

GROWING THE ECONOMY

Create Better Places Grant Program to Spark Recovery and Revitalization



- **WHAT:** Establish a community grant program that strategically coordinates the efforts of several funders supporting place-based economic development projects to improve and revitalize public spaces, whether that is a new walking or cycling path, turning vacant buildings into pop-up markets, improving community gathering spaces, increasing outdoor dining opportunities, expanding cultural programming, or testing a street closure to make more room for pedestrians and retailers or for farmers markets to operate safely.
- **WHY:** The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated our economy through business closures, job loss, and physical distancing requirements have exacerbated social isolation and negatively impacted Vermonters quality of life. Vermont’s downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods increasingly depend on public spaces that are robustly programmed to advance local recovery efforts, rebuild community life, restore our sense of place, strengthen community pride, and attract businesses, jobs, and talent. Investments in public spaces are essential for supporting economic activity and health and well-being throughout the pandemic and for building engaged, equitable, and resilient communities in the future.
- **WHO:** The Better Places proposal will help empower local leaders to play an active role in rebuilding their communities, strengthening the economy, instilling consumer confidence, by creating safe, accessible, and vibrant public spaces needed to restart local businesses and advance community recovery efforts. The new funding platform is aimed at smaller ‘quick build’ projects, that create a shared community focus, inspire local leaders to collaborate, and bring diverse people together to make the places they call home more inclusive, equitable, and vibrant. Tackling small projects together can restore confidence, build unity, boost local capacity, and renew local pride of place – critical elements that help communities recover quickly and thrive in the future.
- **HOW:** Through a partnership between state, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, the Better Places proposal utilizes an innovative ‘crowdgranting’ funding model to support community development efforts in Vermont’s downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods. The Better Places proposal will advance local recovery efforts by creating a one-stop-shop for funders to collaborate and provide communities a more nimble, flexible source to quickly fund and launch local ‘placemaking’ projects that improve and revitalize community gathering spaces. Specifically, the proposal:
 - Establishes enabling legislation to create the Better Places program to accelerate local projects that improve streets and parks, walking and biking trails, and vacant properties.
 - Streamlines and integrates grantmaking of multiple funders so residents, businesses, and community organizations achieve more immediate results.
 - Empowers local leaders to play an active role in recovery efforts, shaping their communities, building social capital, local pride, and community leadership.
- **FUNDING:** \$5 million

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