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Southern Vermont Zone CEDS 2021 Vital Projects Announced

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) are pleased to announce that ten projects submitted as part of the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy have received Vital Project designation. The Southern Vermont CEDS is a federally approved action plan for growing the Southern Vermont Zone's regional economy and represents a broadened continuation of the original Windham County S.M.A.R.T. CEDS that was completed in 2013. Each year, the CEDS includes new and updated project submissions from businesses and organizations that highlight several activities strengthening the region at a range of scales.

Projects were selected by a CEDS Project Review Committee comprising members of the public and business community and organized by the staff at BDCC and the BCRC. The committee reviewed 66 projects from municipalities, businesses, and non-profit organizations across the two-county region, and offers its thanks to all the organizations that submitted projects and its congratulations to those receiving Vital Project designation.

Said Bill Colvin, Assistant Director of the BCRC and Director of the Bennington County Industrial Corporation, "this year's projects show that Southern Vermont's public and private sectors see strong ties between their work and our region's economic success, whether addressing aging infrastructure, early childhood education needs, real estate development opportunities, cultural offerings, or public spaces for the public good." Adam Grinold, Executive Director of the BDCC, added "the majority of the Vital Project designations were awarded to new projects, an indicator of how swiftly organizations in our region have pivoted to address new challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic."

All projects submitted benefit from being included in the CEDS. While Vital Projects are selected annually, projects can be submitted for inclusion throughout the year at:

<https://www.vermontzone.com/ceds-projects>

The following list of Southern Vermont CEDS 2021 Vital Projects is presented in alphabetical order by project name.

Project: Bennington Recreation Center Head Start/Early Head Start Addition

Impact Region: Multiple Towns in Bennington County

Submitting Organization: Town of Bennington

Description: Currently under construction in the Town of Bennington is an early childhood center that will provide much needed daycare for infants, toddlers and preschool children. The 13,500-square-foot, \$3.7 million addition is funded primarily through a \$3.5 million federal grant to the local UCS Head Start program. The center is being constructed as an addition to the Bennington Recreation Center on Gage Street. It is a joint project of the town, United Counseling Service, Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start, and the Rec Center. In addition to five classrooms for Head Start programs and a commercial style kitchen area and a kitchen/learning space nearby for educational programs, it will feature a multipurpose room, a community cafe, and a new entrance with a lobby and elevator.



Project: Community Facilities Technical Assistance

Impact Region: Windham Region

Submitting Organization: Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

Description: BDCC helps support town offices and non-profit organizations prepare projects for ultimate funding from the USDA. The early stage technical assistance we provide may help qualifying organizations with early development and management of nascent projects. In addition to our budget, which we are able to use to pay for third-party technical assistance vendors, we extend direct technical assistance support to each organization and / or town interested in the program.



Project: Developing New Markets and Infrastructure to Support Vermont Farms and Food Producers

Impact Region: Southern Vermont

Submitting Organization: Food Connects

Description: In 2020, Food Connects doubled local food sales revenue to over \$1 million, while growing staffing to 20 and building new infrastructure to continue growing and increasing impact on the local food economy. Over 50% of sales went to independent retailers and farm stands, supporting those businesses in sourcing what their customers wanted and maintaining food resilience during the COVID pandemic. Recent efforts include the creation of a new Vermont Food Catalog to create new markets for producers outside of the state; improving transportation infrastructure and logistics technology with a recent focus on connecting Brattleboro, Bennington and Rutland; hiring a new Sales Broker to build new markets throughout the Northeast, while researching and testing messaging to better sell Vermont products on the regional marketplace from Maine to South Carolina; and working to increase the delivery fleet from 4 to 6 vehicles by the end of 2021.



Project: DVFiber

Impact Region: Windham Region

Submitting Organization: DVFiber

Description: DVFiber, the trade name for the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District, is on a mission to secure reliable, affordable broadband for all homes and businesses in at least 21 towns in southern Vermont. To make the Internet accessible to every home and business in the district, DVFiber will collaborate with a private entity to create a public/private partnership. According to our business plan, we will secure broadband for all district towns in three phases, beginning with the least-served areas. The plan also calls for project completion by 2024.

DVFiber

empowering our connection to the future



Project: Intersecting Recreation, Environmental Education and Food Security at Lake Paran

Impact Region: Multiple Towns in Bennington County

Submitting Organization: Paran Recreations

Description: Paran Recreations (also known as Lake Paran) is expanding its depth of programming from solely summer recreation to offering year-round recreation opportunities with environmental education programs for children and adults. Lake Paran Recreations, which provides healthy outdoor fun to nature lovers, has a goal to offer affordable and accessible environmental education programming for community members, encouraging deep connections with local nature and inspiring stewardship of the land for years to come. Within those summer camps, we will base our curriculum around the watershed's natural environment from the lake ecosystem to the plants and animals who make their habitat at Lake Paran; lessons in conservation management; food system education that will teach children how to cook, process and store foods grown from local community gardens; and knowledge of the Wabenaki indigenous peoples who used this land and their cultural heritage especially as it relates to food. To make our programs as accessible as possible, Lake Paran will provide scholarships for families in need of assistance.



Project: The North Barn

Impact Region: Multiple towns in the Windham Region

Submitting Organization: Retreat Farm

Description: Retreat Farm seeks to restore the largest barn on the farm, the North Barn, which will satisfy a vital need in Brattleboro for a large indoor gathering place and become the keystone of Retreat Farm's future programming and prosperity. The facility will feature a large gathering space with a maximum capacity of 600 people or 240 seated for dinner, ample bathrooms, and a spacious catering kitchen. The restoration of the North Barn will create an iconic gathering space that will create and retain jobs, attract new residents, visitors, and increase spending in the region, while strengthening the social bonds of families and communities and the economic vitality of the region.



Project: Outdoor Season at the Southern Vermont Arts Center

Impact Region: Southern Vermont

Submitting Organization: Dorset Theatre Festival

Description: The Dorset Theatre Festival plans to build an outdoor theatre designed for safely distanced live performances, and we are thrilled that Southern Vermont Arts Center has offered to host us on their campus. The addition of Dorset Theatre Festival's outdoor season will create opportunities for the region to visit galleries, enjoy a chamber music performance, and have dinner before seeing a professional production all in the same vibrant arts hub. More than ever before, Dorset's Outdoor Season at SVAC will prioritize access for our community, making clear that all are welcome to come together to share stories that elevate and illuminate our shared humanity. Our programming will include a world premiere, a revival of a classic comedy, special performances for families, and, in collaboration with our partners at SVAC, community talks, workshops, and class offerings.



Project: Pipelines and Pathways Program

Impact Region: Windham Region

Submitting Organization: Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

Description: With all five Windham Regional high schools virtual, hybrid, or otherwise disrupted, P3 moved to all online and virtual teaching. Despite pandemic disruptions, P3 has run 1-2 meaningful programs in each school and will complete more by end of year. These include Flexible Pathways which is the newest iteration of the career readiness curriculum series; Career Spotlight where we bring professionals into the classroom for career panels and Q&A with kids; Resume workshops for freshmen; and the upcoming Sophomore Summit which we plan to hold virtually at BUHS using a combination of virtual field trips (videos have been created featuring workplaces kids would normally visit) and live professional panelists.



Project: Southern Vermont Communications Union District

Impact Region: Bennington County

Submitting Organization: Southern Vermont CUD

Description: The Southern Vermont Communication Union District (SoVT CUD) aims to bring broadband Internet service to under-served areas of Southern Vermont. Following the model of Act 79, 2019's "broadband bill", this effort has, in less than a year: 1) Created the SoVT CUD which now includes 14 southwestern Vermont towns; 2) Been awarded a grant under Act 79 for a feasibility study and three year business plan; 3) Undertaken a utility pole survey in our most under-served towns utilizing a \$100,000 CARES grant; and 4) Received \$30,000 in grants from Vermont Community Foundation Lack of broadband Internet service is a major restraint on the growth of our economy and on our effort to attract people and business to our region. SoVT CUD is tackling the problem head-on.



Project: Whitingham Sewer Infrastructure

Impact Region: A single town in Windham County

Submitting Organization: Town of Whitingham

Description: Since an emergency shutdown of Whitingham's two sewer treatment plants in March 2018, the town has worked closely with the state and an engineering firm to construct new treatment plants. In 2020, the project moved from Phase One, preliminary engineering and 20-year evaluations, into Phase Two, engineering design. The engineers are currently at about 90% completion of the "final design phase" of this project. When complete we will have all the design specs and construction documents to put the project out for construction bidding. The project should be out for bid in the coming months.



2021 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects (alphabetical by project name)

- A New Approach to Drinking Water Safety - MSK Engineers
- Area Wide Plan - Town of Rockingham
- Bellows Falls Incremental Neighborhood Housing Development - Town of Rockingham
- Bellows Falls Opera House Lower Theater - Town of Rockingham
- Bellows Falls Historic Train Station Purchase and Renovation - Town of Rockingham
- Bellows Falls Vacuum Coating Training Center - Sustainable Valley Group, Inc
- Bennington County Food System Asset Map - Bennington County Regional Commission
- Bennington Recreation Center Head Start/Early Head Start Addition - Town of Bennington
- Branded Graphics for Small Woman-Owned Business - couch + cork, llc
- Brattleboro Quality Youth Development Certification - Building a Positive Community
- Community Access Technology Center (Deerfield Valley) - Wilmington Works
- Community Facilities Technical Assistance - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- curATE café - Southern Vermont Arts Center
- Developing new markets and infrastructure to support Vermont farms and food producers - Food Connects
- Dorset Theatre Festival Outdoor Season at Southern Vermont Arts Center - Dorset Theatre Festival
- Downtown River Connector Rail With Trail - Friends of the West River
- DVFiber - Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DVCUD)
- Early Childhood Education Center - Community Collaborative for Guilford
- Energizer Facility Reuse - Town of Bennington
- Entrepreneurship and Talent Development - Bennington Area Makers
- Expand existing architecture to include kitchenettes for traveling public - Casablanca Motel
- Extending Massachusetts Rail Expansion to Vermont - Windham Regional Commission
- Flood Hazard Mitigation in Jacksonville Village - Town of Whitingham
- Green Island Project - Great Falls Food Hub - Sustainable Valley Group, Inc
- Hiring Needs Assessment - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

- Hotel Windham CapEx - Windham Development Group LLC
- IEDC Staff Certification - Bennington County Regional Commission
- Intersecting Recreation, Environmental Education, and Food Security at Lake Paran - Paran Recreations
- Island St. Revitalization - Bellows Falls Area Development Corp
- Knowledge Bites Webinar Series - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Lake Paran Village - Shires Housing
- Licensed Nurse Assistant Education Program - Vermont Technical College
- Lynda/ LinkedIn Learning for McCullough Library Members - John G. McCullough Free Library
- Manchester Riverwalk - Manchester Riverwalk Association
- Municipal Currency Referendums - Public Liberation Unions
- Old School Community Center - Old School Enrichment Council, Inc.
- Pipelines & Pathways Program - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Pleasant Valley Water Treatment Project - Town of Brattleboro
- Pownal Town Green - Town of Pownal
- Retreat Farm - Retreat Farm
- Rich Earth Institute's Urine Nutrient Reclamation Project - Rich Earth Institute
- Robertson Paper Site Redevelopment - Bellows Falls Area Development Corp
- Route 9 Infrastructure Improvement - Town of Wilmington
- Southern Vermont Communication Union District - SoVT Executive Committee
- Southern Vermont Economy Summit - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Southern Vermont Mapping Capacity - Bennington County Regional Commission
- Southern Vermont Marketing Plan - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Southern Vermont Welcome Wagon Project - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Southern Vermont Workforce Center of Excellence - BDCC/SeVEDS
- SoVermont.com "Job Board" - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Strategic Plan - Southern Vermont Natural History Museum
- Sunrise Connections Project - Sunrise Family Resource Center
- Targeted Expertise Recruitment and Retention - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- The Food Center - Retreat Farm
- The North Barn - Retreat Farm
- TLR Master Plan - Sustainable Valley Group, Inc
- Trails and Outdoor Recreation - Town of Rockingham
- Transportation Master Plan: Bellows Falls Greater Island District and FERC - Town of Rockingham
- Trolley Line Shared Use Path - Bennington County Regional Commission
- Vernon Center: A new 21st-century New England village - Friends of Vernon Center, Inc.
- Vernon Green Nursing Home Replacement - Vernon Advent Christian Homes, Inc. ("VACH") dba Vernon Homes.
- Vilas Bridge Rehabilitation - Town of Rockingham
- Village Water/Wastewater Feasibility - Windham Regional Commission

- Welcoming Communities Project (formerly Working Communities of Southern Vermont) - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Whitingham Sewer Infrastructure - Town of Whitingham
- Windham Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

CEDS Project Ranking Committee: BDCC and BCRC staff worked together to bring together eleven individuals that represent the region and are firmly established in their field of expertise to review, rank, and discuss the 66 project submissions. This year's committee: Gordon Black, Town of Manchester; Linda Bow, Tri-State Area Federal Credit Union; Drew Bryenton, The Richards Group; Sharon Crossman, Town of Londonderry; Mike Cutler, CAT-TV; Lissa Harris, Fare Value Network; Elisabeth Marx, Vermont Community Foundation; Shannon McLenithan, The Bank of Bennington; Ed Metcalf, Vermont Distillers; James Salerno, Hale Mountain Research; Betsy Thurston, Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance.

The 2019 Southern Vermont CEDS is the five year federally recognized regional economic development plan which the public and private sectors collaborated to create. A CEDS must be the result of an ongoing economic development planning process, developed with broad-based and diverse public and private sector participation, and must include a section listing all suggested projects. A CEDS also contains a section identifying and prioritizing vital projects, programs and activities that address the region's greatest needs or that will best enhance the region's competitiveness. Progress on all the goals and projects will be updated annually. The 2019 Southern Vermont CEDS can be found here: <https://www.vermontzone.com/ceds>. BDCC and BCRC are the lead regional agencies for the 2019 Southern Vermont CEDS, and the region's standing CEDS Committee consists of members of the Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies and Regional Economic Development Working Group (see below)

The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) is a private, nonprofit economic development organization that serves as a catalyst for industrial and commercial growth throughout Southeastern Vermont, including Windham County and the towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, Winhall and Weston. BDCC serves as the State of Vermont's certified Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the greater Windham County area. BDCC is one of 12 RDCs throughout Vermont. ¹This BDCC activity was 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/>

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves and works on behalf of those municipalities to build strong, resilient and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. For more information visit www.bcrct.org.

Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) is 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

The Regional Economic Development Working Group (RED Group) is a volunteer body committed to increasing the shared prosperity and quality of life for the seventeen municipalities in southwestern Vermont. The group has a diverse membership that reflects the varied community, business, workforce, and demographic characteristics of the region. The RED Group focuses on the internal and external economic development issues that affect the Bennington County region as a whole; the regional implications of local economic development issues; the process of regional economic development from local, state, and federal perspectives; and options for future initiatives.