

Senate Committee on Corrections & Institutions

April 10, 2025



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Gus Seelig
Executive Director

Pollaidh Major
Director of Policy & Special Projects



Senator Dick Mazza



Bayview Crossing, South Hero



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Statutory Purpose

“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.”

10 V.S.A.15 §302

Dual goals
in Brattleboro



Brattleboro Food Co-op



Latchis Theater



Rebop Farm



Mount Ascutney, Windsor



Lily Pond Highlands, Athens

Capital Construction and State Bonding Act

FY26 proposed support for VHCB programs

Section 10 Clean Water: \$2.8M

Agricultural water quality projects: \$800,000

Land Conservation and water quality projects \$2M



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Conservation Impact since 2020



Boissoneault, St. Albans

22,674
acres conserved across
25 towns in 10 counties

NATURAL LANDS

56 projects
9,997 acres

FARMLAND

78 farms
12,677 acres

WETLANDS

843 acres of special water
quality protection zones
53 miles of surface water

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

14 projects
12 towns
8 counties



Island Pond Island, Brighton

Conservation Programs

- Recreational Lands, Forests, and Natural Areas Conservation
- Historic Preservation
- Water Quality
- Farmland Access
- Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)
- VHCB AmeriCorps



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Clean Water Initiative

Land Conservation and Water Quality



Maidstone Bends, Brunswick

Farmland Retirement Tanguay, Brunswick

- Former dairy by the Maidstone Bends of the upper Connecticut River
- 183 acres of floodplain
- 15 acres of wetlands
- The Nature Conservancy will restore floodplain forest habitat and wetlands along the river, and some of the upland fields will remain in agricultural production.

Conservation and Water Quality



Wolcott Community Forest Project Highlights:

- Lake Champlain Basin
- \$352,000 WQ Bond
- 735 acres conserved
- 109 acres of protected wetlands
- 2 acre ecological protection zone
- 15 flood plain acres
- 29,040 feet of riparian corridor conserved with 50' buffers

- VHCB purchases development rights and places permanent conservation easements on farms and natural areas.
- Conservation areas protect water quality assets through management practices such as riparian buffers and wetland protections
- Bond dollars from the clean water section support projects with enhanced water quality outcomes.

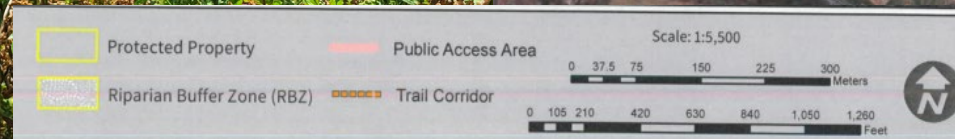
Project Highlights:

- 10,000 feet of 50' buffers on the Mad River
- 38 acres of Mad River frontage within a River Corridor Easement funded by Vermont DEC
- 8 acres of riparian protections with support from the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- 6 acres of permanently retired cropland

Defreest Farm, Waitsfield

Water Quality Protections on Conserved Farms

- Conserved farms are 33% forested, 43% pasture/hay, 10% wetlands, 14% annual crops.
- Since 2019, 80 miles of buffers established on conserved farms and 1,400 acres of wetlands protected.



Farm Transfers



Old Soul Farm, Barre



Bread & Butter Farm, South Burlington



Boneyard Farm, Fletcher



Lucas Dairy Farm, Orwell

Farm & Forest Viability Program



Rebop Farm, Brattleboro

- In-depth, individualized business assistance
- Succession planning, financial management, access to capital, land search and access, bookkeeping, improving profitability
- 108 clients in 2024 represented **\$42 million** in economic activity and **over 300 jobs**
- 36% average increase in profitability

2024 Business Vitality Metrics

68%

OF BUSINESSES
INCREASED
GROSS SALES

ON AVERAGE
BUSINESSES
INCREASED SALES BY

\$45K

CLIENTS
ACCESSED OVER

\$5.6M

IN GRANTS
AND LOANS

100%

IMPROVED BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT SKILLS

49%

ADDED
NEW JOBS



Morgan Mapleworks, Morgan



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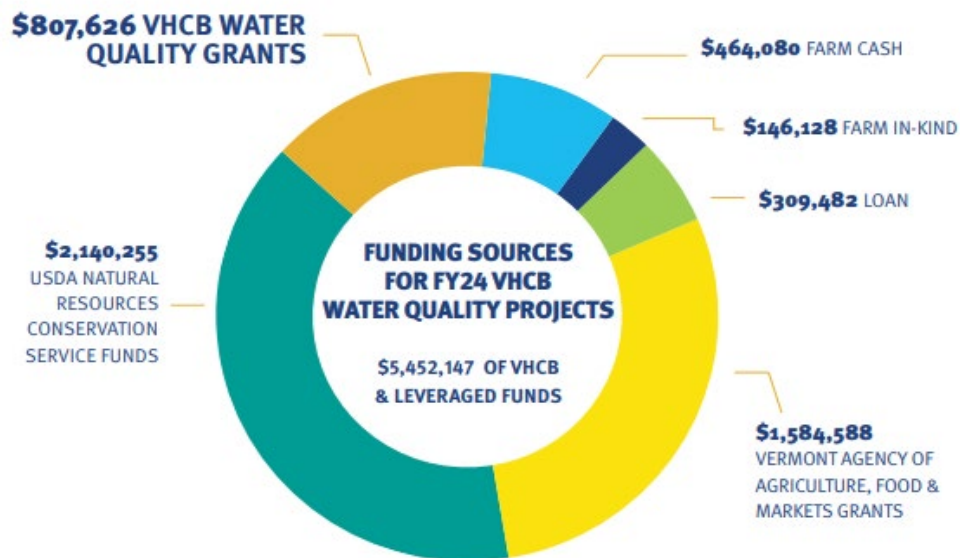
Frost, Flood & Climate Resilience

- We continue to see the impacts of 2023 & 2024 frost, flooding, and wet weather
- Profitable farms have more ability to invest in proactive solutions
- Farmers want support integrating climate resilience into their business planning
- Business planning supports adaptation and innovation

Sweetland Farm, Norwich

Water Quality Grants

- 20 grants in 2024 will reduce runoff, boost soil health, improve manure management, and increase grazing infrastructure
- \$807K in 2024 leveraged an additional \$4.6 million
- \$4.9 million awarded since 2017
- Flexible addition to State's clean water programming



Hillside Homestead, Craftsbury

Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

\$1,086,681 ➡ **\$22,751,701**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES



Sweet Rowen Farm, West Glover

REDI impacts:

- Assists small towns and working lands businesses access capital for critically needed economic development projects
- **\$22.7 million** secured for small communities

Focus areas:

- Community-based economic development and downtown revitalization
- Working lands
- Outdoor recreation

Sweet Rowan Farm, West Glover:

\$114,000 USDA VAPG for value-added dairy expansion. Paul Lisai has worked with a Farm Viability business planner several times to help grow and refine his business.

Supporting Small Towns to Access Big Funding

- **Canaan:** \$900,000 in ARPA/VT Dept of Libraries funds to expand programs, improve accessibility, and modernize the library
- **Arlington:** \$250,000 award for renovation of recreation infrastructure and vacant buildings, providing access to fitness and wellness programming
- **Rupert:** \$43,000 VCDP Planning Grant, then \$120,000 Congressionally Directed Spending award for upgrades to the historic Sheldon General Store



Alice M. Ward Library, Canaan



Arlington Common, Arlington



Sheldon General Store, Rupert



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Infrastructure & Rural Economic Development



Algiers Family Housing, Guilford



Guildford Country Store, Guilford

VHCB Housing Impacts since 2020*

5,124 households served (rental & homeownership)

Total VHCB investment: \$387.7M → Total leverage: \$702.6M

HOMEOWNERSHIP

389 households supported
170 new construction
single-family homeownership units

RENTAL

2,370 total units
1,964 new units
700 homes for unhoused Vermonters

MANUFACTURED HOME COMMUNITIES

27 infill units
1077 lots in 11 communities

FARMWORKER HOUSING

68 repair projects
6 replacement projects
282 farmworkers to be served

SHELTER

24 shelters served total
10 new shelters
571 beds
269 new beds total

RECOVERY RESIDENCES

4 projects
59 residents benefitted

LEAD ABATEMENT

90 households served
70 apartments
20 single-family homes

ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

434 households received accessibility
improvements

**January 1, 2020 – January 31, 2025*



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100 New Units in Hartford



Riverwalk Apartments

42 units
8 units for those
experiencing homeless



Mountainvale Apartments

40 units
8 units for those
experiencing homeless



747 Hartford Avenue

18 units for those experiencing
homelessness

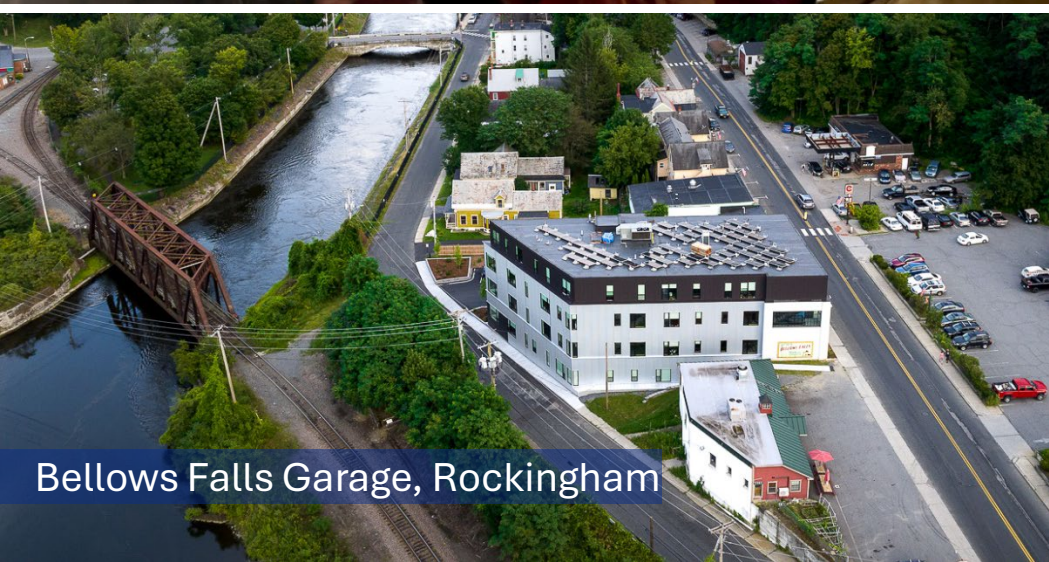
Investing in Downtowns



Squire House, Bennington



Pearl Street, Montpelier



Bellows Falls Garage, Rockingham



Central & Main, Windsor

Housing Programs

- Multi-Family Rental Housing
- Home Ownership
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Shelter Improvement and Expansion
- Manufactured Home Communities
- Home Accessibility Improvements
- Community Planning & Technical Assistance
- Farmworker Housing
- Recovery Residences

**16,335 permanently affordable homes
(rental & homeownership)**



Shattuck Hill Mobile Home Park, Derby



The Lofts at Sacred Heart, Newport

Permanent Affordability through Homeownership

- 389 new shared equity homeowners since 2020
- The Shared Equity model provides an affordable path to homeownership
- Homes created in partnership with Vermont's affordable housing developers and Habitat chapters
- The subsidy is recycled through generations
- From 2021 to 2023 the share of renters financially able to buy a median home dropped from 32% to 6%





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Permanent Affordability

Protects Vermonters



Protects Mixed-Income Communities



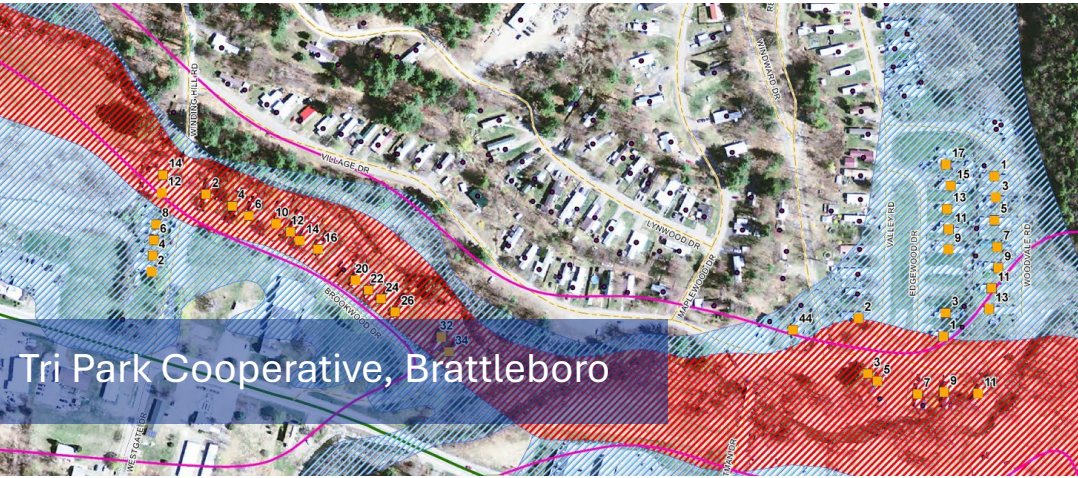
Protects the State's assets





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Flood Resilience



Tri Park Cooperative, Brattleboro



Melrose Terrace, Brattleboro



Whetstone Brook, Brattleboro

Thank You!



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Camp Dream, Fletcher