



For Immediate Release May 23rd

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## Southern Vermont Zone CEDS Vital Project Rankings Announced

Dover, Vermont, May 23, 2019 — The first project rankings for the new 2019 Southern Vermont Economy Zone CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) have been announced. A total of 70 projects were submitted to be included in the first ever five-year plan for growing the southern Vermont economy, six of which have been ranked “vital.”

### VITAL PROJECTS:

**Project: Extending Massachusetts Rail Expansion to Vermont**

**Impact Region:** Southern Vermont

**Submitting Individual/Primary Organization:** Chris Company/Windham Regional Commission

**Description:** This project will lay the foundation for the Windham region to capitalize on a pilot program increasing passenger rail service along the Connecticut River corridor in Massachusetts. Through market assessments, feasibility studies, and demand analysis, the project will advocate for and support regional connections to expanded commuter rail services in the Pioneer Valley, as well as the development of rail services and schedules that would promote use across Western New England.

**Project: Old School Community Center**

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

**Submitting Individual/Primary Organization:** Cindy Hayford/Deerfield Valley Community Partnership

**Description:** The Old School Community Center Project is organized for the purpose of inspiring enrichment, wellness, and economic development in the Deerfield Valley, including Wilmington, Whitingham, Dover, Searsburg, Readsboro, and Halifax, among others outside the Valley. This project and the necessary renovations will bring into the region millions of dollars and has the potential to create and retain over approximately 35-42 jobs. The project will improve the lives of regional community members of all ages through access to local multi-generational resources and services, including business incubation and co-working spaces, artist studios and galleries, childcare, elder care, commercial kitchen access, and other components which are currently only available in Brattleboro and Bennington, over twenty miles of mountain roads.

**Project: Putnam Block Redevelopment Phase II****Impact Region:** A single town in Bennington County**Submitting Individual/Primary Organization:** Katie Stuart-Buckley/Bennington Redevelopment**Description:** The Putnam Block Redevelopment Phase II is the second stage of the \$52 million redevelopment project that proposes to transform the Putnam Block into a vibrant, mixed use downtown space with offices, in-town living, restaurants, and retail establishments. Phase II will include two new mixed-use buildings with 29 residential units on the upper stories. One will have retail/office space on the first floor, and the other will contain 30,000+ sf for medical services. Additionally, Housing Vermont will have an option to purchase a portion of this property for construction of up to 30 affordable housing units.**Project: Southern Vermont Marketing Plan****Impact Region:** Southern Vermont**Submitting Individual/Primary Organization:** Jennifer Stromsten/Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**Description:** The “SoVermont” Marketing Plan is a workforce recruitment-forward marketing approach. The complementary suite of offerings increases our talent pool by directly reaching working audiences, and by providing employers with collateral that helps sell the Southern Vermont lifestyle through their own recruitment efforts. With seed funding from the USDA RBEG, employer and workforce partners, and tremendous in-kind commitments of marketing and promotional actions, this \$150,000+ project quietly launched in the fall with SoVermont.com coming online, and new marketing partners are continuing to join the program.**Project: Entrepreneurial Consortium: The Lightning Jar – Startup 802 – INSTIG8****Impact Region:** Southern Vermont**Submitting Individual/Primary Organization:** Dimitri Garder/The Lightning Jar; Nicole Stetson/Community College of Vermont; R.T. Brown/Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**Description:** The Entrepreneurial Consortium is three distinct CEDS project submissions that have been included among the Vital Projects as a suite due to their complementary nature. Each is a crucial part of Southern Vermont’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, and each is looking to grow and expand services. The Lightning Jar, the entrepreneurial hub of the Bennington region, is looking to secure the services of a full-time director to focus on growing its network of entrepreneurs, businesses partners, and community partners. Startup 802, an entrepreneurial training program dovetailed with a business management college course within the Community College of Vermont, is working to expand its user base to incorporate remote workers and recent arrivals to the region. In the Windham region, INSTIG8 identifies resources needed in the region to help entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurial culture creation activities. INSTIG8 also provides services ranging from small business marketing and technology workshops to Idea Jams which cultivate and encourage participants to share their business ideas. Most recently, INSTIG8 has been scoping a pilot program to link business owners who are looking to transition into retirement with potential buyers.**Project: Windham Region Village Water and Wastewater Need Assessment and Feasibility Plan****Impact Region:** Windham Region**Submitting Individual/Primary Organization:** Chris Campany/Windham Regional Commission**Description:** Emerging technological and regulatory advances hold the promise of community water and wastewater systems alternatives that will enable economic activity and housing development in the smaller villages of the Windham region. This project will identify the scope of existing problems; present context-sensitive conceptual plans; profile necessary financing and fiscal management practices; and identify the regulatory barriers to implementation and finance options.

The purpose of identifying Vital Projects is to publicly acknowledge the top actions our region can support that will make demonstrable progress towards our regional economic development goals, as outlined in the new 2019 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). This CEDS was created in 2018 and 2019 through dozens of meetings with stakeholders, through a process led by the grassroots SeVEDS (Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies of

Windham) and RED (Regional Economic Development of Bennington) Groups. The new CEDS establishes measurable goals, objectives, and a clear set of strategies. While every project submitted becomes part of the annual CEDS, projects which best demonstrate the ability to advance those goals garnered the most support. These are the Vital Projects. A press event was held at the Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit in Dover, Vermont to announce the six Vital Projects.

CEDS Projects are submitted as significant activities which are happening around the region that can help implement the CEDS. Projects are given priority based on their likely ability to increase our population, improve our physical infrastructure, enhance our social infrastructure, expand our business infrastructure, or develop our regional economic development capacity.

All CEDS Projects submitted have been reviewed for inclusion in the Southern Vermont Zone CEDS. Every project submitted is included in the CEDS. Projects not ranked as Vital Projects are listed alphabetically by category in CEDS publications.

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All projects submitted for inclusion in the 2019 Southern Vermont CEDS (appearing in alphabetical order by Project Category)

## **2019 Southern Vermont CEDS Projects**

### **Workforce and Economic Development**

- 219 Pleasant St Redevelopment
- Bridge to Brattleboro
- Business Recruitment and Resource Packet
- Downtown Manchester Mixed Use Development
- Farm Food Innovation Center
- Historical & Recreational Park of the Deerfield Valley
- IT Externship Program
- Old School Community Center
- Oldcastle Theatre Marketing Plan
- Pipelines & Pathways Program
- Restoration of the Dewey Family Barn/warehouse into mixed use space in Downtown Bennington
- Rural Business Development Hub for the West River Valley
- Shires Leadership Development Series
- Shires Young Professional group
- Southern Vermont Global Green Business Bridge
- Southern Vermont Marketing Plan
- Southern Vermont Workforce Center of Excellence
- SoVermont Job Board
- Startup 802
- SVG - Green Island Project
- TERR
- Vacuum Coating Training Center (VCTC) at Bellows Falls
- Vermont STEMcorps
- VTC LNA Program

### **Transportation**

- Bennington Wayfinding Signage
- Extending Massachusetts Rail Expansion to Vermont
- Manchester Parking lot Upgrade

### **Sustainability/Resilience**

- Building a Small Hemp Stone House
- Flood Hazard Mitigation in Jacksonville Village
- Rich Earth Institute
- Shires Outdoor Adventure Recreation project
- The Ecovation Hub
- Vermont Climate Economy Model Communities Program - Dorset, VT
- Vermont Housing Initiative

### **Programmatic**

- Chamber Lunch and Learns
- Infant & Toddler Care @ The Collaborative
- INSTIG8
- Knowledge Bites Webinar Series
- Pop-Up Shops
- Southern Vermont Connectivity Summit
- Southern Vermont Economy Summit
- The Lightning Jar

### **Public/Private Partnerships**

- Bennington County Cultural Plan
- Bennington Rental Rehab
- Long Falls Paperboard Energy & Recycling Initiatives
- Main Street Permanent Power Installations
- Renewable Power Conversion for Long Falls Paperboard
- Vernon Center: A new 21st-century New England village

### **Major Investments**

- BFADC - Island St Revitalization
- BMAC-Flat Street
- Pownal Racetrack Development Project
- Putnam Block Redevelopment - Phase 2
- Retreat Farm, Ltd.
- Windham Place

## **Infrastructure/Planning**

- Applegate to Willowbrook Path
- Downtown Wi-Fi
- Exit 1 Industrial Park Improvements
- Manchester Rail Trail
- Manchester Riverwalk Association, Inc
- Manchester Skate Park
- Route 9 Infrastructure Improvement Project
- Southern Vermont GIS Based Economic Analysis
- Stage 33 Live
- Stark Street Nature Playground
- The Windham County Integrated Resource Recycling Center
- TOR - Bellows Falls Area Wide Plan (Listed as TIF Feasibility in 2018 plan)
- TOR - Trails and Outdoor Recreation Economic Development Project
- Whitingham Sewer Infrastructure
- Wilmington Fiber Connectivity
- Windham Region Village Water and Wastewater Need Assessment and Feasibility Plan

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**CEDS Committee:** A project selection committee, comprised of a small group of individuals that represent the region and are firmly established in their field of expertise, were chosen by SeVEDS and RED to review, score, and rank the 70 project submissions. This committee was made up of: Eric Durocher, Southern Vermont Chamber of Commerce; Eilidh Pederson, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital; Drew Bryenton, Commonwealth Dairy; Chris Parker, Town of Vernon Select Board; Cor Trowbridge, BCTV; Gary Fox, Town of Rockingham; Melissa Trainor, SIT; James Salerno, Hale Mountain Research; Kelly Clarke, Centerline Architects; Elisabeth Marx, Vermont Community Foundation; John Burnham, Kimpton Taconic; Kayla Becker, Catamount Connections; Jim Martinez, Tri State Area Federal Credit Union

**The 2019 Southern Vermont Zone 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 Zone CEDS can be found here: <https://www.vermontsummit.com/2019-zone-ceds>

**For a complete list of the 2019 CEDS Projects, please visit:** <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-Southern-Vermont-CEDS-VITAL-Projects050619-1.docx>

## **About BDCC, SeVEDS, BCRC, and RED:**

**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, 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. For more information visit: <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/>

**Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS)** is an affiliate of BDCC that grew from a 2008 grassroots effort, initiated by BDCC, 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 submitted Windham Region's federally recognized S.M.A.R.T. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for federal approval. For more information visit: [www.seveds.com](http://www.seveds.com)

**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.bcrvct.org](http://www.bcrvct.org).

**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.