



General Store Tax Credit  
Submitted by Erin Sigrist, VRGA President  
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**Who:** Vermont's vital General Stores. The independently-owned (by an individual, family, or a group of community citizens) retail store located usually in a small or rural community that carries a wide variety of goods including groceries, general necessities, and supports its community with access to necessary services.

**What:** Vermont Retail & Grocers Association requests the allocation of \$2 million in tax credits that will allow general stores to make general rehabilitation, updates to maintain code compliance, and/or exterior improvements, etc. There are roughly 180 general stores located around Vermont that serve small communities. While we believe that full support of the total number of stores is closer to \$3 million to \$4 million, given the size of the existing program, we request that a one-time allocation of \$1 million would provide support to these vital community businesses.

This request is in addition to ACCD's proposal to expand the Downtown and Village Tax Credit Program and increase the cap from \$3 million to closer to \$5 million and include [Designated Neighborhood Development Areas](#).

Vermont's General Stores have maintained their integrity of serving their small communities during a time where the retail landscape has drastically changed. With lack of funding to advertise or make updates to levels similar to that of large retailers, these businesses have sustained their communities as quite often the only purveyor of food and necessities including the post office, monetary services, within communities for more than 100 years.

VRGA requests that the parameters of eligibility be similar to those set forth by the Downtown and Village tax credits; with few changes. The Legislature will need to define the "general store"

**When:** In tandem with the current Downtown and Village Tax Credit Program.

**Why:** As Representative Janet Ancel said in previous testimony, "General stores seem to be one of the most fragile institutions in our communities, and one of the most important."

It is estimated that *at least* 70% of these stores are the only location within at least 10 -15 miles that offer staple foods and necessities for their communities. Without many of these stores, Vermont would face an increase in food deserts and decreased access to very important supports for communities and even low-income residents. Many owners have reported that they work directly with community members to carry federally approved products within the WIC and 3SquaresVT programs. In addition to often being the only provider of food staples, many of these stores house the town post office, monetary services, and serve various other important roles including the community's social center, community message center, fundraiser hosts, etc. Quite often, these general stores carry goods for everyday home maintenance as well – hardware, lawn and garden products.

General Store operators report that a tax credit would help them to make significant upgrades to their facilities, update equipment, and make long-desired improvements to these very important community centers. Such improvements will allow for additional efficiencies and open up the opportunity to allocate funds to pay increases for existing employees as well as the creation of new positions.

We are starting to notice a resurgence, or an increase in the purchasing of these vital stores by the next generation or community groups to ensure the stores keep going. Providing access to tax credits, may allow for necessary updates and support the continued operation of these stores for generations to come.