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# Southern Vermont CEDS 2024 Vital Projects Announced

*Projects focus on building community and strengthening infrastructure*



*WheelPad's manufacturing facility renovation and site redevelopment, which will allow for in-state construction of modular accessible home additions, along with worker housing and a workforce training program, has been selected as one of Southern Vermont's twelve "Vital Projects" for 2024.*

Even for those who are deeply involved in the life of their community, it can be difficult to keep up with all the good work happening across Southern Vermont. Every year, Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) and Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) issue a call for local organizations and community leaders to let us know what projects they are working on – and to highlight how those projects align with our region’s development goals.

These development goals are outlined in the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a federally approved five-year action plan for growing our regional economy. Our updated 2024-20249 CEDS has been developed with a wide range of community input, and prioritizes actions that result in a community that is welcoming, forward-thinking, and healthy. (Read more about the CEDS and the specific objectives at [sovermontzone.com/ceds](https://sovermontzone.com/ceds).)

Each year, a community review committee reads all project submissions and selects a slate of “Vital Projects” for our region. Whether selected as a vital project or not, all submitted projects become an official part of our CEDS, which can then boost their visibility and eligibility for funding.

The committee reviewed 83 projects from municipalities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations across the two-county region, meeting in Wilmington to complete a final project review and select twelve to designate as Southern Vermont Vital Projects.

The selected Vital Projects include workforce training and infrastructure improvements along with housing and programs to support veterans and BIPOC Vermonters.

The committee offers its thanks and appreciation to all the organizations that submitted projects, and its congratulations to those receiving Vital Project designation.

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.

**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 diverse 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](http://gracecottage.org/future)), and permitting is nearly complete.

**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.

**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 climate 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.

**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

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 Sustainability 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

Ninja Path - Bennington County Regional Commission

Out in the Open's Rural LGBTQ+ 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)

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

***CEDS Project Review Committee:*** BDCC and BCRC staff brought together eighteen community and business leaders from across the region to review, rank, and discuss the 83 project submissions. This year's committee: Andrea E. Bacchi (Shaftsbury) Think Dynamic Digital, LLC; Gordon Black, Town of Manchester; Laura Boudreau (N Bennington), Southwestern Vermont Supervisory Union; Anna Bowler, Brattleboro Solar Management; Donald Campbell (Bennington), Vermont Land Trust; Mike Corey (Shaftsbury), Bennington College; Mike Cutler (Bennington), CAT-TV; Bob Davis, Brattleboro Savings & Loan; Bob

Donald (Grafton), retired Windham Foundation director; Jennifer Fels, Bennington Museum; J. Violet Gannon (Newfane), Greenway Institute; Linda Gifkins (Wardsboro); Alexina Jones, Bennington Museum; Gibbs Rehlen (Newfane), VT-30 Collective; Mariya Shcheglovitova (Bennington), UVM Extension; Stanley Talstra (Bellows Falls), Great Falls Regional Chamber of Commerce; Kate Traeger, Brattleboro Gallery Walk; and Shannon Wheeler, Town of Dover.



*The 2024 CEDS Project Review Committee. Pictured left to right: Gordon Black, Michael Corey, J. Violet Gannon, Mariya Shcheglovitova, Kate Traeger, Linda Gifkins, Donald Campbell, Laura Boudreau, Bob Davis, Jennifer Fels, Shannon Wheeler, Stanley Talstra, Anna Bowler, Alexina Jones. Not pictured: Andrea Bacchi, Bob Donald, Mike Cutler, and Gibbs Rehlen.*

**The 2024 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 2024 Southern Vermont CEDS can be found here: <https://www.sovermontzone.com/ceds>. BDCC and BCRC are the lead regional agencies for the 2024 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).

**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/>

**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.bcrvt.org](http://www.bcrvt.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](http://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.