



Community Planning + Revitalization

Chris Cochran, Caitlin Corkins
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development



Photo credit: VT SHPO, National Register Nomination, 1982

Bristol, VT

Bristol, Vermont

population: 3,782

There's no better marketing, tourism draw, or talent recruitment strategy than investing in vibrant places where people want to live, work, and visit





AGENCY OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPT. HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Planning + Revitalization Division

The CP+R team uses a collaborative, **place-based approach** to land-use planning and community development that **empowers state and local leaders** to plan for and build vibrant, inclusive, and resilient downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods.

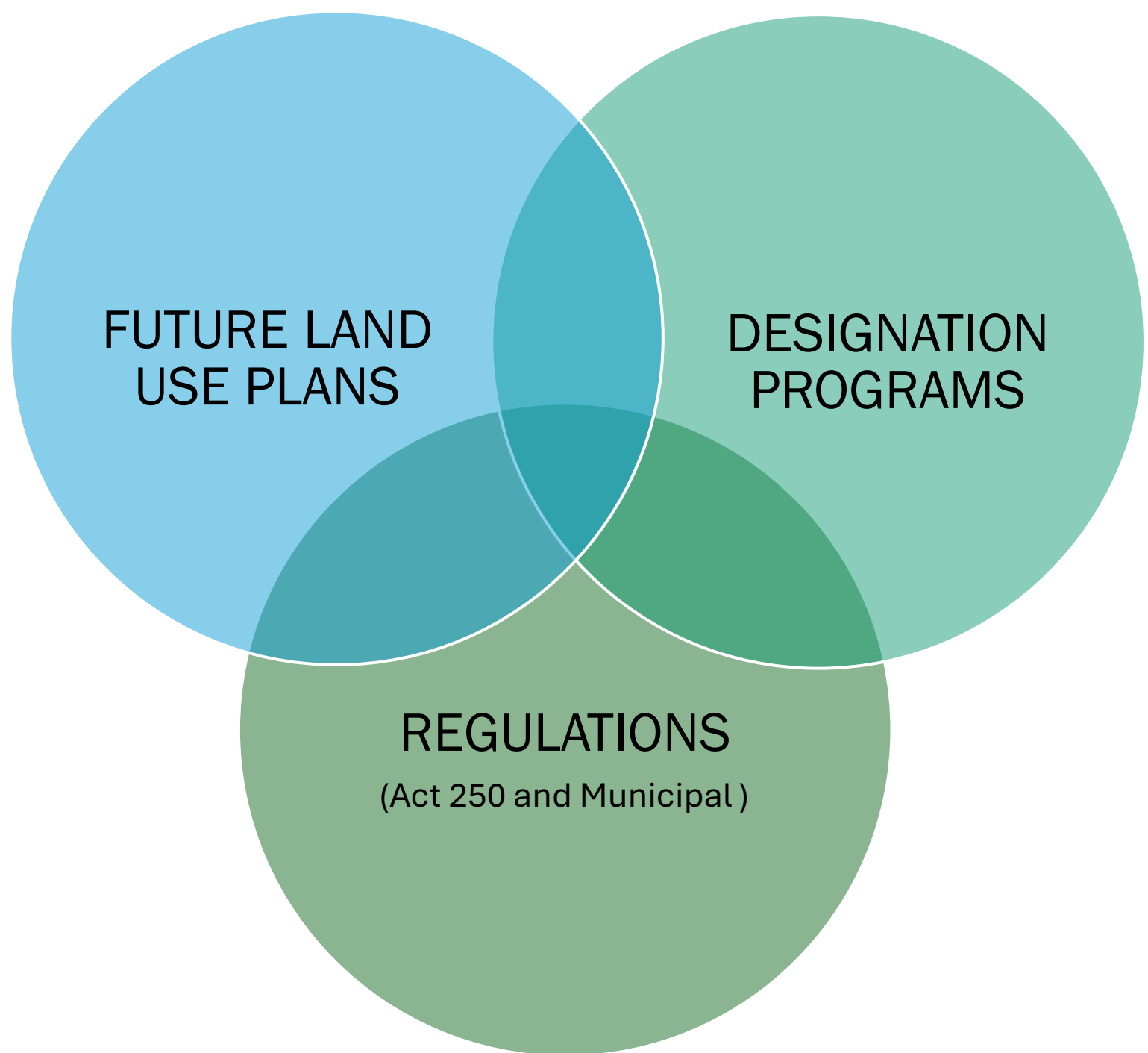


Place-based People-Focused



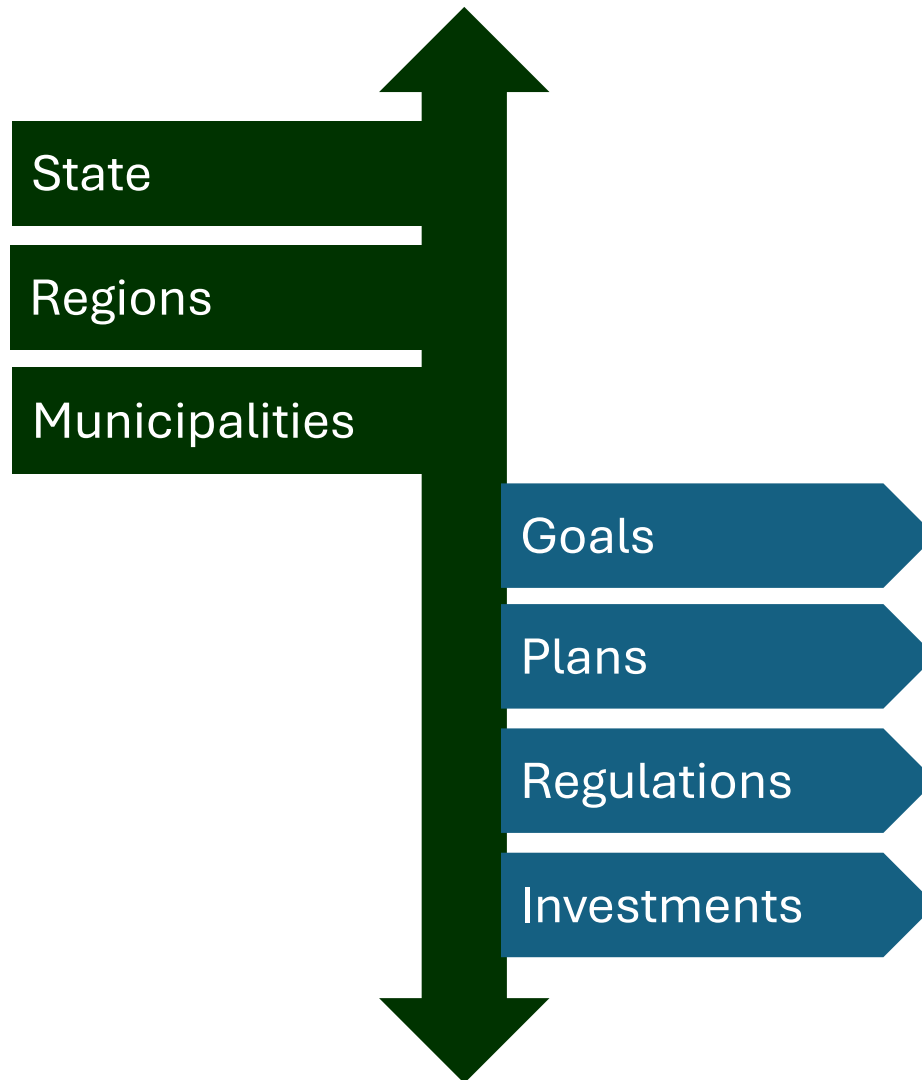
Act

181



Modernized Process & Platform

Aligning Best Practices for Good Outcomes



Brandon, Vermont Culvert Installation

Better Designations

Improved access and better benefits



Community Investment Board

Reformed Oversight & Stewardship Body for Designation

- 16 members: representatives from State agencies, local government, regional planning commissions,
- Replaced the Downtown Board on **July 1, 2024**
- Expanded Board now includes State Treasurer, Bond Bank, Regional Development Corporations, and Office of Racial Equity
- **Increased focus on implementation and infrastructure investments through cross-government and cross-agency coordination**
- Will continue to confer place-based benefits (like tax credits)

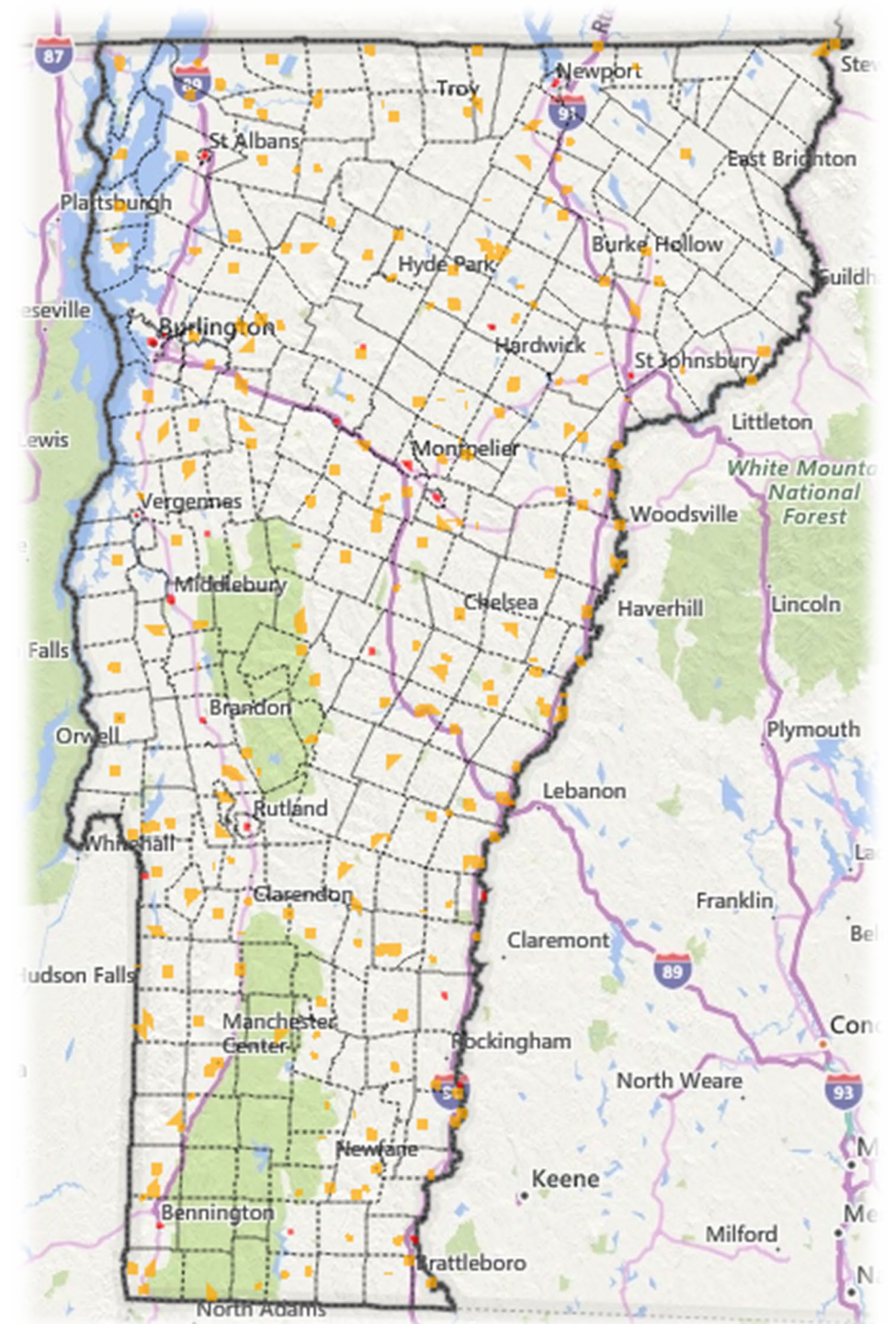


Related Work

- Report on Designation-based Municipal Technical Assistance & Rural Capacity due **December 31, 2025**

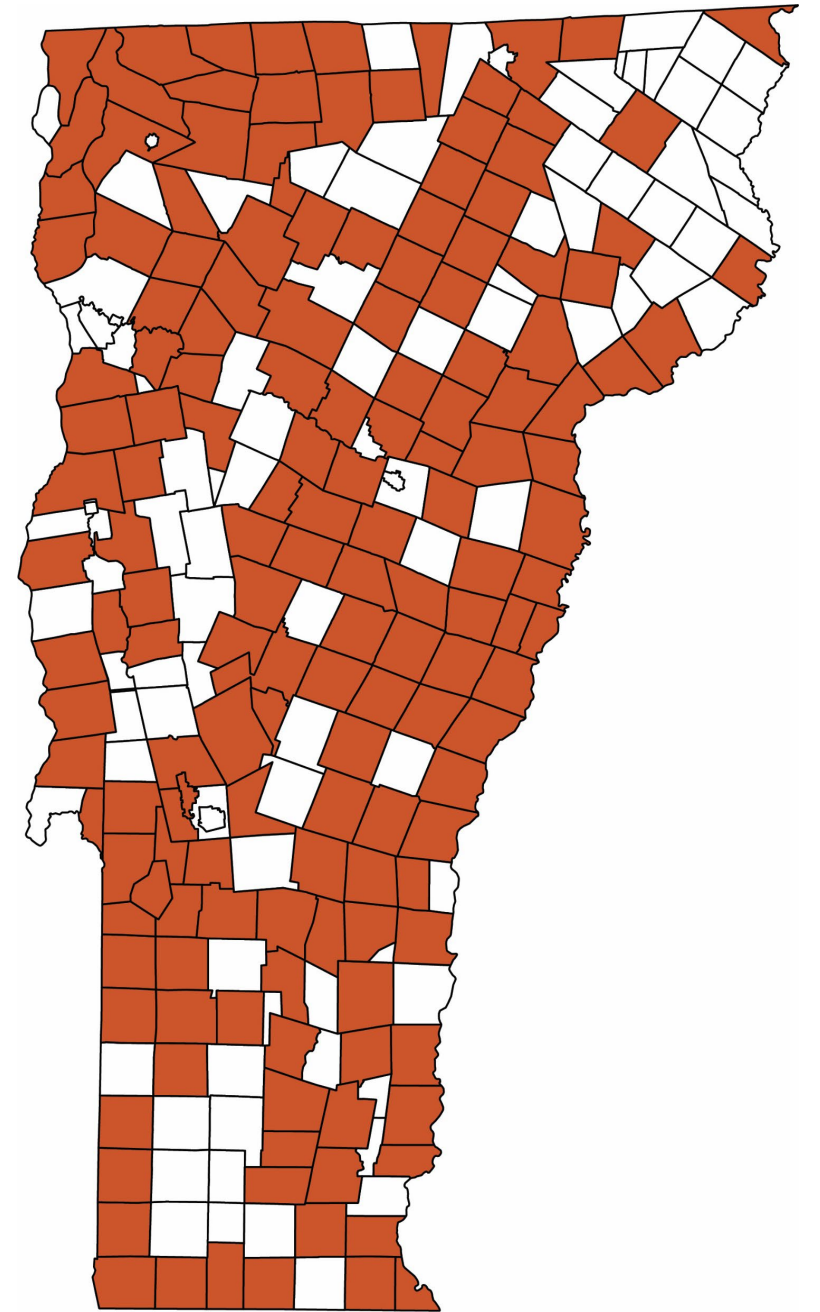
State Designation

- 25 Years
- 295 designated areas
 - Every county
 - Every region
- A coordinating platform for shared priorities & investments
- Used as a proxy for state land use
- Rooted in Vermont's common goals and smart growth principles



Designated Village Centers

250



The 5 Designations Today

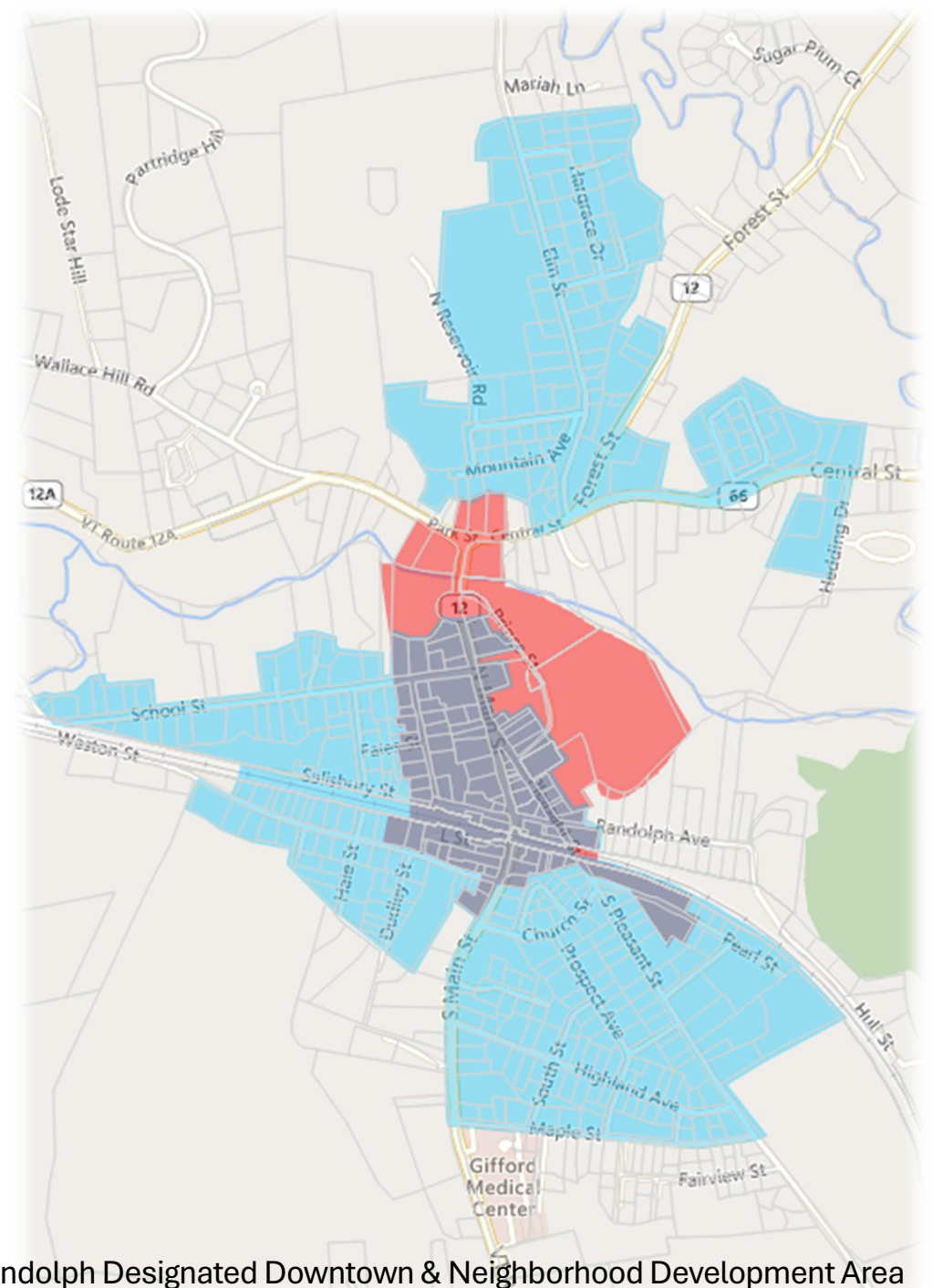
Distinct requirements & benefits

3 CORE DESIGNATIONS

1. Village Centers
2. Downtown Centers
3. New Town Centers

2 ADD-ON DESIGNATIONS

4. Growth Centers
5. Neighborhood Development Areas



New Designations Established by Regional Maps

- From 5 to 2 designations
- New designations continue to have requirements & benefits
- New designation established by regional maps; more and larger areas expected



Act 181 Reforms

CENTERS

Step 1: Beginner

Starter Village

Step 2: Intermediate

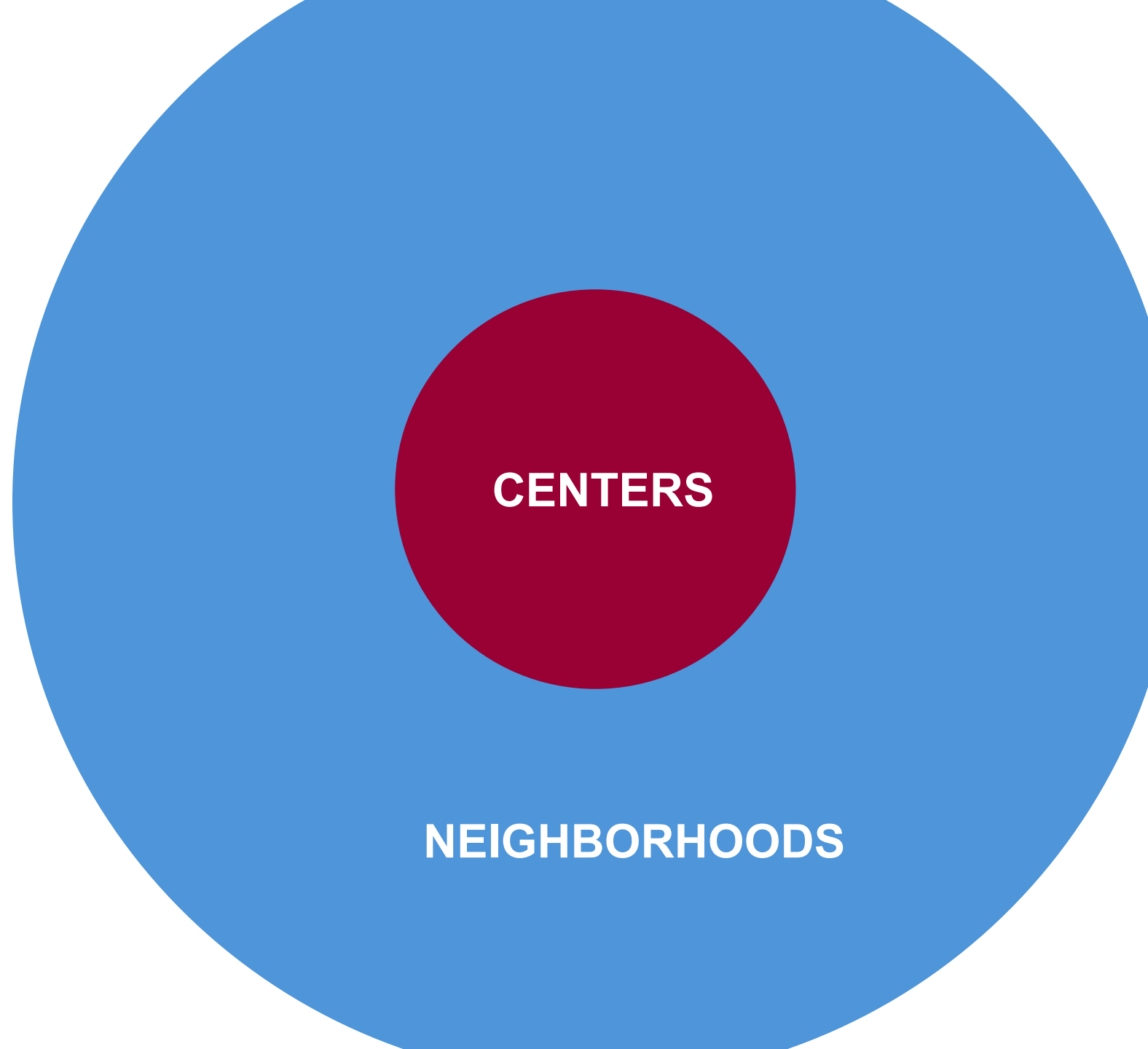
Growing Village

Step 3: Advanced

Downtowns

(Main Street Program)

NEIGHBORHOODS

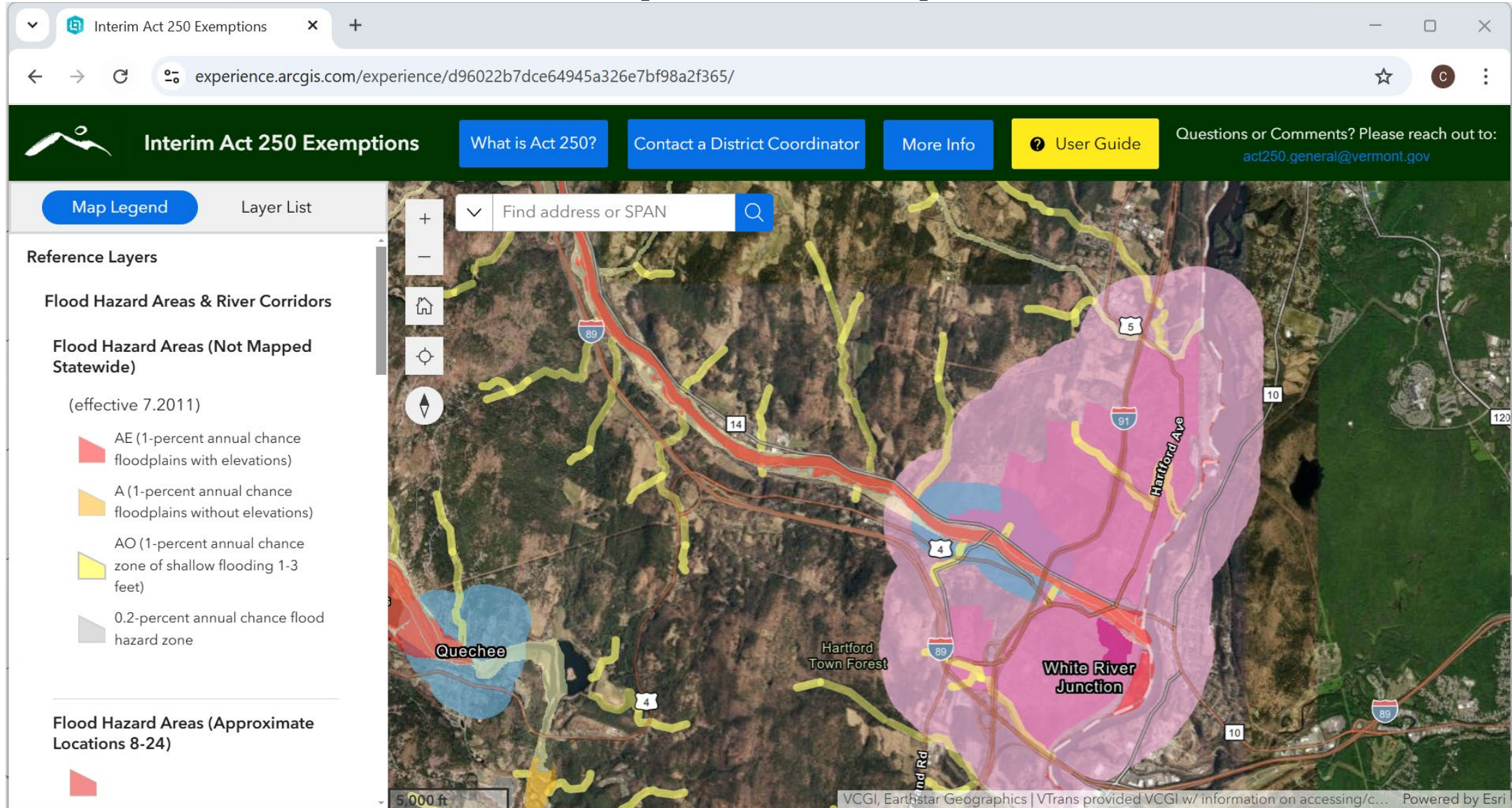


Transition for Legacy Designations

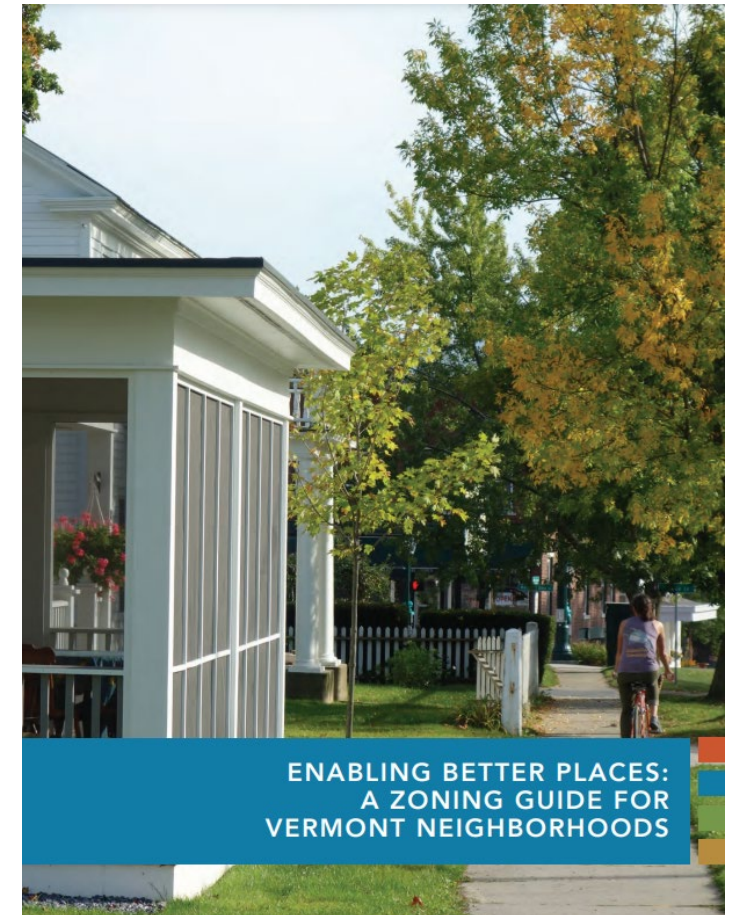
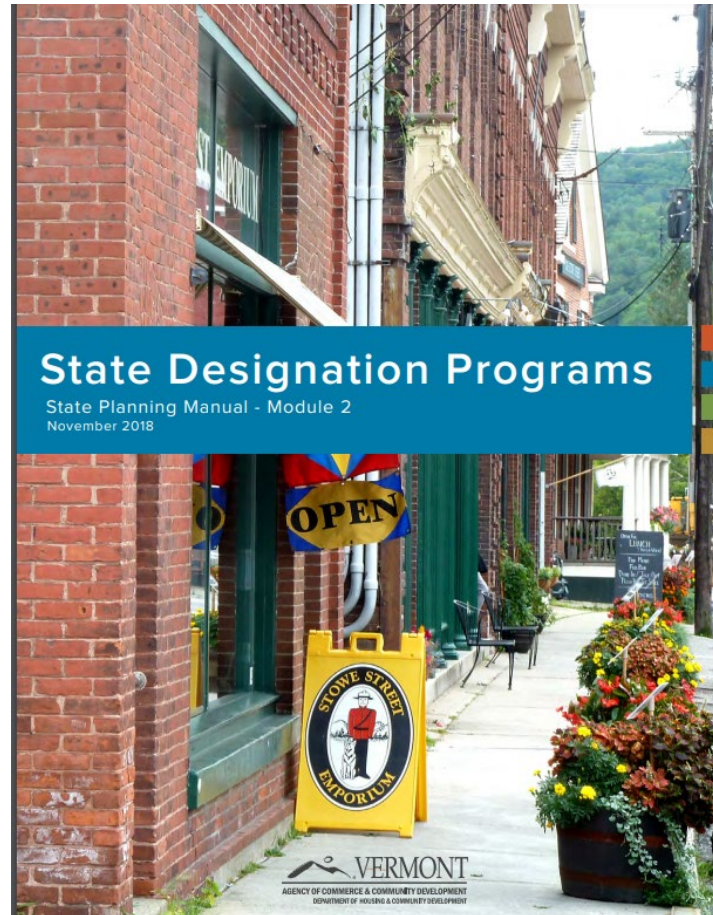
- Legacy designations recognized by regional maps
- Smooth transition into new framework:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Villages > Step 2 Center | Centers |
| Downtowns > Step 3 Center | |
| New Town Centers > Step 2 Center | |
| Neighborhood Development Areas > | Neighborhoods |
| Growth Centers > | |

Interim Act 250 Exemption Maps



Planning Manual Update



Municipal Planning Grants


Match requirements waived for communities that need zoning and subdivision regulations

Applications are due March 31, 2025

By the Numbers [2020-2024]

 **\$4.6 m**
in grant funds requested

 **\$2.8 m**
in grant funds awarded

 **\$538,064**
in local match funds

 **160**
municipal planning grants awarded

 **386,163**
people engaged in the planning process

 **99%**
of survey respondents say MPGs are important to achieve planning goals

Municipal Planning Grants

2025

Program Overview

Awarded annually and administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the program works to strengthen Vermont communities. Since 1998, the Municipal Planning Grant Program has provided over \$15 million to 240 cities and towns across Vermont to help breathe new life into communities, plan for future growth and investment, and improve the quality of life.

This year's Municipal Planning Grants range from \$3,857 to \$45,000 with total requests exceeding \$1,272,985. Competitively awarded, 57 total applications were reviewed with 31 recipients selected.

Funded projects range from capital improvement and village streetscape plans, to housing inventories, flood resiliency studies, regional cultural plans, and amending zoning rules to expand housing choice using the [Enabling Better Places neighborhood zoning guide](#). Grants continue to help towns revitalize by adopting useful and relevant municipal plans and capital infrastructure and facility plans, charting the way for strong communities and a better future.

FY 2024 Grant Recipients

- | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ■ Addison | ■ Jamaica | ■ Roxbury | ■ Stafford |
| ■ Bennington | ■ Maidstone | ■ Rutland City | ■ Swanton |
| ■ Brattleboro | ■ Mendon | ■ Shaftsbury | ■ Village |
| ■ Chester | ■ Montpelier | ■ Sheffield | ■ Waitsfield |
| ■ Concord | ■ Mount Holly | ■ South Hero | ■ Winhall |
| ■ Fairlee | ■ Orange | ■ Springfield | ■ Winooski |
| ■ Hinesburg | ■ Poultney | ■ St. Albans | |
| ■ Hyde Park | ■ Putney | ■ Town | |
| ■ Isle La Motte | ■ Richford | ■ St. Johnsbury | |

"Municipal Planning Grants connect people to their priorities and organize communities for action; they jumpstart local projects."

— 2023 Planning Survey Response


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For more information, please contact:
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Thank You

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Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Program



Caitlin Corkins, Tax Credits & Grants Coordinator
VT Department of Housing and Community Development

State Designation Program

The Vermont Downtown and Village Center Designations **recognize and support local revitalization efforts** across the state **with dedicated staff and funding** to help designated municipalities build and foster strong communities.

24

designated
downtowns



249

designated
village centers



3

new town
centers



17

neighborhood
development
areas



6

growth
centers



Downtown & Village Center Tax Credits

By the Numbers [2021-2025]



173
projects awarded



84
communities
served



\$21.2 m
awarded tax
credits



\$698.3 m
in private
investment

- Program was created in 1998
- Awards \$3 Million in credits annually
- Applications are competitive
- Building must be over 30 years old
- Must be located within a Designated Downtown or Village Center
- Applicants have 3 years from date of award to complete project

Tax Credit Categories

Historic Credit:

- Property must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places
- 10% credit for all exterior and interior work.
- Must have an approved federal RITC application

Smith Block, Brandon



Tax Credit Categories



Façade Credit

- 25% credit for façade repairs
- Cap of \$25k in credit
- Work must meet preservation standards



*Wallingford Block &
Chapman's Store, Fairlee*

Tax Credit Categories

Code Credit

- 50% credit for code improvements
- Elevators up to \$75K in credit
- Sprinkler systems up to \$50k in credit
- “Other code improvements” up to \$100K in credit

*Craftsbury General Store &
Odd Fellows Building, Ludlow*



Tax Credit Categories



Flood Mitigation Credit

- Added to the program in FY 2023
- 50% credit for flood mitigation improvements
- Cap of up to \$100,000 in credits
- Helps flooded properties build back better, and encourages proactive improvements

*Positive Pie in Montpelier,
Bennington High School*

Downtown & Village Center Tax Credits

- Credits can be carried forward up to nine years
- Can be sold to banks or insurance companies for cash, debt reduction, or favorable loan terms
- Non-profits are eligible, but not municipalities or single-family homes



East Calais General Store

Downtown & Village Center Tax Credits

Legislative Ask:

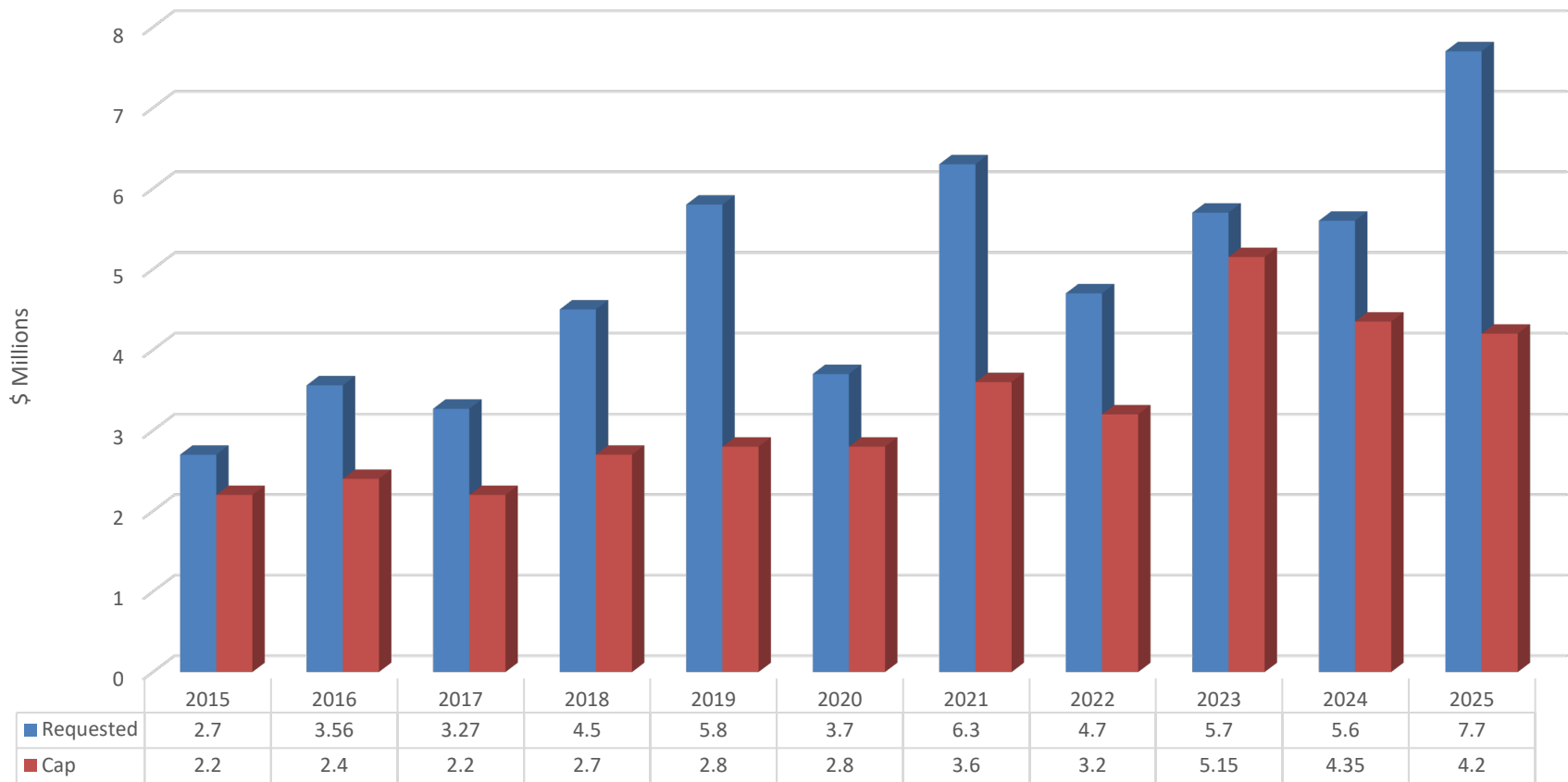
- Currently the program is funded at \$3 million annually
- Governor's proposed budget increases this to \$5 million annually

*Customs House,
St. Albans*



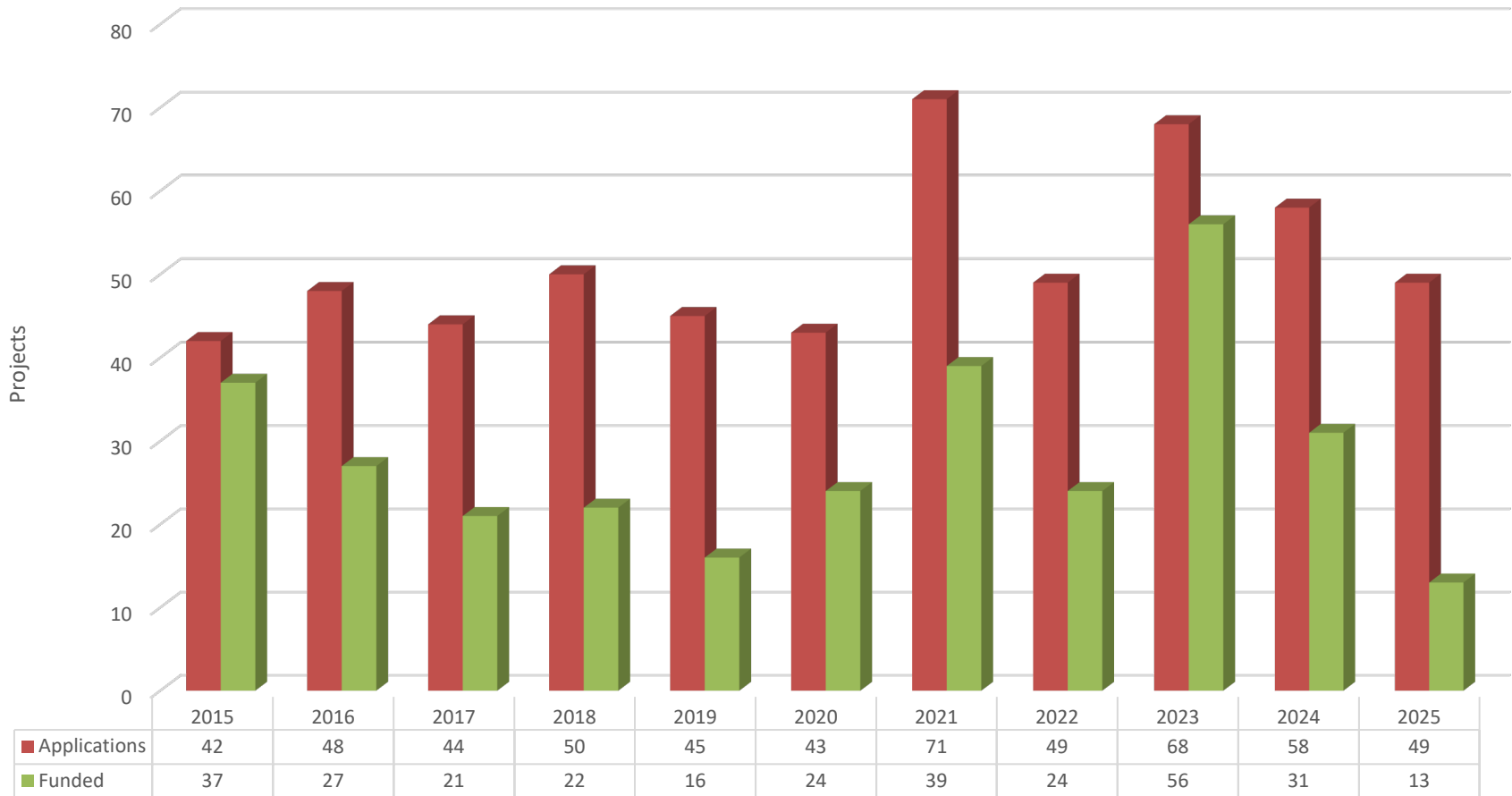
Program Demand

Oversubscription - Dollars



Program Demand

Oversubscription - Projects



Project Examples



Emerson DeWitt Warehouse, Brattleboro

\$10.3 Million Project

\$1.7M in Federal RITC funding

\$408,100 in State Historic Credits

\$2.1 Million - Total Tax Credits

Project Examples



Former Caplan's, St. Johnsbury **\$680,000 Project**

\$16,225 - 25% State Façade Credit
\$50,000 - 50% State Code Credit

\$66,225 Total Tax Credits

Project Examples



Northfield, Grey Building

\$23,392 Project

\$11,696 – 50% Other Code Credit

\$11,696 Total Tax Credits



Questions?

Caitlin Corkins

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