

State of Vermont**Agency of Commerce and Community Development**

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Memorandum

To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary - Agency of Commerce and Community Development
Re: CRF Request for Better Places, Safer Places
Date: August 19, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$8.75 M. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development is seeking funding to support the continuity of safe municipal and business operations this fall and winter.

The proposal has three components:

- **Expand Staff Capacity of 23 State Designated Downtown Organizations (\$1.25M)** - Funding is needed to help businesses market, plan, permit, and organize safe fall and winter outdoor events and promotions to increase visitation and sales (Grand Isle and Essex Counties do not contain a designated downtown; regional funding is proposed to support the village centers in these counties)
- **Launch Better Places, Safer Spaces (\$2.5M)** - Funding will help businesses, nonprofits, and municipalities purchase the equipment and materials needed to modify, streets, sidewalks, parking lots, town greens, and parks and ensure small downtown and village center businesses can safely survive winter, adapt to the new normal, and thrive in the future.
- **Municipalities Facilities Grants (\$5M)** - Funding will help municipalities make health and safety improvements to key public buildings. Municipal operations, civic life, and community activities must be maintained during the Covid-19 pandemic. Town halls, community centers, recreation facilities, libraries, and other municipal or non-profit owned facilities are critical civic infrastructure and must re-open to the public. To do so safely, financial support will be needed to make costly repairs to ventilation systems, access improvements, and sanitary systems.

Response to the Pandemic: Downtown and village centers are the foundation upon which Vermont's culture, brand, economy, and quality of life is built. The pandemic has significantly reduced sales and foot traffic in our traditional centers of commerce, accelerated consumer shopping preference for national online retailers, and limited municipal operations and services.

Urgency of Request: Fall is a critical season for restaurants and retailers and now is the time to make critical investments that will give local businesses and communities a fighting chance to adapt and survive the devastating economic and social impacts of the pandemic – and help Vermont's small businesses and municipalities emerge from the pandemic stronger and more resilient.

