSES TO THRIVE LONG-TERM

**Rationale:** To foster business success in Southern Vermont, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This includes building resilience against future economic disruptions, strengthening existing workforce pipelines, developing alternative revenue streams, and preparing for an increasingly digital future. These strategies are integral to realizing key economic development goals, such as diversifying the local economy, supporting existing businesses, encouraging new startups, and creating fresh resident opportunities. Southern Vermont can create a more robust and adaptable economic landscape by focusing on these areas.

## 2.A) ENHANCE BUSINESS POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

### BENEFITS OF BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION VISITS:

- Strengthens local business relationships
- Identifies growth opportunities early
- Addresses business concerns proactively
- Supports long-term economic stability
- Provides opportunities to connect vendors/suppliers
- Increases awareness of resources and improves the business climate

- I. **Foster a culture of business growth and resilience that provides tools and empowers owners to invest in their own success.** For those looking to improve operations, adopt digital technologies, prepare their workforce, pursue new markets and establish resiliency and recovery plans, provide comprehensive support to align with their investments and help them achieve their goals.
- II. **Enhance alignment and effectiveness of the existing Southern Vermont business support organizations, economic development organizations, and leaders who are actively advancing business assistance through the development of metrics and goals to stimulate growth.** To achieve this, the region should develop a strategic entrepreneurial ecosystem framework and work plan, establish public-private partnerships, and create programs that leverage professional business service providers. These solutions will address challenges like scaling.
- III. **Continue conducting business retention and expansion visits by regional and local economic development organizations throughout the region to engage with businesses of all sizes, phases, and locations.** Use these meetings to identify areas of concern, inform priorities for business and entrepreneurial ecosystem development, facilitate connections between suppliers and buyers, and with regional, state, and federal programs and resources, and provide solutions to support the success of regional businesses.
- IV. **Establish sustainable funding streams, increase access to capital to serve regional businesses.** Include targeted funding for businesses of all sizes and in all locations led by individuals from historically underfunded populations.
- V. **Support businesses of all sizes through periods of transition** through comprehensive awareness campaigns, ongoing programming, and access to capital. Including for startups, expansion projects, and succession planning.
- VI. **Catalyze and facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities and access to preeminent business expertise for business owners** to expand the degree of information sharing, expanded market access, and resource identification that might otherwise be unavailable in a rural region. Prioritize a continuum of learning and connection opportunities that are accessible, consistently available, and of exceptional quality.



ELEMENTS OF  
ENTREPRENEUR-LED  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Entrepreneurial activity provides positive personal and societal benefits in addition to the economic growth it sparks. Entrepreneurship leads to:

- Job creation and economic growth
- Innovation and knowledge exchange
- Enhanced community through diversification
- Retention of local talent
- Long-term economic transformation
- Cultural and social enrichment
- Increased culture of resilience and adaptability

Supporting this activity requires attention to:

- Workforce and Talent Development
- Support Networks for entrepreneurs
- Access to Capital
- Access to Physical Space
- Supportive Regulations
- Market Access
- Cultivation of Culture and Community for Entrepreneurs

2.B) STRENGTHEN THE SOUTHERN VERMONT ENTREPRENEURIAL AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

- I. **Establish a more formalized small business incubator program** to provide aspiring entrepreneurs the resources, support, and mentorship they need to realize their business ideas. Key components of the incubator program could include affordable workspace, reducing rent on space that will last a set number of years, and then phasing into full market rent business development resources, funding assistance, and administrative support.
- II. As part of developing a focused strategic entrepreneurial ecosystem framework and work plan, **identify key metrics, methodologies, and resources to support start-ups, innovation and modern business ideas to make it from ideation to launch.** Ensure that would-be entrepreneurs are equipped with the technical expertise to pursue the development of their product or service, the financial and business acumen to be successful, and the network of support needed to sustain the effort.
- III. **Build critical resilience among socially and economically disadvantaged individuals within our regional business/entrepreneurial communities by fostering essential connections, providing socioeconomically appropriate support services/programs, and implementing models of shared capacity building.** Continue to offer training on emerging business topics and create opportunities for mentoring among entrepreneurs in the region accounting for a broadly representative range of cultural, educational, and professional experience levels.
- IV. **Center and support entrepreneur-led initiatives** to strengthen the culture of entrepreneurship and support the success of those who risk investing in themselves.
- V. **Continue to support the creation of locally owned small businesses that enhance community vibrancy, build wealth, and diversify the regional economy.** Simultaneously, gather data and insights from these efforts to demonstrate that both our smallest and our largest businesses are crucial to the success of our rural economy.

## 2.C) ESTABLISH A COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

### EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS:

- Basic Computer Skills
- Software Proficiency
- Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technology
- Cloud Computing and Virtualization
- Robotics and Process Automation
- Digital Communication and Collaboration
- Digital Ethics and Cybersecurity
- Coding and Programming Basics
- Digital Marketing and Social Media
- Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
- Data Analytics and Visualization
- E-Commerce and Online Business Development

- I. Use economic data, information from employers, surveys, and regional coordination to establish a list of the top critical workforce needs** and leverage data-driven insights to identify the most critical occupations, trades, and skills required for growth. Develop targeted strategies to train, attract, and retain individuals with these qualifications. To implement these strategies effectively, pursue funding to support training programs, talent acquisition initiatives, and employer-employee matching services.
- II. Invest in training programs that equip the workforce with the skills needed to enhance productivity and drive innovation** to strengthen the competitiveness of businesses and organizations. Collaborate with local, regional, and national institutions to expand access to in-person and online training programs focusing on emerging technologies, digital literacy, and other future-ready skills.
- III. Strengthen regional collaboration related to workforce development**, including educational institutions, businesses, and workforce development organizations. Working together can help develop accessible and affordable in-person training programs that address the most critical workforce needs, such as internships, apprenticeships, and skill-building workshops.
- IV. Foster a robust workforce pipeline** to bridge the gap between the emerging workforce and available employment opportunities. Expanding job-readiness training is crucial for strengthening the workforce pipeline, including providing essential career awareness, job readiness, and coaching to Vermonters seeking to enter, reenter, or advance in the job market. This comprehensive support will empower individuals and contribute to a more vibrant and competitive workforce.
- V. Support employers in embracing an evolving workforce** and equip employers with the tools they need to embracing an evolving workforce and build more broadly representative, engaged, and successful teams. This includes access to various funding sources for employee development, expert guidance on creating broadly representative hiring practices, and assistance in evaluating and implementing effective technologies.





## 2.D) INCREASE ACCESS TO INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SPACE

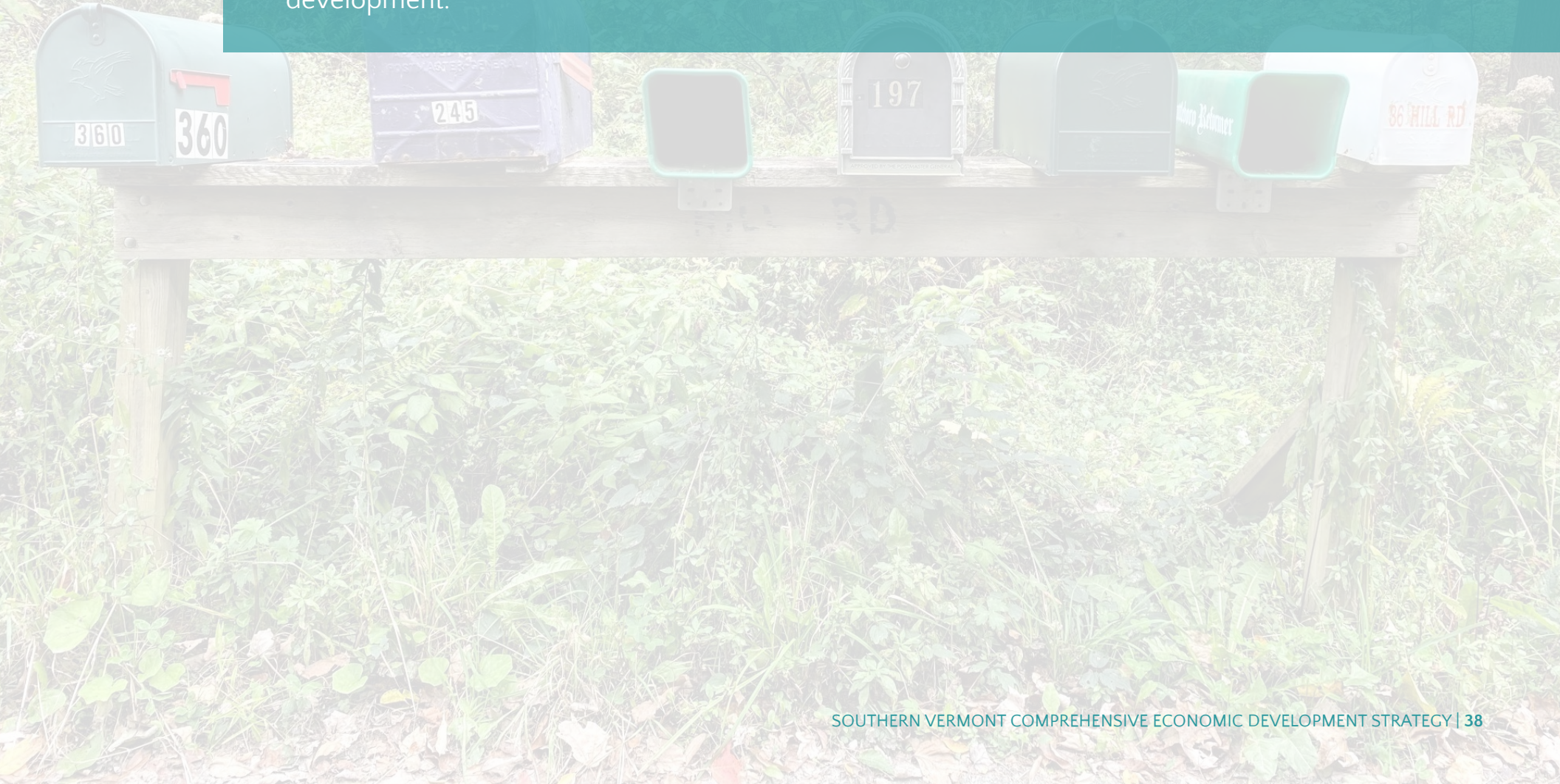
- I. **Request information from municipalities to establish an inventory of key information about interest, availability, and infrastructure related to industrial and commercial space.** Prioritize working with communities open to industrial and commercial development, with available space and needed infrastructure. Work to identify any parcels of land that are particularly challenging to develop due to legal or physical constraints to establish inventory. Assist interested communities without the needed infrastructure to develop it through financing and technical assistance.
- II. **Continue to pursue mission-based real estate purchases to increase access to industrial and commercial space and provide opportunities for businesses to expand and build resilience within the region.** Align mission-based real estate purchases with data and insights into existing business sectors and the emergent needs of burgeoning sectors.
- III. **Support the development and redevelopment of commercial and industrial uses within existing village centers** throughout the region to encourage infill development, greater density within areas of existing infrastructure and services, and alignment with local and regional goals.
- IV. **Identify catalyst properties/parcels within the region's downtowns and village centers** that have challenges around redevelopment, engage partners to find a market and financially feasible redevelopment options, and/or support municipalities in partnering in the redevelopment process.



### OBJECTIVE 3

## FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

**Rationale:** The creation of resilient and adaptable communities is equally crucial for Southern Vermont's economic development. This effort directly contributes to establishing high-quality living environments that attract and retain residents. Key focus areas include addressing the ability to withstand the increasing frequency of historically significant flooding events, expanding housing options, promoting civic engagement, and enhancing the region's recreational and cultural offerings. These initiatives not only make Southern Vermont more appealing to potential residents but also improve the quality of life for current inhabitants, fostering a cycle of growth and development.





### 3.A) INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEM UPGRADES TO ADAPT TO BROADLY CHANGING WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

#### VERMONT MUNICIPAL VULNERABILITY INDICATORS TOOL:

The Municipal Vulnerability Indicators Tool (MVI) is a mapping tool created by the State of Vermont to help municipalities understand their vulnerabilities across several social, economic, and environmental factors.

- The tool tracks 48 factors of vulnerability over six domains:
  - Infrastructure
  - Community
  - Built Environment
  - Social
  - Natural Environment
  - Economy and Jobs
- It includes information on 13 environment related hazards including drought; extreme precipitation; erosion; ice, hail and snowstorms; high and low temperatures; wind; wildfire; landslides; flooding; and invasive species

Source: [vermont.gov](http://vermont.gov)

- I. **Implement infrastructure upgrades** to build resilience and mitigate the effects of broad weather and environmental changes. Create a comprehensive list of at-risk locations and utility redundancy needs to help develop targeted infrastructure upgrade plans. Increase regional capacity to execute plans and projects to protect critical assets and ensure the safety of residents. In addition, share information about changing weather and environmental hazards, which can help communities assess their vulnerability to changing weather and environment-related hazards and inform decision-making. Discuss different funding and shared service approaches for municipalities to support this effort.
- II. **Engage with businesses and property owners in vulnerable areas at risk of damage from flooding or erosion.** Assess specific vulnerabilities and explore proactive options to better understand potential risks and develop effective mitigation strategies to be prepared for future flooding.
- III. **Initiate regional discussions to explore innovative approaches to mitigate broad changes weather and in environmental impacts** including funding, mitigation, adaptation, and related workforce/industry development. Focus on infrastructure hardening, energy system resiliency, and other cutting-edge strategies that could be adapted and scaled for other places.
- IV. **Advocate for state and federal funding to support the development of comprehensive resilience plans and implementation** to address both adaptation and relocation strategies, enabling individual towns to envision sustainable futures. Explore opportunities to align resilience initiatives/planning with other municipal funding streams and investigate varied financing options to ensure successful implementation.
- V. **Research and support the creation of local or regional water and wastewater districts and projects** to support village and neighborhood densities. Consolidating operations and implementing innovative approaches can create sustainable methods for operating, maintaining, and expanding the infrastructure necessary to support our communities.
- VI. **Sustain and grow the food supply chain to decrease reliance on long-distance transportation and increase regional resilience.** Facilitate conversations among key players to identify areas for greater regional collaboration and coordination.

## PROMOTING INFILL AND “MISSING MIDDLE” HOMES:

One way to create more housing while preserving the character of Vermont’s traditional settlement patterns is through the development of ‘Missing Middle’ homes. These include home types that were common before local zoning codes began to separate different kinds of uses and building types. They include:

- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Duplexes
- Small-scale multi-household buildings
- Neighborhood-scale mixed-use/live-work buildings

The State of Vermont has released several tools to help communities promote the development of MMH’s including:

- [Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods \(2020\)](#)
- [Homes for All: A ‘Design and Do’ Toolkit for Small-scale Home Builders, Investors, and Community Leaders \(2024\)](#)

Source:  
<https://accd.vermont.gov/home sforall>

## 3.B) INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ALL

- I. **Survey all regional municipalities to gauge interest in increasing housing and willingness to receive additional support.** Cross-reference this data with areas that possess adequate infrastructure. Prioritize public investments and support in communities with both interest and the necessary foundation for development and reach out to municipalities that express interest but lack sufficient infrastructure or resources.
- II. **Develop town-level mapping of locations where housing development can occur** (aligned with zoning, design, and conservation constraints), offering developers a clear roadmap for potential projects. Identifying specific locations that meet these criteria can bridge the gap between town-level housing goals and regional housing needs, providing developers with actionable starting points for their initiatives.
- III. **Foster community conversations to expand awareness of the importance of housing to thriving communities.** These conversations should emphasize the positive impact of housing on both community well-being and the tax base, demonstrating the return on investment (ROI) of infrastructure improvements. Facilitate the coordination of a regional network of small developers to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and best practices in the field.
- IV. **Pursue greater housing options for seniors of all income and service needs** to allow older residents to remain in the community but in a housing type that better meets their needs. Create adaptable housing units that are attractive to older residents but could also be used by other generations in the future to ensure longevity and strength of the housing market.
- V. **Encourage private investment in large-scale workforce housing development/redevelopment project** through comprehensive support services, including facilitating stakeholder meetings, assisting with funding applications, and guiding developers through permitting process assembling necessary parcels of land. Providing these resources can create a more favorable environment for private investment, encouraging the realization of large-scale projects.
- VI. **Facilitate the coordination of a regional network of small developers** to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and best practices in the field





- VII. Support the development of mixed-income housing and mixed-use development within existing village centers and neighborhood districts throughout the region to encourage infill development.** Encouraging denser development in areas with established infrastructure and services will maximize land utilization and reduce the need for new development in the more rural areas. This infill approach aligns with local and regional goals of creating sustainable, walkable communities that offer various housing options and amenities.
- VIII. Support residential rehabilitation and redevelopment programs.** Modernizing older homes through energy-efficient upgrades, structural repairs, and accessibility features can increase their resilience, improve their overall condition, enhance the quality of life for residents, and expand options for residents in different income brackets.
- IX. Facilitate access to homeownership programs that provide pathways to owning a home.** Consider programs that provide financial education, down payment assistance, and other resources to help individuals build wealth, increase neighborhood stability, and foster community belonging. Explore alternative, community-centered housing opportunities that engage prospective homeowners in cooperative or mission-based housing initiatives. Look for ways to align programs with entrepreneurial skill-building and offer pathways for generational wealth creation.
- X. Further expand the funding and assistance specific to housing development to establish greater stability and predictability for developers.** This includes implementing Tax Increment Financing programs to fund necessary infrastructure improvements, increasing access to capital through loans and grants, facilitating participation in tax credit programs, ensuring access to suitable real estate parcels, and streamlining the permitting process.



### 3.C) PROMOTE CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- I. **Reinforce the importance of civility in community conversations** through education, public statements before meetings, continued support of local media outlets, and ongoing focus on constructive behavior. Improving the public engagement environment will make serving on boards a more rewarding endeavor. Recognize the mental health toll that serving on boards can take and provide support as appropriate.
- II. **Strengthen the effectiveness and capacity of non-profit organizations and other mission-driven enterprises** to serve the community and enhance their operational efficiency. Connect these organizations with mentors and other experienced professionals to provide guidance on refining their processes, financial management, HR practices, and overall "business" model. Continue to promote awareness of available resources and training opportunities designed to improve their functioning. Encourage collaboration between local non-profit organizations and municipal boards to strengthen community engagement and volunteerism. This support will empower non-profits to optimize their operations and ultimately deliver a greater impact on Southern Vermont.
- III. **Use the CEDS as a tool for active engagement in community discussions**, inviting a regionally driven, broadly representative approach to economic development. Facilitating open dialogue and discussion, the CEDS can help bridge divides and reduce political polarization, ensuring that economic development initiatives are aligned with the needs and priorities of all stakeholders.
- IV. **Establish a meaningful way to engage with remote workers, retirees, and newcomers to the region.** Establishing various engagement initiatives will foster community and belonging among newcomers to Southern Vermont. Investing in public space design, implementing effective communication strategies, inviting participation in local and non-profit boards, organizing social events, providing co-working spaces, and creating opportunities for gathering can cultivate a welcoming and broadly representative environment that fosters meaningful connections and strengthens the community.





### 3.D) REINFORCE THE REGION'S RECREATION AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

- I. **Support major regional tourist destinations in implementing a more diversified marketing and programming strategy.** By targeting a wider range of demographics, exploring opportunities beyond their traditional offerings, collaborating with other regional sectors, and preparing for future changes, these destinations can enhance their appeal, attract a more broadly representative visitor base, and position themselves for continued success to ensure long-term resilience and growth.
- II. **Incorporate the implications of broad changes in environmental impacts on recreational and cultural resources in planning initiatives.** Collaborate with industry stakeholders to identify and implement strategies to enhance the resilience of these resources, including necessary upgrades to lodging, destination infrastructure, and transportation systems.
- III. **Help recreational and cultural organizations consider exploring ways to diversify offerings** to boost resilience and profitability and reduce their dependence on seasonal factors. Consider supporting initiatives such as targeted marketing campaigns to locals, special packages, infrastructure upgrades, and innovative business models that cater to year-round activities. Small changes can make a big difference in adapting to market shifts and supporting long-term success.



## OBJECTIVE 4

### PROMOTE GREATER REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

**Rationale:** Southern Vermont has a long history of collaboration, with numerous organizations actively engaged in advancing economic, workforce, and community development. This strong foundation creates a unique opportunity to bring even greater alignment and cohesion to these efforts. By enhancing coordination among these dedicated entities, we can streamline services and strengthen our collective impact. It is crucial to communicate effectively with residents, policymakers, and business leaders regarding matters of local and regional import. A positive, forward-thinking, and coordinated approach will be key to breaking through any perceived challenges. Together, we can build on Southern Vermont's strengths, realizing its full potential and achieving meaningful, lasting change for the entire region.







## 4.A) CREATE AND STRENGTHEN STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT CEDS IMPLEMENTATION

- I. **Expand access to capital through strategies including revolving loan funds (RLF) and other tools** that can level the playing field for capital access. These financial tools can provide critical funding for projects promoting affordable housing, job creation, and community development. Increasing uptake and Leveraging RLF and other capital resources can support local businesses, revitalize neighborhoods, and improve residents' overall quality of life.
- II. **Investigate the feasibility of establishing specialized entities to build greater regional capacity for project implementation.** Internal development services could provide direct support for key community and economic initiatives. At the same time, a Project Development Authority (PDA) could be created to manage complex projects on behalf of local communities. The PDA would bring a high degree of expertise and financial insight to the table, ensuring that projects are executed efficiently and effectively.
- III. **Pursue targeted outreach to expand the economic development ecosystem and increase opportunities for business connections**, including:
  - Expand Capital Access for Business Growth: Develop structured pathways for businesses to access capital, focusing on both scaling existing enterprises and supporting startups, using a mix of federal, state, and regional funds.
  - Develop Investment Vehicles: Establish and expand regional investment funds, angel networks, and revolving loan programs, securing capital from national-scale sources to fuel local growth.
  - Promote Regional Collaboration: Strengthen collaboration between economic development organizations (EDOs), municipalities, and private partners to create a unified regional pitch for external investors.
  - Targeted Outreach and Networking: Actively engage with national philanthropic organizations and capital networks, showcasing regional opportunities and successful initiatives that align with their priorities.

**SOLUTION HIGHLIGHT:**

**Approaches to Local Wealth Creation**

Many organizations have developed data-driven approaches to local and regional economic development that focus on local wealth development.

- Wealthworks is an approach that brings together and connects a community's assets in multiple areas to meet market demand in ways that build livelihoods that last.
- Aspen Institute CSG's, Thrive Rural Framework is a new tool to help communities take stock, target action, and gauge progress on equitable rural prosperity.
- Main Street America's Four Point Strategy addresses broadly representative Economic Vitality and emphasizes asset inventory as a key component of downtown/Main Street development.
- Rural LISC strives to assist rural communities in developing opportunities at the local level with a partnership model that helps develop local leadership and capacity to carry out critical projects, building on local assets.

**4.B) WORK REGIONALLY TO ADDRESS CRITICAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

- I. Engage in state-level conversations about regionalization and shared municipal service agreements.** Exploring opportunities to collaborate with neighboring municipalities and share resources can identify ways to optimize service delivery while minimizing expenses.
- II. Engage businesses, municipalities, non-profits, and the public in conversations about the wealth of resources available to achieve economic development-related goals.** Foster open dialogue and encourage greater adoption of existing programs and technical assistance. This collaborative approach will empower stakeholders to work together towards shared goals, driving positive change and fostering a more vibrant Southern Vermont.
- III. Explore the applicability of data-driven approaches to supporting and building local wealth creation** in multiple areas, including intellectual, financial, natural, cultural, political, individual, and social capital. The goal is to increase collaboration and expand opportunities across the region.
- IV. Facilitate regional and cross-state conversations to identify areas for shared municipal services, collaborative approaches, and coordinated resource deployment.** Encouraging collaboration and cooperation among local governments can streamline operations, reduce costs, and enhance the delivery of essential services to our communities.



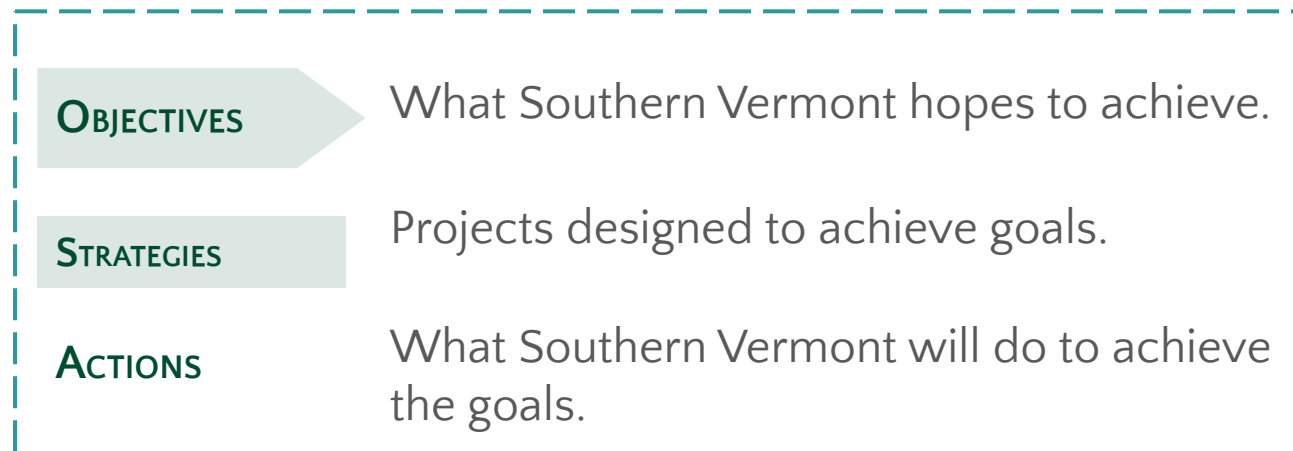
# ATTACHMENT A:

## Action Plan Matrix

# ACTION PLAN MATRIX

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES KEY

- **Population:** Total number of residents in Southern Vermont;
- **Workforce:** Job openings per sector; Working age residents; Educational attainment
- **Income:** Per capita income; Unemployment rate; Wage growth
- **Housing Units:** Number of housing units
- **Care System:** Number of sector job openings; Number of childcare seats; Number of providers
- **Business Growth:** Number of jobs; Number of businesses assisted
- **Entrepreneurship:** Number of business starts. Availability of capital
- **Investment:** Number and value of redevelopment projects; Vacancy rates
- **Resilience Infrastructure:** Amount of investment in infrastructure; Number of new or upgraded systems; Amount of investment
- **Collaboration:** Depth of involvement with partners; Number of meetings held





# ACTION PLAN MATRIX

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES CROSSWALK

The following table shows the performance measures addressed by each objective.

Objectives	Performance Measures									
	Population	Workforce	Income	Housing Units	Care System	Business Growth	Entrepreneurship	Investment	Resilience	Collaboration
1. Address Critical Population Needs for the Future	X	X	X	X	X		X			X
2. Empower Businesses to Thrive Long-Term		X	X			X	X	X	X	X
3. Foster Resilient, Adaptable Communities				X		X	X	X		X
4. Promote Greater Regional Economic Development Alignment							X			X

OBJECTIVE 1

ADDRESS CRITICAL POPULATION NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

STRATEGY 1.A) INVEST IN COMMUNITY ASSETS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
1.A.I	Improve quality of life for young people and their families	Support and develop local, regional, and state initiatives and policies that improve quality of life for young people and their families, including schools, childcare, arts and culture, variety of nightlife, family-friendly workplace policies, and recreation amenities.	High	Ongoing	29
1.A.II	Invest in programs to attract and retain young people	Support existing programs and explore opportunities to create new programs that cater specifically to the needs and interests of young adults.	Medium	Ongoing	29
1.A.III	Pursue housing to accommodate younger people	Identify and develop housing options that are suitable for young adults in terms of size, price, amenities, and location.	High	Short	29
1.A.IV	Develop targeted marketing materials	Highlight alignment of Southern Vermont's lifestyle with young people's values/preferences and work in coordination with state marketing and attraction programs.	Low	Mid	29

Performance Measure: Population · Workforce · Housing Units · Care System



OBJECTIVE 1

ADDRESS CRITICAL POPULATION NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

STRATEGY 1.B) CREATE PROGRAMS TO TRAIN, ATTRACT, AND RETAIN PEOPLE WITH NEEDED SKILLS

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
1.B.I	Identify and prioritize the most in-demand skills and occupations	Collaborate with workforce development partners to establish the necessary training programs, educational pathways, and support services.	High	Short	30
1.B.II	Increase the public's awareness of the specific skilled workforce needs	Based on data, launch a targeted marketing campaign highlighting the opportunities available.	Medium	Ongoing	30
1.B.III	Empower Southern Vermont employers to be employers of choice	Help employers be attractive places to work through financial incentives, work/life balance, community engagement, and family-friendly policies.	Medium	Mid	30
1.B.IV	Pursue housing to accommodate the workforce	Identify and develop housing options that are suitable for the workforce in terms of size, price, amenities, and location.	High	Short	30
1.B.V	Continue to support affordable transportation for employees	Identify and develop affordable transportation options for employees to access their workspace and training programs	Medium	Ongoing	30

Performance Measure: Workforce · Housing Units · Income · Care System

OBJECTIVE 1

ADDRESS CRITICAL POPULATION NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

STRATEGY 1.C) FOSTER A POPULATION THAT REFLECTS A BROAD RANGE OF BACKGROUNDS

ACTION	DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
1.C.I	Convene discussions among key organizations and stakeholders involved with refugee resettlement efforts	Focus on identifying areas for improvement, sharing best practices, and developing strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the program.	High	Immediate	31
1.C.II	Improve economic and community development related materials	Enhance the effectiveness, uptake and inclusivity of economic and community development programs.	Medium	Mid	31
1.C.III	Develop entrepreneurial support targeted to underrepresented communities	Foster a supportive and broadly representative entrepreneurial ecosystem by creating mentorship programs, providing access to affordable resources, and advocating for fair policies.	Medium	Mid	31
1.C.IV	Build broadly representative leadership and representation within economic and community development organizations and initiatives	This involves fostering a culture of respect and broad representation, as well as implementing policies and procedures that promote economic opportunity and geographic equity.	Low	Ongoing	31

Performance Measure: Collaboration · Entrepreneurship



OBJECTIVE 1

ADDRESS CRITICAL POPULATION NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

STRATEGY 1.D) CONTINUE TO SUPPORT POLICIES THAT IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN THE CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
1.D.I	Invest in creative solutions to expand access to care (child and elder care)	Support programs that facilitate training, funding for starting in-home care programs, and guidance on meeting state requirements.	High	Ongoing	32
1.D.II	Pursue innovative solutions to strengthen the health care system	Increase accessibility through culturally competent care, mobile service providers, interpreter services, workforce retention and attraction efforts, and affordable insurance options.	High	Short	32
1.D.III	Participate in conversations about school districts' ability to modernize	Equip schools to meet the needs of today's students and prepare them for future success.	High	Ongoing	32
1.D.IV	Foster greater collaboration among school districts	Strengthen Southern Vermont schools and improve educational outcomes.	Medium	Ongoing	32
1. D.V	Establish targeted workforce attraction efforts to grow the pipeline of care, mental health, and education system needs	Address the growing workforce needs to expand access and improve service provision.	High	Short	32

Performance Measure: Care System · Collaboration · Workforce · Population

## OBJECTIVE 2

### EMPOWER BUSINESSES TO THRIVE LONG-TERM

#### STRATEGY 2.A) ENHANCE BUSINESS POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
2.A.I	Foster a culture of business growth and resilience	Support businesses in their efforts to remain viable and transition towards future opportunities.	High	Ongoing	34
2.A.II	Enhance alignment and effectiveness of the existing Southern Vermont business support organizations, EDOs and leaders	Develop a strategic entrepreneurial ecosystem framework and work plan, establish public-private partnerships, and create programs that leverage professional business service providers.	Medium	Mid	34
2.A.III	Continue conducting business retention and expansion visits	Engage with businesses of all sizes, phases, and geographic locations to understand specific needs, concerns, and aspirations.	Medium	Ongoing	34
2.A.IV	Establish sustainable funding streams and access to capital to serve regional businesses	To expand access to funding for businesses to pursue their strategic initiatives.	Medium	Mid	34
2.A.V	Increase access to capital	Support business transitions of all types and for all business sizes.	High	Ongoing	34
2.A.VI	Catalyze and facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities	Expand the degree of information sharing, expanded market access, and resource identification that might otherwise be unavailable in a rural region.	Medium	Ongoing	34

Performance Measure: Business Growth · Entrepreneurship



OBJECTIVE 2

EMPOWER BUSINESSES TO THRIVE LONG-TERM

STRATEGY 2.B) STRENGTHEN THE SOUTHERN VERMONT ENTREPRENEURIAL AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
2.B.I	Establish a more formalized small business incubator program	Provide aspiring entrepreneurs with the resources, support, and mentorship they need to realize their business ideas.	High	Medium	35
2.B.II	Identify key metrics, methodologies, and resources to support start-ups, innovation and modern business ideas to make it from ideation to launch	Ensure that would-be entrepreneurs are equipped with the technical expertise to pursue the development.	High	Ongoing	35
2.B.III	Build critical resilience among socially and economically disadvantaged individuals within our regional business and entrepreneurial communities	Continue to offer training on emerging business topics and create opportunities for mentoring.	High	Medium	35
2.B.IV	Center and support entrepreneur-led initiatives	To strengthen the culture of entrepreneurship and support the success of those who risk investing in themselves.	High	Ongoing	35
2.B.V	Support the creation of locally owned small businesses	To enhance community vibrancy, build wealth, and diversify the regional economy.	High	Ongoing	35

Performance Measure: Entrepreneurship · Business Growth · Collaboration

## OBJECTIVE 2

## EMPOWER BUSINESSES TO THRIVE LONG-TERM

### STRATEGY 2.C) ESTABLISH A COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
2.C.I	Establish a list of the top critical workforce needs	Leverage data-driven insights to identify the most critical occupations, trades, and skills required for growth.	High	Short	36
2.C.II	Invest in training programs that equip the workforce with the skills needed to enhance productivity and drive innovation	Collaborate with local, regional, and national institutions to expand access to in-person and online training programs focusing on emerging technologies, digital literacy, and other future-ready skills.	High	Short	36
2.C.III	Strengthen regional collaboration related to workforce development	Provide essential career awareness, job readiness, and coaching to Vermonters seeking to enter, reenter, or advance in the job market.	Medium	Mid	36
2.C.IV	Foster a robust workforce pipeline	Work from a young age to develop a job-ready workforce with the skills needed.	Medium	Mid	36
2.C.V	Support employers in embracing an evolving workforce	Expand access to funding sources for employee development, expert guidance on creating broadly representative hiring practices, and assistance in evaluating and implementing effective technologies.	Medium	Ongoing	36

Performance Measure: Workforce · Collaboration · Income



OBJECTIVE 2

EMPOWER BUSINESSES TO THRIVE LONG-TERM

STRATEGY 2.D) INCREASE ACCESS TO INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SPACE

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
2.D.I	Establish an inventory of sites for development	Prioritize working with communities open to industrial and commercial development, with available space and needed infrastructure.	Medium	Short	37
2.D.II	Continue to pursue mission-based real estate purchases	Increase access to industrial and commercial space and provide opportunities for businesses to expand and build resilience within the region.	Medium	Mid	37
2.D.III	Support the development and redevelopment of commercial and industrial uses within existing village centers	Encourage infill development, greater density within areas of existing infrastructure and services, and alignment with local and regional goals.	Medium	Mid	37
2.D.IV	Identify catalyst properties/parcels within the region's downtowns and village centers	Engage partners to find a market and financially feasible redevelopment options, and/or support municipalities in partnering in the redevelopment process.	Medium	Long	37

Performance Measure: Investment · Resilience Infrastructure

# OBJECTIVE 3

## FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

### STRATEGY 3.A) INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEM UPGRADES

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
3.A.I	Plan for infrastructure upgrades	Create a comprehensive list of at-risk locations to develop targeted infrastructure upgrade plans.	High	Short	39
3.A.II	Engage with businesses and property owners in vulnerable areas	Assess specific vulnerabilities and explore proactive options.	High	Short	39
3.A.III	Initiate regional discussions to explore innovative approaches to resilience	Explore innovative approaches to mitigation, adaptation, and related workforce/industry development.	Medium	Mid	39
3.A.V	Advocate for state and federal funding to support the development of comprehensive resilience plans	Help communities plan for and navigate the challenges of disaster planning and ensure that villages and neighborhoods persist and thrive.	Medium	Long	39
3.A.VI	Research and support the creation of regional water and wastewater districts and projects	Consolidating operations and implementing innovative approaches can create sustainable methods for operating, maintaining, and expanding the infrastructure necessary to support our communities.	Medium	Mid	39
3.A.VII	Strengthen the food supply chain	To decrease reliance on long-distance transportation and increase regional resilience.	Medium	Mid	39

Performance Measure: Resilience Infrastructure · Collaboration



# OBJECTIVE 3

## FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

### STRATEGY 3.B) INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ALL

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
3.B.I	Survey all regional municipalities to gauge interest in increasing housing	Identify areas in Southern Vermont that are best suited for further housing development.	High	Short	40
3.B.II	Develop town-level mapping of locations where housing development can occur	Provide developers with actionable starting points for their initiatives.	High	Short	40
3.B.III	Foster community conversations to expand awareness of the importance of housing to thriving communities	Emphasize the positive impact of housing on both community well-being and the tax base, demonstrating the return on investment of infrastructure improvements.	Medium	Ongoing	40
3.B.IV	Pursue greater housing options for seniors of all income and service needs	Expand housing options for older residents.	High	Mid	40
3.B.V	Encourage private investment in large-scale workforce housing development and redevelopment project opportunities	Create a more favorable environment for private investment, encouraging the realization of large-scale projects that contribute to community growth and revitalization.	Medium	Long	40

Performance Measure: Housing Units · Investment

# OBJECTIVE 3

## FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

### STRATEGY 3.B) INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ALL (CONT.)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
3.B.VI	Facilitate the coordination of a regional network of small developers	Support and facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and best practices in the field	Medium	Ongoing	40
3.B.VII	Support the development of mixed-income housing and mixed-use development	Encourage denser development in areas with established infrastructure and services.	High	Ongoing	41
3.B.VIII	Support residential rehabilitation and redevelopment programs	Modernize older homes through improvements such as energy-efficient upgrades, structural repairs, and accessibility features.	High	Ongoing	41
3.B.IX	Facilitate access to homeownership programs that provide pathways to owning a home	Support programs offering financial education, down payment assistance, and other resources to help individuals build wealth, increase neighborhood stability, and foster a sense of community belonging.	Medium	Mid	41
3.B.X	Expand the funding and assistance specific to housing to create a greater sense of stability and predictability for developers	Examples include implementing Tax Increment Financing programs to fund necessary infrastructure improvements, increasing access to capital through loans and grants, facilitating participation in tax credit programs, ensuring access to suitable real estate parcels, and streamlining the permitting process.	Medium	Long	41

Performance Measure: Housing Units · Investment



OBJECTIVE 3

FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

STRATEGY 3.C) PROMOTE CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
3.C.I	Reinforce the importance of civility in community conversations	Improving the public engagement environment will make serving on boards a more rewarding endeavor.	High	Ongoing	42
3.C.II	Strengthen the effectiveness and capacity of non-profit organizations and other mission-driven enterprises	Connect these organizations with mentors, teachers, and other experienced professionals to provide guidance on refining their processes, financial management, HR practices, and overall "business" model.	Medium	Ongoing	42
3.C.III	Use the CEDS as a tool for active engagement in community discussions	Facilitating open dialogue and discussion, the CEDS can help bridge divides and reduce political polarization, ensuring that economic development initiatives are aligned with the needs and priorities of all stakeholders.	Medium	Immediate	42
3.C.IV	Establish meaningful way to engage with remote workers, retirees, and newcomers to the region	Investing in public space design, implementing effective communication strategies, organizing social events, providing co-working spaces, and creating opportunities for gathering can cultivate a welcoming and broadly representative environment.	Medium	Mid	42

Performance Measure: Collaboration

OBJECTIVE 3

FOSTER RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE COMMUNITIES

STRATEGY 3.D) REINFORCE THE REGION’S RECREATION AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
3.D.I	Assist regional tourist destinations in implementing diversified marketing and programming	Support destinations in their effort to enhance their appeal, attract a more broadly representative visitor base, and position themselves for continued success to ensure long-term growth.	Medium	Mid	43
3.D.II	Incorporate the implications of resilience planning on recreational and cultural resources in planning initiatives	Collaborate with industry stakeholders to identify and implement strategies to enhance the resilience of these resources.	High	Ongoing	43
3.D.III	Help businesses consider ways to diversify their offerings	Enhance the resilience and profitability of businesses in the region and reduce their dependence on seasonal factors.	High	Ongoing	43

Performance Measure: Collaboration · Entrepreneurship · Business Growth

OBJECTIVE 4

PROMOTE GREATER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

STRATEGY 4.A) CREATE AND STRENGTHEN STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT CEDS IMPLEMENTATION

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE	
4.A.I	Expand access to capital through strategies including, revolving loan fund (RLF) and other tools	Provide critical funding for projects promoting affordable housing, job creation, and community development.	High	Short	45
4.A.II	Investigate establishing specialized entities to build greater regional capacity for project implementation	Internal development services to provide direct support for key community and economic initiatives.	Medium	Short	45
4.A.III	Pursue targeted outreach	Expand the economic development ecosystem and increase opportunities for business connections	Medium	Ongoing	45

Performance Measure: Collaboration · Entrepreneurship



# OBJECTIVE 4

# PROMOTE GREATER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

## STRATEGY 4.B) WORK REGIONALLY TO ADDRESS CRITICAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PLAN PAGE
4.B.I	Engage in state-level conversations about regionalization and shared municipal service agreements Explore opportunities to collaborate with neighboring municipalities and share resources to optimize service delivery while minimizing expenses.	Medium	Mid	46
4.B.II	Engage in conversations about resources available to achieve economic development-related goals Foster open dialogue and encourage greater adoption of existing programs and technical assistance.	Medium	Mid	46
4.B.III	Explore data-driven approaches to supporting and building local wealth creation Increase collaboration and create expanded opportunities for the region.	Medium	Short	46
4.B.IV	Facilitate regional and cross-state conversations to identify areas for collaborative approaches and coordinated resource deployment Encourage collaboration and cooperation among local governments to streamline operations, reduce costs, and enhance the delivery of essential services.	High	Ongoing	46

Performance Measure: Collaboration

# ATTACHMENT B:

# EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

# ATTACHMENT C:

# BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED FOR 2024 CEDS

2014 SMART CEDS Report  
2019 Southern Vermont CEDS  
2022 Annual Report: BDCC and SoVT EDS  
2023 Annual Report: BDCC and SoVT EDS  
Apprenticeship Project Study  
BDCC & Six College Collaborative Internship Program  
BDCC Project Report  
Bennington County Regional Plan  
CEDS Annual Performance Report: 2020 Annual Performance Report  
Economic Impacts of Vermont Yankee Closure  
ECVEDD CEDS  
Hiring Needs Assessment: Administrative, Clerical, Bookkeeping, Accounting  
Hiring Needs Assessment: CDL & Logistics  
Hiring Needs Assessment: Production and Manufacturing  
INSTIG8: Entrepreneur and Innovation Culture Creation  
Northern VT EDD CEDS  
Northshire EDS  
Southern VT CEDS: Economic Profile  
Southern VT Development Zone Committee Report  
SoVermont Business Accelerator Feasibility Study  
Targeted Expertise Recruitment: Task Force Report to New Chapter  
Today's Recruiting Solutions  
Vermont Advanced Manufacturing Partnership: Final Report  
Vermont Arts & Economic Prosperity 6  
Vermont Housing Needs Assessment 2025-2029  
West Central VT CEDS  
What is a good job? Defining Opportunity in Southern Vermont  
Windham Region: Economic Data Overview  
Windham Regional Plan



# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

The following list of Southern Vermont CEDS 2024 Vital Projects is presented in alphabetical order by project name.

**Project:** A New Home for Vermont Paws & Boots

**Impact Region:** A Single Town in the Bennington County

**Submitting Organization:** Vermont Paws & Boots, Inc.

**Description:** Over the past 18 months, Vermont Paws & Boots has completely renovated a 7,000 square foot structure just outside of Old Bennington, transforming it into a state-of-the-art, best-in-class facility for forming productive and lasting bonds between disabled military veterans/first responders and their service dogs. The facility is one piece of a much larger collection of older structures, and VPB is taking on new redevelopment and renovation challenges to expand its programming and services, including residential and work-based opportunities for clients.

**Project:** Bellows Falls Intermodal Transportation Center

**Impact Region:** Multiple Towns in the Windham Region

**Submitting Organization:** Town of Rockingham

**Description:** The 1923 Bellows Falls Union Station, a contributing structure on the national register, and active intercity bus and rail station is dilapidating and no longer part of the business plan for the owner, Vermont Rail System, with no access to grant funding for a multi-million price rehab and preservation project. The Town will purchase the station, remediate the lead, asbestos, & vapor intrusion, repair & restore brick facade, doors and windows. Next phase will renovate all the mechanical, HVAC, plumbing, electrical systems. VTrans and Amtrak are improving/restoring the intercity passenger rail platform. Feasibility options include the town master lease to Local Development Corp LLC for tax credits and lease space to passenger travel related businesses like localvore teaching restaurant.

**Project:** Compost Facility Expansion

**Impact Region:** Multiple Towns in both regions

**Submitting Organization:** Windham Solid Waste Management District

**Description:** A new enclosed food waste composting facility is being constructed to serve residents, businesses, and schools. The previous facility exceeded its state permit capacity and therefore a new permit with twice the capacity has been received. Other permits include Brattleboro zoning, Vermont stormwater, and Act 250. The new facility includes a 4,000 sf fabric building on a concrete pad with aeration trenches which will accelerate the composting process. The state-of-the-art facility will include an odor control biofilter and heat recovery from the compost piles. Construction started in October 2024 with the facility operating by December 2024. Total budget is approximately \$700,000 and required funds have been obtained without WSWMD incurring long-term debt.

# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

**Project:** DVFiber High Speed Internet

**Impact Region:** Multiple Towns in both regions

**Submitting Organization:** Deerfield Valley Communications Union District

**Description:** The Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (dba DVFiber) is a community-driven, non-corporate fiber optic internet provider serving Southern Vermont. Our mission is to bring reliable, high-speed internet to every corner of our district. In our fifth year of operation, we are implementing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants, totaling \$26 million, to construct the initial phases of the high-speed fiber optic network that will ultimately serve 24 towns. We are applying for additional funds through the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program to support these efforts, with the goal of ensuring equitable access to 21st century technology that supports our region's continued growth and prosperity.

**Project:** Expanding Access to Trades Training in Southern Vermont

**Impact Region:** Windham Region

**Submitting Organization:** HatchSpace

**Description:** HatchSpace is a growing community workshop and school in the heart of downtown Brattleboro devoted to advancing the learning, practice, and applications of woodworking skills. HatchSpace is expanding programs to serve as Southern Vermont's workforce development center for trades training with a focus on careers in the wood product industries, carpentry and related construction sectors. HatchSpace fills the community, cultural, and economic needs stemming from the disappearance of craft education within our schools by delivering innovative, accessible, vocationally relevant, and skills-based training in woodworking for **varied** audiences. By growing our workforce development programs and offering access to specialized equipment and tools, we're poised to have broad economic impact.

**Project:** Grace Cottage Family Health New Primary Care Clinic Building

**Impact Region:** Southern Vermont

**Submitting Organization:** Carlos G. Otis Health Care Center, dba Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital

**Description:** Grace Cottage Family Health has outgrown its primary care facility, currently located in two 1840s-era houses that lack efficiency. Patient visits have increased 50% over the last four years and there is a community need for further growth, but the existing clinic space cannot accommodate it. This project improves healthcare access and allows space for several additional well-paying jobs in the future. Grace Cottage's new clinic building is designed (see [gracecottage.org/future](https://gracecottage.org/future)), and permitting is nearly complete.

# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

**Project:** Renovation Project for the Old School Community Center

**Impact Region:** Multiple towns in both regions

**Submitting Organization:** Old School Enrichment Council, Inc.

**Description:** Renovations (including siding, window replacement, ADA entry ramps, bathrooms, meeting room spaces, roof repair, music space, parking lot paving, etc.) at the Old School Community Center are critical to sustaining essential services that currently benefit residents of all ages across Deerfield Valley and other Southern Vermont towns. The center in Wilmington is a vital hub, housing small businesses, non-profits, childcare services, community events, senior programming, recreational activities, artist lofts, teen programs, and youth sports. By maintaining and improving the facility, we ensure that these crucial services and opportunities for engagement continue to thrive, fostering community well-being and economic growth in the region.

**Project:** Rockingham Industrial Park Stormwater Planning, Design, and Implementation

**Impact Region:** A Single Town in the Windham Region

**Submitting Organization:** Town of Rockingham

**Description:** The stormwater mitigation Best Management Practices (BMP) 30% design by Watershed Consulting for the Rockingham Industrial Park includes infiltration, bioretention, and stormwater management on Imtec Lane, Spencer, and Industrial Drive, and associated Industrial parcels. These infrastructure improvements support existing business, (Town Plan 2023 Draft, P. 30) create an environment that encourages more jobs and opportunities, (2019 CEDS Objective 2 P. 13) and mitigates severe storm water run-off to stop the erosion at Rockingham's largest employers. Sonnax, Chroma, Whitney Blake, Silver Forest, and Vermont Homegrown Cannabis, who employ almost 500 people. More than \$2 million public and private investment has been made on Chroma and Whitney Blake stormwater mitigation measures since 2021.

**Project:** Storage and Distribution Infrastructure for a Thriving Regional Food System

**Impact Region:** Southern Vermont

**Submitting Organization:** Food Connects

**Description:** Food Connects is building a multi-faceted food storage and distribution facility with the BDCC Business Park in Brattleboro that will serve various needs of the regional food system, including farms, food producers, retail grocers, farm stands, general stores and institutions. As a "food hub" we work with over 150 food producers and distribute to over 250 wholesale customers. When complete, our facility will provide over 10,000 sq ft of food-safe cold, frozen and dry storage and various distribution services. Project outcomes include rural economic development, job creation, food entrepreneurship, marketing of Southern Vermont as a food destination, and increased regional food security.



# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

**Project:** SUSU commUNITY farm: Deepening & Widening our Impact

**Impact Region:** Windham Region

**Submitting Organization:** SUSU commUNITY farm

**Description:** We are an Afro-Indigenous farm, committed to centering food and land sovereignty through educational opportunities, land-based relationships, and ancestral healing, in so-called southern Vermont. Our commitment to cultural reclamation is not only an antidote to colonialism and racial capitalism but serves as a path to resilience. We embody this work by practicing food + land sovereignty, offering land-based connections, and ancestral healing. As part of our core programming, we offer a weekly no-cost CSA to 55 BIPOC families in Southern Vermont, alongside multigenerational initiatives including workshops and classes through our Trauma Conscious School of Liberation and our Youth2Liberation Pipeline Program.

**Project:** The Village at Winston Prouty - Phase One

**Impact Region:** Southern Vermont

**Submitting Organization:** Winston Prouty Center

**Description:** The Winston Prouty Center is embarking on an ambitious, collaborative, and forward-thinking project to build housing on its existing campus in Brattleboro, VT. In addition to housing, the project will continue and expand existing services and amenities on campus including office space, small retail, community services, and recreation opportunities available to the entire Brattleboro community. The purpose of the project is to contribute to creating a robust housing continuum in the community and region by adding up to 300 units of housing. The goal is to create a broadly mixed-income neighborhood since research demonstrates that generates better outcomes for all. Housing is the linchpin needed to unlock the economic promise of the region.

**Project:** WheelPad L3C

**Impact Region:** Windham Region

**Submitting Organization:** WheelPad L3C

**Description:** WheelPad L3C manufactures universally designed home attachments, and accessible tiny homes in the most sustainable way possible. [www.WheelPad.com](http://www.WheelPad.com) The overall project is to evolve WheelPad into a stable, sustainable, business. WheelPad is in the middle of upgrading a dilapidated site: 211 Route 9 West, Wilmington, VT 05363. The project for Q4 2024 - Q1 2025 is to complete renovations of our manufacturing facility (PETE) enabling three teams of local workers to construct our home models to bring our construction in-house, rather than subbing out to contractors in other states. In 2025 we will begin the significant renovation of an abandoned building to turn it into office and training program space with site-readiness for worker housing.

# ATTACHMENT D:

# 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

## **2024 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects (alphabetical by project name)**

- A New Home for Vermont Paws & Boots - Vermont Paws & Boots, Inc.
- Arlington Common Community Center - Arlington Arts and Enrichment Program
- Athens Community Center - Town of Athens
- BCRC College Connections Internship Program - Bennington County Regional Commission
- BDCC Development Services - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- BDCC Extension of Business Technical Assistance to Serve SEDI Businesses - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Bellows Falls Area Wide Plan - implementation 0 Bridge St Mixed Use - Town Of Rockingham
- Bellows Falls Intermodal Transportation Center (BFITC) formerly BF Historic Train Station Purchase and Renovation - Town of Rockingham (TOR)
- Bellows Falls Opera House Lower Theater and Main Theater improvements - Town of Rockingham
- Benn High Redevelopment Project - Hale Resources LLC
- Bennington Community Market - Bennington Community Market
- Bennington Skatepark - Town of Bennington
- BFADC - Robertson Paper Site - Seeking Developer/Tenant(s) - Facility scoping, predevelopment, permitting, D&E, and Construction - Bellows Falls Area Development Corporation (BFADC)
- Brattleboro Microtransit Pilot - Southeast Vermont Transit
- Brookline Meetinghouse Historic Restoration - Town of Brookline
- Buzzy Towne Park - Wilmington Recreation Commission
- Chalet Preservation and Redevelopment - Windham & Windsor Housing Trust
- Community Center & Town Offices - Town of Shaftsbury
- Compost Facility Expansion - Windham Solid Waste Management District
- Cotton Mill Campus Expansion, Incubation, and Workforce Housing - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Creative Sector Hub - High Street & Green, LLC

# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

### 2024 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects (alphabetical by project name)

- Destination: SoVT / Welcoming Communities (combined) - Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)
- Dover & Wilmington Bi-Town Strategic Marketing Plan - Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Dover Municipal Water System - Town of Dover - Municipal Water Task Force
- DVFiber High Speed Internet - Deerfield Valley Communications Union District
- Energizer Facility Reuse - Town of Bennington
- Estey Organ Complex Redevelopment - Phase 1 - Community Development Support Inc.
- Expand cardiovascular care to achieve \$1.3M in annual regional economic growth - Southwestern Vermont Medical Center
- Expanding Access to Trades Training in Southern Vermont - HatchSpace
- Flood Adaptation Planning & Design for Windham Region Designated Centers - Windham Regional Commission
- Flood Hazard Mitigation in Jacksonville Village - Town of Whitingham
- Future Ready Initiative - Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro
- Grace Cottage Family Health New Primary Care Clinic Building - Carlos G. Otis Health Care Center, dba Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital
- Greater Rockingham Area Services Energy Improvements - Greater Rockingham Area Services
- Green Island Project - Great Falls Food Hub - Town of Rockingham
- Hotel Windham - Windham Development Group LLC
- In-Sight Photography Project Career Pathways - In-Sight Photography Project
- Island St Revitalization - Town of Rockingham (TOR) and Bellows Falls Area Development Corporation (BFADC)
- Lake Raponda Dam Project - Town of Wilmington
- Library ADA accessibility including walkway and first floor bathroom - South Londonderry Free Library
- LiveVT - GROW Program in SW Vermont (Grants for Relocation and Outreach Work) - Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- Living Memorial Park Pool Renovation - Town of Brattleboro
- Manchester Sewer Line Extension - Town of Manchester
- Melrose Terrace Redevelopment - Brattleboro Housing Authority dba Brattleboro Housing Partnerships
- Miss Bellows Falls Diner - Rockingham for Progress



# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

### 2024 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects (alphabetical by project name)

- Ninja Path - Bennington County Regional Commission
- Out in the Open's Rural Organizing & Retreat Campus - Out in the Open
- Potash Hill - Potash Hill, Inc.
- Preserving, Protecting, and Enhancing Rudyard Kipling's Naulakha - The Landmark Trust USA
- Putnam Block Redevelopment - Phase 2: Mount Anthony House - Putnam Community Health LLC
- Readsboro Highway Garage - Town of Readsboro
- Regional Capacity Building - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Registered Apprenticeship Program as a High Performance Builder - Sustainable Energy Outreach Network
- Renovation Project for the Old School Community Center - Old School Enrichment Council, Inc.
- Retreat Farm Food Center Facility Improvements - Retreat Farm, LTD
- Rich Earth Institute's Urine Nutrient Reclamation Program (UNRP) - Rich Earth Institute
- Rockingham Community Health Center - Greater Rockingham Area services
- Rockingham Industrial Park Stormwater Planning, Design, and Implementation - Town of Rockingham
- Route 9 Water & Wastewater Infrastructure Expansion Project - Town of Wilmington
- Rupert Town Green - Town of Rupert
- Rural Business Stability and Recovery Center (RBSRC) - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- SEVT Brattleboro Bus Facility - Southeast Vermont Transit
- South Londonderry Master Plan - South Londonderry Master Plan Task Force
- South Londonderry Village Wastewater System - Phase II - Town of Londonderry
- Storage and Distribution Infrastructure for a Thriving Regional Food System - Food Connects
- Stratton Employee Housing - Stratton Mountain Resort
- Sunderland Union Church Rehabilitation & Reuse - Northshire Community Land Trust
- SUSU commUNITY farm: Deepening & Widening our Impact - SUSU commUNITY farm
- The Village at Winston Prouty Phase One - Winston Prouty Center
- TLR, Wyman Flint Master plan BF Greater Island District - Town of Rockingham (TOR) and Sustainable Valley Group (SVG)
- Town of Rockingham - Adams Grist Mill - Town of Rockingham and Bellows Falls Historical Society (BFHS)

# ATTACHMENT D:

## 2024 VITAL PROJECTS

### **2024 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects (alphabetical by project name)**

- Trails and Outdoor Recreation - Walk-Bike-Safety Plan - Town of Rockingham
- Tri-Park Master Plan Projects - Tri Park Cooperative Housing Corporation
- Vermont Employment Pathfinder - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Vermont Museum of Natural History-Project Feasibility & Workplan - Vermont Museum of Natural History, Inc.
- Vilas Bridge Rehabilitation - Town of Rockingham
- Welcoming Communities - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- WheelPad L3C - Wheel Pad L3C
- Whitingham Public Works Garage Renovation for Resilience - Town of Whitingham
- Whitingham Sewer Infrastructure - Town of Whitingham
- Windham Cultural Plan - Vermont Creative Network, Southern Zone
- Windham Region Infrastructure Characterization: Developing a Town-Level, Region-Wide Understanding of Actions Necessary to Address Infrastructure Limitations to Support Economic and Community Development - Windham Regional Commission
- Workforce Center of Excellence - BDCC

The language in these projects were revised at the request of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to comply with Executive Orders 14154, 14151, and 14168 issued by the current administration. These changes were required to secure approval of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as part of the region's application for Economic Development District (EDD) designation. 4The EDA formally communicated this requirement on April 14, 2025, and confirmed that compliance was necessary for continued consideration of the application.

# DATA SOURCES



**Lightcast** (formerly Emsi Burning Glass) is a global leader in labor market analytics, offering a data platform that gives a comprehensive, nuanced, and up-to-date picture of labor markets at all scales from national to local. Key components of the platform include traditional labor market information, job postings analytics, talent profile data, compensation data, and skills analytics. Lightcast integrates government data with information from online job postings, talent profiles, and resumes to produce timely intelligence on the state of the labor market. Job and compensation data is available by industry, occupation, educational program, and skill type. [Click to learn more.](#)



**Esri ArcGIS Business Analyst** combines proprietary statistical models covering demographic, business, and spending data with map-based analytics to offer insights on market opportunities for industries, businesses, and sites. Business Analyst integrates datasets covering a wide range of topics including demographics, consumer spending, market potential, customer segmentation, business locations, traffic counts, and crime indexes, which can be overlaid spatially to produce customizable maps and uncover market intelligence. Data can be pulled for standard and custom geographies, allowing for valuable comparison between places. [Click to learn more.](#)



**PolicyMap** is a spatial analysis and data tool that facilitates the creation of compelling, interactive maps from 50,000+ indicators related to public policy. Geospatial analysis, including advanced querying and filtering facilitated by data-rich maps, can be used for storytelling and decision-making. PolicyMap's library of variables spans topics such as demographics, housing, lending, quality of life, economy, education, health, and government programs. Functionality is optimized for use by policymakers in government, business, healthcare, universities, academic, and others. [Click to learn more.](#)



**IBISWorld** is a leading provider of expert industry research and analysis for broad sectors and niche industries across the economy. Thoroughly researched industry reports from IBISWorld leverage economic, demographic, and market data into forward-looking insight, providing detailed data and narrative on current and historic trends, as well as future outlook and projections. Topics covered include products and services, major markets, upstream and downstream supply chain industries, performance drivers, factors for competitiveness, operating conditions, major players, and key statistics on industry performance. Reports are available by industry at the global, national, and state level. [Click to learn more.](#)



**CoStar** is a comprehensive source of commercial real estate intelligence, offering an inventory of over 6.4 million commercial properties spanning 135 billion square feet of space in 390 markets across the US. CoStar covers office, retail, industrial, hospitality, and multifamily markets. Property- and market-level data on absorption, occupancy, lease rates, tenants, listings, and transactions are researched and verified through calls to property managers, review of public records, visits to construction sites, and desktop research to uncover nearly real-time market changes. [Click to learn more.](#)





The **American Community Survey (ACS)** is an ongoing statistical survey by the US Census Bureau that gathers demographic and socioeconomic information on age, sex, race, family and relationships, income and benefits, health insurance, education, veteran status, disabilities, commute patterns, and other topics. Mandatory to fill out, the survey is sent to a small sample of the population on a rotating basis. The questions on the ACS are different than those asked on the decennial census and provide ongoing demographic updates of the nation down to the block group level. [Click to learn more.](#)



Conducted every ten years in years ending in zero, the **US Decennial Census of Population and Housing** is a complete count of each resident of the nation based on where they live on April 1st of the Census year. The Constitution mandates the enumeration to determine how to apportion the House of Representatives among the states. The latest release of the 2020 Census contains data for a limited number of variables, including: total population by race/ethnicity, population under 18, occupied and vacant housing units, and group quarters population. [Click to learn more.](#)



The **Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)** program estimates total employment and unemployment for approximately 7,500 geographic areas on a monthly basis, from the national level down to the city and town level. LAUS data is offered through the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by combining data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey, and state unemployment (UI) systems. [Click to learn more.](#)

### Business Dynamics Statistics | US Census Bureau

The Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS) program provides annual measures of business dynamics—such as job creation and destruction, establishment births and deaths, and firm startups and shutdowns—for the economy and aggregated by establishment and firm characteristics. It covers the entire US economy and is available at the national, state, and MSA (metropolitan statistical area) levels. [Click to learn more.](#)

### Population Estimates Program | US Census Bureau

The Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (PEP) produces estimates of the population for the US and its states, counties, cities, and towns. Demographic components of population change—births, deaths, and migration—are produced at the national, state, and county levels. PEP provides population estimates on an annual basis. [Click to learn more.](#)

### **OnTheMap | US Census Bureau**

OnTheMap is a tool developed through the US Census Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD) program that helps to visualize Local Employment Dynamics (LED) data about where workers are employed and where they live. It offers visual mapping capabilities for data on age, earnings, industry distributions, race, ethnicity, educational attainment, and sex. [Click to learn more.](#)

### **Economic Census | US Census Bureau**

The Economic Census is the US Government's official five-year measure of American business and the economy. It is conducted by the US Census Bureau for years ending in 2 and 7. The Economic Census is the most comprehensive public source of information about American businesses from the national to the local level. Published statistics cover more than 1,000 industries, 15,000 products, every state, over 3,000 counties, 15,000 cities and towns, and Puerto Rico and other US Island Areas. [Click to learn more.](#)

# ABOUT CEDS PARTNERS

**The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC):** The mission of the Bennington County Regional Commission is to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities that are home to economic prosperity and a high quality of life for the residents of seventeen municipalities in southwestern Vermont. It is one of two organizations in the state that functions as both a regional planning commission (RPC) and regional development corporation (RDC). BCRC accomplishes its mission by providing planning, economic development, and project management services to municipalities, businesses, and community organizations in our service region, as defined by 24 V.S.A. Section 4341. For more information visit: <http://www.bcrcvt.org/>

**The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC):** The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) is a private, nonprofit economic development organization with the mission of *investing in the drivers of the regional economy so that people, businesses, and communities in Southern Vermont can thrive*. BDCC serves as the State of Vermont's certified Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the greater Windham County area (including Windham County and the towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, Winhall and Weston). BDCC is one of 12 RDCs throughout Vermont. BDCC activity is made possible in part by a grant from the State of Vermont through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. For more information visit: <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/>

**Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS):** An affiliate of BDCC that grew from a 2008 grassroots effort, initiated by BDCC, to understand and create long term strategies needed to reverse the economic decline of the Windham Region and plan for the economic impacts from the closure of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant. In 2014, after multiple years of regional input, education and data gathering, SeVEDS received federal approval for the Windham Region's federally recognized S.M.A.R.T. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). SeVEDS partnered with Bennington's Regional Economic Development Group in 2018 to develop the 2019 Southern Vermont Zone CEDS. For more information visit: [www.seveds.com](http://www.seveds.com).

**The Southern Vermont Economic Zone:** The Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone was created by act of the Vermont Assembly during the 2015 legislative session as a result of continued population and tax receipt decline. It comprises the geographic areas served by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and the Bennington County Regional Commission. Work has been ongoing since 2015 with a Zone Committee report chaired by Wayne Granquist of Weston, the annual Southern Vermont Economy Summit held each May, and the USDA-funded Southern Vermont Economy Project sponsoring training sessions across Windham and Bennington counties for economic and workforce development entities. In 2019 the first SoVermont CEDS was completed and approved by the EDA. A proposal for federal designation of the zone as an EDA Economic Development District is underway.



# ABOUT CAMOIN ASSOCIATES

As the nation's only full-service economic development and lead generation consulting firm, Camoin Associates empowers communities through human connection backed by robust analytics.

Since 1999, Camoin Associates has helped local and state governments, economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses across the country generate economic results marked by resiliency and prosperity.

To learn more about our experience and projects in all of our service lines, please visit our website at [www.camoinassociates.com](http://www.camoinassociates.com). You can also find us on LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube.

## The Project Team

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