

M E E T I N G N O T I C E

BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD

Monday, January 10, 2022

Bennington Fire Facility

Multi-Purpose Room - 3rd Floor

130 River Street

Bennington, VT 05201

A G E N D A

6:00 PM

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Pledge of Allegiance | |
| 2. Vision Statement | |
| 3. Consent Agenda | 6:00 PM - 6:05 PM |
| A. Minutes of December 27, 2021 | |
| B. Warrants | |
| 4. COVID Update | 6:05 PM - 6:15 PM |
| 5. Initial Report of Economic Development
Strategy and Infrastructure | 6:15 PM - 6:35 PM |
| 6. TIF Extension | 6:35 PM - 6:45 PM |
| 7. Energizer Re-use Study | 6:45 PM - 7:05 PM |
| 8. Audit | 7:05 PM - 7:25 PM |
| 9. Public Comment | 7:25 PM - 7:40 PM |
| 10. Mask Resolution Discussion | 7:40 PM - 7:55 PM |
| 11. Implementing the Town's Vision | 7:55 PM - 8:10 PM |
| 12. Manager's Report | 8:10 PM - 8:20 PM |
| 13. Upcoming Agenda | 8:20 PM - 8:25 PM |
| 14. Other Business | 8:25 PM - 8:30 PM |

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES**

December 27, 2021

Present: Jeanne Conner, V. Chair, Gary Corey, Sarah Perrin, Tom Haley and Bruce Lee-Clark.

Absent: Jeannie Jenkins, Chair, and Jim Carroll

Also present: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager.

The meeting was called to order by the V. Chair at 6:00 pm.

The consent agenda including the minutes of December 13, the warrants, and a liquor license for the Four Chimneys Inn, which is changing ownership was approved unanimously.

In Public Comment, Donald Washun (sp) asked if the agenda could be placed by the door for those who attend the meeting. The Board felt this was a good idea. Nancy White questioned the staff's decision to recommend a loan of \$200,000 to the newly proposed nonprofit grocery store in the former Alcaro building on Main Street. The Manger and the V. Chair explained that the process is a policy driven one that has existed for many years. A Board vote is not required for the staff to act. Jenny Dewar, BBC Executive Director, then spoke on behalf of the BBC (the Better Bennington Corporation) on its support for the new business and the loan.

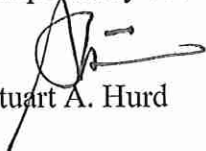
In the Mask Mandate Discussion, Bruce Lee-Clark noted that the requirement to post the new signage included in the recent Resolution was not being complied with based on an unofficial tour he took in the downtown. Signs are required and available online and at the Town Offices.

Upcoming Agenda include budget work sessions on January 3, 8, and possibly the 15th. On January 10th, a regular meeting, the Board will hear the initial report of the Infrastructure Committee, discuss a TIF extension, hear the report on the Energizer Reuse Study and the FY 21 Audit.

In Other Business, it was noted that on December 29 and 30th, the State was offering free antigen test kits to parents of students at the VTRANS garage on Bowen Road. Parents must register.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,


Stuart A. Hurd

PRESS RELEASE – January 5, 2022

HEADLINE: Town Seeks Input on 3.9 Million in Funding Priorities

The Town of Bennington is expected to receive a total of 3.9 million dollars in federal funding for projects as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). How the Town uses the funds can be transformational for our community and the Town is seeking input from community members to best determine those uses.

At the January 10th Select Board meeting, a public presentation will be made outlining the process for determining funding priorities along with an overview of ARPA, eligible funding uses, and to answer any questions regarding the process. This first meeting on January 10 is to discuss the process only. The merits of individual projects and where they fall in the list of priorities for ARPA funding will be discussed at the following Select Board meeting on January 24.

An initial draft list of suggested priorities for economic development and Town infrastructure and operations has been created by the Town of Bennington Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — a Select Board sub-committee and Town of Bennington, BCRC and BBC staff — with consultation by economic development consultants White and Burke and the Bennington Department of Health. These lists are broken down into “tiers” where the first tier of projects best aligns with a combination of available funds, including ARPA eligibility, time for project completion, a clear role for the Town, and the existence of necessary partners for moving forward. Subsequent tiers do not reflect any judgement on the merits of the projects themselves, but rather a lack of some or all of the aforementioned criteria. This draft list is available for review on the Town website at: <https://benningtonvt.org/arpa-priorities/>

Is there a lower tier project that you might know about that is farther along than the committee knows? Are there possible partners to move a project forward that the committee is unaware of? (For example: a tier two project is a Downtown Hardware Store. Do you know someone who formerly owned or ran a hardware store who dreams of opening a hardware store here? If the Town had a partner ready to move on a project, that could elevate it to a tier one project.) Are there feasible projects that were missed?

The Town is asking for your input on the priorities for using the ARPA funds. Public comment will be taken between January 10 and January 21 in preparation for the Select Board meeting on January 24th when the projects will be discussed. A public comment form is available on the town website at <https://benningtonvt.org/arpa-priorities/> or you can mail comments or drop them off at the Town Office. The public will have the opportunity to make additional comments, if they choose, at the meeting on the 24th. The Select Board strongly urges the public to provide written comments in advance as written comments are by far the most effective and efficient way for the public to provide meaningful input.

It is important to note that the initial priority list will need to be flexible. Final ARPA guidelines may change, new ideas from the public may emerge, problems with initial priority projects may appear that make them no longer feasible. The result of this process is an initial list of priority projects to start working on and pursuing... not necessarily the final list. A vote on the initial list of priorities will be made after the discussion on January 24 so that Town staff can begin that work.

You are here: [Home](#) / [ARPA Priorities](#)

ARPA Priorities

Determining Bennington Priorities for Using ARPA Funding

The town has been working to develop a list of priority projects, including economic development and town infrastructure and operations projects. Given the availability of ARPA funding, the town has focused on ARPA eligible projects.

Bennington is expected to receive a total of 3.9 million dollars in federal funding for projects as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). How we use the funds can be transformational for our community and we are seeking input from our community members to best determine those uses.

The town has created this page to inform the public about the process we are undertaking to determine our funding priorities, information about ARPA funding restrictions, suggested priorities for funding, and to give citizens the opportunity to comment on those suggestions and to make their own.

On This Page:

- [Process for Determining Funding Priorities](#)
- [Eligible Uses of ARPA Funds](#)
- [Suggested Priorities and Documents and Reference Materials](#)
- [Public Comments](#)
- [QUICK LINK DIRECT TO PUBLIC COMMENT FORM](#)

Process for Determining Funding Priorities

January 10, 2022 – Select Board Meeting on Process and Eligibility

A public presentation will be made outlining the process for determining funding priorities along with an overview of ARPA, eligible funding uses, and answer any questions regarding the process. The merits of individual projects will be discussed at the following Select Board meeting on January 24.

January 11 – January 21 – Review of Documents and Input from the Community

The public will be directed to this web page to review the suggested priorities, to make comments, and to suggest their own priorities. Public comments are due by 3 pm, Friday, January 21, so they can be compiled and shared with the Select Board for their meeting on January 24.

January 24 – Select Board Meeting to Discuss Projects and Vote on Priority List

The Select Board will discuss the projects list and suggestions from the community. Please "Click Here" to access the public comment form. There is also a link below. The form is set up so that you can comment on one project at a time, or suggest your own. You are welcome to use the form as many times as you wish to comment on as many projects as desired. The public will have the opportunity to make additional comments, if they choose, at this meeting. A vote on an initial list of priorities will be made after the discussion.



Public Notices

COVID-19 Rule SIGNAGE

December 28, 2021 By Town of Bennington

Energy Committee Meeting – January 5, 2022

Posted on December 30, 2021

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting – January 4, 2022

Posted on December 30, 2021

Select Board Meeting – January 3, 2022

Posted on December 29, 2021

All About Town – December 27, 2021

Posted on December 22, 2021

Eligible Uses of ARPA Funds – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

ARPA includes four broad criteria outlining eligible uses:

- To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

These guidelines are not 100% finalized so we need to be ready to adjust our priorities as needed for compliance.

More information regarding the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) can be found on the Vermont League of Cities and Towns website ([CLICK HERE](#)).

Suggested Priorities

An initial draft list of suggested priorities for Economic Development and Infrastructure has been created by a Select Board sub-committee and Town of Bennington staff, with consultation by economic development consultants White and Burke, the BCRC, BBC, and the Health Department. These lists are broken down into "tiers" where the first tier of projects best aligns with a combination of ARPA eligibility, time for project completion, a clear role for the Town, and the existence of necessary partners for moving forward. Subsequent tiers do not reflect any judgement on the merits of the projects themselves, but rather a lack of some or all of the aforementioned criteria.

How public input can help:

Is there a lower tier project that you might know about that is farther along than we think? Are there possible partners to move a project forward that we don't know about? (For example: a tier two project is a Downtown Hardware Store. Do you know someone who formerly owned or ran a hardware store who dreams of opening a hardware store here? If we had a partner ready to move on a project, that could elevate it to a tier one project.) Are there feasible projects that we don't mention at all that we missed? **The Select Board strongly urges the public to provide written comments via this website (or mail us or drop off at the Town Office) as written comments are by far the most effective and efficient way for the public to provide meaningful input.** ([CLICK HERE TO GO TO PUBLIC COMMENTS](#) or use the "Click Here" button near the bottom of this page.)

MATERIALS ([CLICK TO DOWNLOAD](#)):

[List of Projects](#)

[List of Projects, Detail](#)

[White & Burke Economic Consultants Review](#)

A note about TIF: The White & Burke Review recommends the use of Bennington's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District to advance some of the economic development projects. The Town of Bennington established a downtown TIF district in 2017 with the goal of stimulating economic development. The Town has yet to incur any TIF debt to advance any of the projects outlined in the TIF District Plan. Legislation in 2020 and 2021 extends the total time period in which Bennington can incur debt to be repaid with TIF to March 2029. However, the deadline to incur first TIF debt is March 31, 2022. To extend the window and preserve the opportunity to use TIF until 2029, the Town would need to apply to VEPC for a substantial change before the end of March 2022.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The initial priority list will be flexible. Final ARPA guidelines may change, new ideas from the public may emerge, problems with initial priority projects may appear that make them no longer feasible. The result of this process is an initial list of priority projects to start working on and pursuing... not necessarily the final list.

Public Comments

Please use the "click here" button below to access the public comment form. The form is set up so that you can comment on one project at a time, or suggest your own. You are welcome to use the form as many times as you wish to comment on as many projects as desired.

Serving People Through Teamwork

Welcome to Bennington!

Contact Us

205 South Street
P.O. Box 469
Bennington, VT 05201
Hours: M-F, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Phone: 802-442-1037
Email: info@benningtonvt.org

Our Partners

Bennington Area Chamber of
Commerce
BCIC
BCRC
BBC

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DRAFT – 1/05/22

Preliminary Prioritization of Projects

Economic Development Projects

TIER 1

Benn High (former Middle School)

Downtown Food Market

Putnam Block Phase 2

Capitalization of Revolving Loan Program

TIER 2

Catamount School (Bennington Sports Center)

Downtown Hardware Store

Energizer

Everett Estate (former SVC Campus)

TIER 3

Youth Housing

Affordable Housing Options for Homeless

Purchase by Municipality of Blighted Properties

Infrastructure and Town Operations Projects

TIER 1

Willow Park Playground Replacement

County Street/Benmont Avenue Sewer Line Upgrades

South St./Union St. Stormwater Management Improvements

Premium Pay/Benefits to Eligible Workers

Construction of Skate Park and/or Outdoor Skating Rink (synthetic ice)

Digitization of Land Records

TIER 2

Wastewater Department Infrastructure Projects

Wastewater Treatment Facility (WTF) Sand Filter Replacement

Relining of Sewer Interceptor

Water Department Infrastructure Projects

Settlers Road/Springhill Road Water Line Extension

South end Water Main Improvements

Raw Water Tank Replacement

Filter Upgrades at Water Filtration Plant

Chapel Road Tank Replacement

Burgess Rd Pressure Reducing Valve

Gage Street Water Main Replacement

Highway Department Infrastructure Projects

Depot Street Bridge

Mount Anthony Road Bridge

Police Department Projects

4-run Dog Kennel and Vehicle Impound Yard

Firefighter Certification of Police Officers

PD Equipment Purchases and Upgrades

Recreation, Parks, and Pathway Projects

Town Gymnasium

Ninja Trail

Benmont Avenue Bike/Ped Improvements

Sidewalk Repairs and Improvements

Expansion/Interconnection of Local Pathway/Trail Network

Mount Anthony Summit Trail and Lookout

Public Arts Projects

Town Facilities Department Projects

Armory Building

Renovations & Upgrades to the Recreation Center Facility

Air Quality Improvement & HVAC Upgrades - Town Office

Air Quality Improvement & HVAC Upgrades Firehouse Company Rooms & Community Room

Blacksmith Shop Building Exterior Historical Renovation

Town Office Roof Replacement

Support for Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, and other "Green" Infrastructure Projects

Improvement of Downtown Streetscape, Infrastructure, Facades

Improvements to Downtown Streetscape, Infrastructure, and Facades

Town Administration Projects

Computer Hardware Upgrade

Main Server Upgrade

Software Upgrades

Other Projects

Public Sanitation Facility

Expanding Services at Bennington Free Clinic and/or Schools

Bus and Car Share Expansion

DRAFT – 12/29/21

Priority Projects*

*Projects were identified by the Select Board Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee, Town staff, BBC staff, and BCRC staff. Most projects were placed in two broad categories – Economic Development Projects and Infrastructure and Town Operation Projects. Projects that did not clearly fit within Economic Development Projects, and Infrastructure and Town Operation Projects were identified as Other Projects. Although not identified as separate categories, the importance of projects that addressed public health and/or housing were acknowledged as high need and are included in the projects listed below. The Economic Development projects were preliminarily prioritized based on a report from White & Burke and Dominic Cloud in consultation with the Select Board Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. The Infrastructure and Town Operation projects were preliminarily prioritized by Town Staff in consultation with the Select Board Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. The projects identified as Other Projects were not prioritized as they all are very speculative at this time and/or there was not a clear role for the Town at this time.

Public input and discussion with the entire Select Board will need to occur to identify possible additional priority projects and before a more definitive ordering of projects can be completed.

Economic Development Projects

Economic Development projects were prioritized based on a three-tier system. Projects within each tier are listed in no particular order. **Tier 1** includes projects with a near-term opportunity (within 1-2 years), stakeholders at the table, and a clear role for the Town. **Tier 2** projects were deemed critical economic development projects but lacking a clear role for the Town at this time. **Tier 3** Projects were deemed speculative and/or not to have a role for the Town at this time.

TIER 1 (Projects with a near-term opportunity (within 1-2 years), stakeholders at the table, and a clear role for the Town.)

Project Name (Nickname): Benn High (former Middle School)

Location: 650 Main Street

Project Description: Facilitate redevelopment of the vacant 90,000 sq. ft. historic Bennington High School (most recently the former Middle School). Opportunities include the creation of a community center (possibly including the Senior Center) and gymnasium with programming for

all ages, and multiple housing units, including senior housing, and market rate housing. Potential partners include Shires Housing (senior housing), the Town's Senior Center, Meals on Wheels, Council on Aging, YMCA (to manage recreation programs), Berkshire Dance Theatre, Bennington Farmers Market, and Vermont Arts Exchange.

Project Status: The Benn High building was purchased by a developer in 2020. Roof leaks were repaired, many old windows were repaired, and new utility services to the building were constructed. More recently, the building owner applied for and was granted local permits for a mixed-use renovation/redevelopment of a large portion of the property. The plans included several new market-rate apartments, maker's spaces, offices, and a recreation use in the old gymnasium space and the old cafeteria space. Initial renovation of the cafeteria space and three nearby former classrooms has been completed. Renovation of the balance of the space has not begun.

Estimated Project Cost: \$500,000 to \$2 million.

Funds Secured/Possibly Available: To date, the building owner has self-financed initial improvements. Possible sources of additional funding include: Town Revolving Loan Program, TIF Funds, Vermont Community Development Program, Historic Tax Credits, ARPA.

Timing: Ideally, completion of renovations in 18 to 24 months with an opportunity to begin use of the community center spaces earlier.

Project Name (Nickname): Downtown Food Market

Location: 239 Main Street (Salerno building - former LaFlamme's building) – Letter of Intent signed.

Project Description: Establishment of a downtown food store in the downtown. There is now a dedicated group of people working to establish a high-quality not-for-profit food store in downtown Bennington and the Town may be able to further those efforts significantly. Financial support for a planned downtown food market to help ensure its financial viability and development of affiliated programs designed to enhance food access and security would be a tremendous benefit to the community.

Project Status: The Four Corners Market Board (non-profit) has been formed and is meeting regularly. A Market Manager, Kitchen Manager, and Bakery Manager have already been identified and are actively working with the board. A loan from the Town's Revolving Loan Fund has been secured. A fund-raising effort will begin soon.

Estimated Project Cost: Start-up costs, including tenant fit-up and equipment purchases, are estimated at between \$400,000 and \$600,000.

Funds Secured/Possibly Available: Possible sources of funding for the downtown food market include private donations, the Town's Revolving Loan Program (secured), USDA Rural Development grants and loans, Vermont Community Foundation, Preservation Trust of Vermont, ARPA.

Timing: The goal is to enter in to a lease for 239 Main Street within the next 30 days and begin fundraising thereafter. A Summer 2022 opening would be ideal.

Project Name (Nickname): Putnam Block Phase 2

Location: East of intersection of Washington Avenue and Main Street (adjacent to Putnam Phase 1) – western portion of Putnam Block.

Project Description: Mixed use redevelopment (new multi-story building and site improvements) anchored by Southwestern Vermont Health Care (SVHC). The project would include clinical office space, small liner retail spaces and thirty+ units of housing. Possible municipal involvement may include a low-interest loan, state and federal grants, TIF funding, and/or upgrades to Washington Avenue and/or West Main Street, and on-site parking improvements and assumption of the entire lot as a municipal asset.

Project Status: The project is in the pre-development phase – planning and feasibility assessment is ongoing. Identification of funding sources, including New Market Tax credits, will follow.

Estimated Project Cost: Unknown but will be a multi-million-dollar project.

Funds Secured/Possibly Available: Some funding for brownfields remediation work has been secured. BRG has funded, to date, the pre-development costs. Possible additional funding sources include: private funding sources (including opportunity zone investment), traditional bank financing, New Market tax credits, Town Revolving Loan Program, etc. for parking lot and or streetscape improvements – TIF funds, Downtown Transportation Fund, municipal funds (primarily in-kind work for parking lot improvements if lot is given to Town) may be sought.

Timing: The goal is to have the feasibility and preliminary planning work completed by mid-2022 with the identification of funding elements to follow soon thereafter.

Project Name (Nickname): Capitalization of Revolving Loan Program

Location: N/A.

Project Description: Use portion of ARPA funds that may be identified as reimbursement for lost revenue to increase capitalization of Town Revolving Loan Program. Funds could be used to fund economic development priorities.

Project Status: In process of determining amount of ARPA funds that may be deemed reimbursement of lost revenue.

Estimated Project Cost: To be determined.

TIER 2 (Projects deemed critical economic development projects but lacking a clear role for the Town at this time.)

Project Name (Nickname): Catamount School (Bennington Sports Center)

Location: 230 School Street (also has frontage on North Street)

Project Description: Facilitate re-development of former Catamount School. The property consists of the historic four-story 19th century former St. Francis Academy (facing North Street), and a three-story structure constructed in the 1950's (facing School Street). The buildings previously served as the Catamount Elementary School. The St. Francis Academy building is largely vacant but has been well maintained and has a new roof among other improvements. The three-story School Street property has been recently converted to a recreational space known as the Bennington Sports Center. The space has been used to host indoor soccer leagues, clinics, and camps. Those uses will, likely continue, but only occupy the space for a very limited time. In partnership with the Town, the YMCA recently signed short-term lease for the Bennington Sports Center. The YMCA plans to expand its youth afterschool and summer programs at the property. Over the next few months, the YMCA will determine if a long-term lease makes sense based on revenue the Y generates with expanded programs. The building owner is interested in developing extended stay suites in the St. Francis Academy building. There may be opportunities for the Town to facilitate the re-development of the St. Francis Academy Building and the robust use of the Bennington Sports Center for community benefit.

Project Status: See above.

Estimated Project Cost: Unknown at this time.

Funds Secured/Possibly Available: Possible funding sources: owner funds, traditional bank financing, Town Revolving Loan Program.

Project Name (Nickname): Downtown Hardware Store

Location: Multiple locations have been considered, including the Tuttles Lot, Putnam Block, 239 Main Street (Alcaro/LaFlamme's building), Inkspot Press on East Main Street, and the former Jeep/Dodge Dealership on North Street, etc.

Project Description: A downtown hardware store has long been identified as a critical need. Over the past several years, Town and BBC officials have contacted multiple hardware store operators and met with several property owners to facilitate establishment of a hardware store in downtown. Although most hardware store operators express interest, the per sq. ft. rent the operators believe is affordable is insufficient to pay for renovations or new construction of a hardware store space. Municipal financial support for a hardware store in the form of loans, grants, or direct investment appears necessary.

Project Status: Town efforts continue but the numbers have not changed.

Estimated Project Cost: Unknown, but substantial – perhaps \$500,000 to \$1 million in loans, grants, direct investment.

Funds Secured/Possibly Available: Possible sources of funding for a downtown hardware store include CDBG and the Town's Revolving Loan Fund.

Project Name (Nickname): Energizer

Location: 401 Gage Street (frontage on Gage, Division, Pratt, and Scott Streets)

Project Description: Facilitate re-development of multi-building Energizer manufacturing complex. An Energizer Re-use Plan funded by grants secured by the Town provides detailed information regarding the property and redevelopment possibilities for the site. Opportunities for public investment to help spur redevelopment of this critical site adjacent to the urban core might include public parks or other recreational assets along the Walloomsac River on the southern edge of the property, support for public programming space or any other number of possibilities. Pursuit of community development block grants or other available funding to assist with redevelopment that may include a mix of housing types would be a valuable role for the Town to play.

Project Status: Energizer will vacate the site soon. The property has been listed for sale.

Estimated Project Cost: Unknown at this time.

Project Name (Nickname): Everett Estate (former SVC Campus)

Location: Mansion Drive – West of Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC)

Project Description: Facilitate redevelopment of Everett Estate in partnership with Southwestern Vermont Health Care (SVHC).

Project Status: SVHC is actively marketing the Everett Mansion for hospitality use. The gymnasium is currently being used for COVID testing and vaccinations. SVHC is evaluating how best to re-develop the dormitory buildings, cafeteria buildings and balance of the site. The Town is operating and maintaining the athletic fields. SVHC has continued to encourage and allow public access to the numerous trails on the property.

Estimated Project Cost: Unknown at this time.

TIER 3 (Projects deemed speculative and/or not to have a role for the Town at this time.)

Project Name (Nickname): Youth Housing

Project Description: Housing and wrap around services for unaccompanied youth ages 15-18 and transitional youth 19-24. Predominant causes of youth homelessness are physical, sexual

and/or emotional abuse by parents/guardians. Youth ages 19-24 are also at risk for homelessness due to aging out of the foster system, limited economic opportunities or are pregnant/parenting. Youth and young adults who leave home, voluntarily or forced, resort to staying with friends, couch surfing or may engage in risky behaviors/relationships to have a roof over their heads. Identified as a priority by local housing agencies, supervisory union and parenting resource center, more research to determine the extent of youth homelessness in Bennington is needed. Opportunity with Bennington Regional Planning Commission and Homeless Health Equity Grant for assessment/planning to inform need, spending priorities and local operational capacity. ARPA funding could potentially be used to support research.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Affordable Housing Options for Homeless

Project Description: Short- term plans to house General Assistance Motel population when state program ends/increases restrictions. This requires more research and could be paired with other initiatives such as the Housing First model used by Pathways Vermont.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Purchase by Municipality of Blighted Properties

Project Description: Purchase of blighted/vacant properties (other than those identified above), cleaning up the properties (demolition of structures/brownfields remediation, etc.), and re-sale or redevelopment of the properties.

Infrastructure and Town Operations Projects

Infrastructure and Town Operations Projects were prioritized based on a two-tier system. Projects within each tier are listed in no particular order. **Tier 1** includes high priority projects that appear to be ARPA eligible and that may be constructed/implemented within 2 to four years, and the estimated cost of the projects do not exceed available municipal ARPA funds. **Tier 2** projects were not included in Tier one for one or more of the following reasons: the project is not ARPA eligible; the project may be funded from other sources; the project is not shovel ready enough to be constructed within 4 years; and/or the project's estimated cost exceeds the available municipal ARPA funds. It is important to note that the recently passed approximately \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act may provide significant additional funding for infrastructure projects, but few specifics are known yet.

TIER 1 (Projects that appear to be ARPA eligible and that may be constructed/implemented within 2 to four years, and the estimated cost of the projects do not exceed available municipal ARPA funds.)

Project Name (Nickname): Willow Park Playground Replacement

Location: Willow Park, East Road/Performance Drive

Project Description: Willow Park is a large and extremely popular town park. The main playground at the park must be replaced due to the deteriorating condition of the playground equipment. A new play structure must meet or exceed all current Federal, CPSC, ASTM, IPEMA standards as well as be fully ADA Accessibility compliant. Additional enhancements to Willow Park should also be considered.

Project Status: The project is currently in the planning phase. Ballpark estimates and conceptual designs have been developed, but a final design will be determined after gathering public input. A Design/Build request for proposal is in development. Community Engagement will be incorporated into the design selection process.

Estimated Project Cost: \$600,000 - \$800,000

Funds Secured/Possibly Available: ARPA eligible – located within approved census tract.

Timing (if relevant): Given current condition of the playground, construction should begin in the Spring of 2022.

Project Name (Nickname): County Street/Benmont Avenue Sewer Line Upgrades

Project Description: Replacement of 1600' of 15" clay sewer line to a larger size adequate to handle the sewer flows. The current sewer line is undersized and surcharges during high flows.

Estimated Project Cost: \$800,000

Timing (if relevant): Could be completed within two years.

Project Name (Nickname): South St./Union St. Stormwater Management Improvements

Project Description: Study and address frequent flooding of South Street/Union Street intersection caused by inadequate stormwater system in the area.

Estimated Project Cost: \$25,000 for review of current stormwater system conditions and design alternatives – Unknown for construction of chosen alternative.

Timing (if relevant): Study could commence almost immediately. Construction could occur within 2 – 3 years.

Project Name (Nickname): Premium Pay/Benefits to Eligible Workers

Project Description: Compensation to Town employees who worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic - \$99,000 for hazard pay and \$88,000 for benefits

Estimated Project Cost: \$187,000

Project Name (Nickname): Construction of Skate Park and/or Outdoor Skating Rink (synthetic ice)

Project Description: Construct additional recreational amenities in town such as a skate park or outdoor ice-skating facility (synthetic ice). A possible partner and location for an indoor/outdoor skate park have been identified.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Timing (if relevant): Construction within 2 – 3 years.

Project Name (Nickname): Digitization of Land Records

Project Description: Retain digitization company to scan, index, and make available online Town of Bennington land records dating back 40 years (State requirement for title searches). The project will increase efficiency and reduce costs over time.

Estimated Project Cost: \$160,000 initial fee – \$225 monthly maintenance fee.

Timing (if relevant): Can be implemented as soon as funding is available.

TIER 2 (Projects that were not included in Tier one for one or more of the following reasons: the project is not ARPA eligible; the project may be funded from other sources; the project is not shovel ready enough to be constructed within 4 years; and/or the project's estimated cost exceeds the available municipal ARPA funds.)

Wastewater Department Infrastructure Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Wastewater Treatment Facility (WTF) Sand Filter Replacement

Project Description: The WTF sand filter was built in 1985 and has begun to fail in the past few years. The under-drain system needs to be replaced. Since 1985 there have been other filter designs that don't use the sand. With new and more restrictive wastewater limits the old sand filter will soon lead to compliance issues.

Estimated Project Cost: \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

Project Name (Nickname): Relining of Sewer Interceptor

Project Description: The 36" sewer interceptor was installed in 1959 and made of reinforced concrete. This is the one line that collects almost all the flow for the treatment plant. There are sections of this line that have some visible cracks and or infiltration of ground water. The

interceptor line will continue to deteriorate at an accelerated pace. The length of the interceptor is approximately 3.5 miles long. There is a substantial cost savings if the interceptor is relined while it is still intact.

Estimated Project Cost: \$3 million to \$3.5 million

Water Department Infrastructure Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Settlers Road/Springhill Road Water Line Extension

Project Description: Extension of municipal water line to serve 17 single family residences on Settlers Road and Springhill Road that were impacted by PFOA contamination. It is expected that this project will be funded by State ARPA or Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds.

Estimated Project Cost: \$1.6 Million

Project Name (Nickname): South end Water Main Improvements

Project Description: Some higher elevation properties on the south end of town experience low or no pressure during fire flows. In addition to being a nuisance for the impacted property owners, these conditions may cause drinking water to be contaminated. The Town's permit to operate a water supply system from the State of Vermont requires the Town to address the low-pressure issues. Since 2015 the Town has constructed a pump station and a 750,000-gallon storage tank and has begun extending larger water mains to serve the south end, but substantial work remains to extend expanded water mains to the impacted areas.

Estimated Project Cost: \$4 Million

Project Name (Nickname): Raw Water Tank Replacement

Project Description: The raw water tank is a 500,000-gallon concrete tank constructed in the late 1960's. The concrete interior of the tank is spalling and the tank is undersized. During heavy rains when the river is dirty, the water treatment plant must be shut down so that extremely dirty water does not have to be treated. Because the current raw water tank is undersized, the plant can only be shut down for a short time before the tank is depleted. A larger tank for the raw water would allow for the plant to continue operating during heavy rains for a day or two until the river clears up. The upgrades to the tank would also allow the Town to pretreat the water for PH.

Estimated Project Cost: \$4 million to \$4.5 million.

Project Name (Nickname): Filter Upgrades at Water Filtration Plant

Project Description: Filters at the water filtration plant have not been replaced since 1978. These filters are very large and inefficient and have reached the end of their useful life. Replacing the original filters with new filters that utilize modern technology will substantially increase efficiency, improve water quality, and reduce disinfection by-products.

Estimated Project Cost: \$5 million to \$8 million

Project Name (Nickname): Chapel Road Tank Replacement

Project Description: The Chapel Rd tank is a poured in place three-million-gallon tank constructed in 1978 and is nearing the end of its useful life. The tank has become expensive to maintain as it continues to deteriorate. It will eventually fail. Replacing the tank with a new and smaller one and a half or two-million-gallon tank would reduce maintenance costs and improve water quality.

Estimated Project Cost: \$3 Million

Project Name (Nickname): Burgess Rd Pressure Reducing Valve

Project Description: The current Burgess Road pressure reducing valve, located in a manhole at the bottom of Burgess Rd, must be replaced. This valve is one of two valves that control the pressure in the entire water system. Without this valve the pressure in the water system would be too high. A design for a replacement pressure reducing valve in an above ground structure is being developed.

Estimated Project Cost: \$250,000

Project Name (Nickname): Gage Street Water Main Replacement

Project Description: The 1700' water main in the 900 block of Gage Street is undersized and must be replaced.

Estimated Project Cost: \$600,000

Highway Department Infrastructure Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Depot Street Bridge

Project Description: Renovation of Depot Street Bridge – structural repairs to abutments and replacement of concrete/steel beam superstructure and bridge deck. Recent State bridge inspections have identified structural issues with the bridge.

Estimated Project Cost: \$650,000

Project Name (Nickname): Mount Anthony Road Bridge

Project Description: Removal of existing undersized culvert on Mt. Anthony Road and construction of new bridge.

Estimated Project Cost: \$400,000

Police Department Projects

Project Name (Nickname): 4-run Dog Kennel and Vehicle Impound Yard

Project Description: Build and maintain a 4-run kennel/small office on Town of Bennington property located off of Burgess Road. The kennel will provide the Bennington Animal Control Officer with a safe place to lodge/quarantine dogs. Estimated cost - \$35,000.00. Construct vehicle impound yard in same location. Estimated cost - \$10,000.

Estimated Project Cost: \$45,000

Project Name (Nickname): Firefighter Certification of Police Officers

Project Description: Cross train selected members of the Bennington Police Department as firefighters. The members will obtain Firefighter 1 certification and will be able to assist volunteer members of the Bennington Fire Department. Cost of training will be minimal. The purchase of turnout gear and necessary equipment is estimated at \$50,000.

Estimated Project Cost: \$50,000

Project Name (Nickname): PD Equipment Purchases and Upgrades

Project Description: The purchase of the following equipment:

Mobile radios - upgrade radios P-25 digital operation - 10 radios \$40,000 installed in police vehicles.

Portable Radios - upgrade radios P-25 Apex 4500 - 30 radios \$69,900 programmed and ready to use.

Body cameras and in car cameras. (Current cameras are five years old). Estimated cost to replace body cameras and in car cameras is \$150,000.

Radio console (replace/upgrade current console). Estimated cost is \$200,000.

Estimated Project Cost: See above.

Recreation, Parks, and Pathway Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Town Gymnasium

Project Description: There has long been a need for more gymnasium space in the community. Although the local school system has gymnasiums, their availability to the public is very limited for obvious reasons. The Town, perhaps in partnership with the Y, would like to provide at least one additional traditional gymnasium space. As noted above, the BennHi gymnasium could fill this need.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Ninja Trail

Project Description: The proposed path is 2.12 miles. It provides a safe bike/ped corridor between Downtown Bennington, the Northside Drive Commercial corridor, and the Village of North Bennington. The pathway begins on Hicks Avenue at the existing pedestrian bridge and ends at the intersection of VT Route 67A/College Drive/Silk Road/Matteson Road. From there, pedestrians and cyclists can reach the Village of North Bennington via Bennington College's paths and low-speed roads.

Status: \$1 Million in State/Federal Grants have been secured. An update of the cost estimate using current pricing indicates that additional funding in the amount of \$1,300,000 will need to be secured. A bridge over the Walloomsac is estimated at \$1 Million dollars and is the most urgent need as it is essential to the project. Additional grant opportunities are being explored. Segments of paved path between Hicks Avenue and Harmon Road (behind Walmart) and between Bennington College entrance and the Hampton Inn have been constructed. Interim path (dirt and gravel) between the two completed segments is open for use. Preliminary plans for the construction of the remainder of the paved path have been approved by the State. The Town has now obtained all of the easements required for the project.

Estimated Project Cost: \$2.3 Million total - \$1.3 Million in additional funding needed.

Project Name (Nickname): Benmont Avenue Bike/Ped Improvements

Project Description: Improvements to make Benmont Avenue safer and more attractive for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, including significant changes to the Hunt Street intersection. The improvements will act as an extension of the Ninja Trail into Downtown Bennington.

Status: A total of \$559,000 in State/Federal Grants have been awarded. An update of the cost estimate using current pricing indicates that additional funding in the amount of \$525,000 will need to be secured. Additional grant opportunities are being explored. All easements have been obtained. Construction is scheduled for 2023 subject to the receipt of additional funding.

Estimated Project Cost: \$1.1 million total - \$540,000 in additional funding needed.

Project Name (Nickname): Sidewalk Repairs and Improvements

Project Description: Particularly downtown, repair/replace sidewalk sections to reduce trip hazards, buckled areas. Repair/replace downtown sidewalk brickwork.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Expansion/Interconnection of Local Pathway/Trail Network

Project Description: Multiple sections of pathways and trails to create connections between and extensions of Bennington's main existing and proposed Bike/Ped pathways and trails (Ninja, Rail/Trail, Benmont, East Road, BATS trails, etc.) to provide a comprehensive interconnected Bike/Ped pathway and trail network in Bennington.

Possible pathway/trail connections and extensions include the following:

- **Ninja Path Walloomsac short-cut**
 - Scenic short-cut from Hicks Ave. ped bridge to the existing path behind Walmart. For permitting reasons would likely be a simple gravel path. Low cost, high value project.
- **Ninja Path extension to Paper Mill Bridge or to Henry Bridge**
- **Orchard Rd. Connector Path**
 - Shared-use path on the east side of Orchard Rd. between the Molly Stark Elementary School and Northside Dr.
- **Benmont Ave./Rail Trail/North St. Connector Path**
 - Provides East-West connection (approximately from Leonard St. to Tasty Freeze/Beverage Den). Town has easement for a Benmont/Rail Trail connection, but not all the way across to North St. High priority project.
- **Kocher Dr. pedestrian crossing to (former) Kmart Plaza**
- **North St. Sidewalk Extension** (on west side near the Blue Benn)
- **Rail Trail Connector to Northside Dr.**
 - Could be on Waite Dr. or Emma St. or both
 - Connects Rail Trail to Northside Dr. and Ninja Path via Waite Dr. (One easement required).

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Mount Anthony Summit Trail and Lookout

Project Description: Construction of summit trail and lookout (including parking facility, wayfinding signs and marketing) on Mount Anthony in conjunction with Southwestern Vermont Healthcare and the Bennington Area Trail System. Possible funding sources include VOREC.

Estimated Project Cost: \$200,000

Project Name (Nickname): Public Arts Projects

Project Description: Installation throughout Town, especially in Town parks, of public art – sculptures, murals, etc.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Town Facilities Department Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Armory Building

Location: Franklin Lane (behind Town Office)

Project Description: Redevelopment of the Armory Building by the Town. The historic Armory Building located on Franklin Lane (behind the Town Office) adjacent to the Putnam Block will be conveyed to the Town after a new National Guard Readiness Center is constructed. The transfer is expected to occur within the next four years. The Town is beginning to consider municipal uses for the building including a State-of-the-Art meeting facility for public meetings and various municipal office and recreation and performance uses.

Estimated Project Cost: Unknown at this time.

Project Name: Renovations & Upgrades to the Recreation Center Facility

Description/Narrative: The Recreation Center Building is over 50 years old and is in need of renovations and upgrades of the Administrative Areas, Weight Room, Locker Rooms, and Basement Community Rooms. Scope of work would include meeting full ADA Accessibility Compliance; installing upgraded HVAC systems that includes Air Conditioning, De-humidification, and fresh air/air purification systems; and plumbing, electric, and lighting upgrades. The project would address current limitations and issues to include access limitations in the locker rooms; current humidity issues in the basement community rooms; and improve

energy efficiency throughout the building; improve the overall operations and functions of the facility.

Estimated Project Cost: \$400K to \$600K

Project Name: Air Quality Improvement & HVAC Upgrades - Town Office

Description/Narrative: The Town Office building is a historic home. The incorporation of a fresh air/air purification system as well as completing the installation of split unit HVAC heat pumps throughout the building will significantly improve air quality, health, and energy efficiency of HVAC systems in the Town Office.

Estimated Project Cost: \$150K - \$200K

Project Name: Air Quality Improvement & HVAC Upgrades Firehouse Company Rooms & Community Room

Description/Narrative: A multi-phase project to install mini-split unit HVAC heat pumps throughout the firehouse has started. Areas remaining to be completed are the Company Rooms (three total) and common third floor area. A fresh air/air purification system is not in place in the building. The third floor Community Room is the primary space for Town of Bennington public meetings. This project will significantly improve air quality, health, and energy efficiency of HVAC systems.

Estimated Project Cost: \$150K to \$200K

Project Name: Blacksmith Shop Building Exterior Historical Renovation

Description/Narrative: This project is to restore and preserve the historic structure. Once completed this would restore the full historical nature of the building and compliment the historic downtown structures.

Estimated Project Cost: \$250K

Project Name: Town Office Roof Replacement

Description/Narrative: The Town Office slate roof is approaching end of life within the next 10 years. Due to the Historic Nature of the Building a replacement slate roof and/or equivalent slate replica material roof should be installed.

Estimated Project Cost: \$200K - \$225K

Project Name (Nickname): Support for Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, and other “Green” Infrastructure Projects

Project Description: Possible projects include the installation of vehicle charging stations, energy efficiency upgrades of Town buildings, adding electric/hybrid vehicles to Town fleet, Supporting renewable energy production on town lands and approved sites, etc.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Improvement of Downtown Streetscape, Infrastructure, Facades

Project Name (Nickname): Improvements to Downtown Streetscape, Infrastructure, and Facades

Project Description: The Better Bennington Corporation has identified the following improvements, programs, initiatives:

Putnam Square

Traffic Signals

- Paint signal poles black
- Replace/modernize signal system with rigid suspension
- Replace system with ground-mounted installation

Curbing and sidewalks

- Power wash, reset and replace granite curb as needed
- Reset and level all brick paved areas with improved sub-base
- Improve corner drainage, especially SE
- Straighten or replace damaged planting bed curbs
- Refurbish kiosk, installed original-design signage, install video information system
- Repair/replace clock base
- Install permanent granite crosswalks
- Enhance and define Square with granite surface

Facades

- Install appropriate architectural façade lighting historic buildings
- Renovate first floor bank façade – windows, flashing and entry

Streetscape, General

Tree Program

- Develop comprehensive tree plan, study locations
- Consider linden replacement
- Redefine tree beds
- Consider tree grates and/or tree guards

Curbing and Sidewalks

- Reset granite curbs as needed, replace broken
- Substantial repaving as needed
- Reset and level all brick paved areas with improved sub-base

- Install permanent granite crosswalks
- Install new bollards at all crosswalks and bulb outs, consider permanent installation of new lamppost bollards

Alleyways and Access Points

- Treat downtown accessways on a level equaling streetscape quality
- Create “portals” to identify access points
- Insure accessibility and safety

Bennington in Bloom

- Develop comprehensive plan for expansion and enhancement, In particular town entrance ways
- Develop and implement plans for bridge installations
- Obtain additional hardware (pole brackets, etc.)
- Replenish/replace concrete planters

Street Furnishings

- Assess need for additional trash receptacles and coverage area
- Repair damaged existing metal benches
- Develop bench placement policy
- Purchase additional benches, receptacles as required

Street Art/Sculpture Installations

- Develop Street Art program in conjunction with the Bennington Area Arts Council and the Better Bennington Corporation
- Seek artist proposals for established juried selection process
- Fund selected installations including sculpture and murals at selected sites

Façades

Façade Standards

- Develop façade improvement standards in conjunction with the Historic Preservation Commission and the Better Bennington Corporation

Façade Improvement Program

- Develop Community Development Program in conjunction with the Better Bennington Corporation
- Provide free design consultation
- Fund approved projects through grant and loan programs

Public Parking Lots

Function and Capacity

- Improve identity and traffic flow patterns
- Analyze capacity needs, particularly in regard to future development
- Incorporate private lots into unified public system

Ped Access and Enhancement

- Provide pedestrian amenities providing safe and welcoming environments including accessibility and bollard protection
- Develop and execute plans for street furniture and landscaping
- Provide information and wayfinding at access points

Walloomsac Riverwalk

Assessment and Planning

- Develop short- and long-range plan for enhanced use and improvements (analysis in progress)
- Widen/pave original section, repave other sections as needed
- Resolve drainage and erosion issues

- Thin bank vegetation in selected areas, address/replant cherry trees
- Install new lighting systems in the three easterly sections
- Replace existing benches with new, extend along the walkway
- Improve and enhance street crossings, improving safety
- Repurpose westerly section, develop seamless link to rail-trail
- Extend easterly through Energizer, connect to East Main

Depot Street/Washington Avenue

Enhance to Downtown Core Esthetic

- Develop master plan for comprehensive improvements anticipating development opportunities
- Expand downtown tree program to both streets
- Extend downtown street furnishings, lighting, bollards as referenced under streetscape
- Explore options for overhead utility services
- Reduce existing and potential concrete environment
- Enhance Putnam Phase II environment and access
- Reduce negative impacts, enhance downtown entry

Wayfinding/Street Signs

Execute Comprehensive Signage Program

- Refurbish Town entry signs, consider alternate sites
- Fabricate and install downtown signs to reflect expansion concept and enhance approach and identity
- Install downtown wayfinding to advertise attractions and enhance streetscape
- Explore and utilize on-line access to information on the street
- Utilize "mini" kiosks to invite pedestrians into downtown from parking and peripheral areas
- End the practice of using the period lampposts as signposts
- Eliminate conflicts between regulatory signs and amenities
- Utilize grant opportunities and municipal funding

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Town Administration Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Computer Hardware Upgrade

Project Description: New computers to include desktops, laptops, iPads, and Wi-Fi printers
Town wide w/built in video and microphone capabilities that not only allow us to work remotely and safely but can utilize the benefits/speed of FIBER network.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Main Server Upgrade

Project Description: Replace computer server. One of our two main servers is un-supported.

Estimated Project Cost: \$15,000

Project Name (Nickname): Software Upgrades

Project Description:

Time and Attendance System

Status: Currently determining if feasible.

Timeline: Possibly in place by FY23

Cost Estimate: \$5,000-7,000 per year ongoing

General Notes: streamline time-keeping process, cloud-based/able to be used remotely, timekeeping rules will be standard for employee groups which can reduce union issues, more visibility to both employees and managers, able to schedule and have visibility of time off for all employees, reduce manual paper tracking, reduce delays due to manual approval process, reduction of phone calls/in person discussion between payroll clerk and managers, project tracking of labor and equipment used for billable work, grant or other projects, etc.

Payroll System (linked to Time & Attendance)

Status: Not yet researched, but discussed often as very related to Time & Attendance

Timeline: As soon as possible after implementing a time & attendance system

Cost Estimate: \$3,000-4,000 (estimate) per year ongoing

General Notes: streamline payroll process, cloud-based/able to be used remotely, further reduction to manual paper tracking, no manual data entry by payroll clerk, much better reporting capabilities, instant access to employees to update optional deductions, banking, w-4 information, etc.

Human Resource System (linked to Payroll and Time & Attendance)

Status: Not yet researched, but discussed often as very related to Time & Attendance

Timeline: ???

Cost Estimate: \$6,000-\$8,000 per year ongoing

General Notes: Cloud-based/able to be used remotely. This would be the next logical step to complete the payroll and time and attendance project. Our system for hiring, employee benefits, annual reviews, is completely paper-based and takes an extremely long time.

Automating these processes would free up the Human Resource Manager to deal with actual HR issues instead of paperwork.

Budgeting, Financial Reporting and Transparency Software

Status: Researching and speaking with sale people

Timeline: ???

Cost Estimate: \$20,000-\$25,000 per year ongoing

General Notes: Cloud-based/able to be used remotely. Modernize our budgeting process, reduce time needed and human error, increase communication/visibility between managers, budget change tracking and required approval process, instant what-if scenarios, enhanced reporting, and ability to make data available to the public.

Estimated Project Cost: See above

Other Projects

Project Name (Nickname): Public Sanitation Facility

Project Description: Public restrooms and shower facility accessible 24/7 for public use. Sanitation facilities can also serve as a hub for information, wi-fi access, recharging and waste disposal. Opportunity with Bennington Regional Planning Commission and Homeless Health Equity Grant for assessment/planning to inform need, spending priorities and local operational capacity.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Expanding Services at Bennington Free Clinic and/or Schools

Project Description: Supporting dental, medical, mental health and substance use services available to uninsured/under insured individuals in Bennington.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

Project Name (Nickname): Bus and Car Share Expansion

Project Description: Support more frequent bus service and the creation of a car share service (Zip car, etc.) in Town.

Estimated Project Cost: \$???

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Eligible Uses of Funds

ARPA includes four broad criteria outlining eligible uses:

- To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;**
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;**
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and**
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.**



MEMORANDUM

To: Dan Monks, Assistant Town Manager

From: David G. White, White + Burke
Stephanie Clarke, White + Burke
Dominic Cloud, City of St. Albans

Date: December 15, 2021

Re: Bennington Economic Development – Preliminary Findings & Recommendations

Introduction

Over the past few months, we have collected information from the Town, toured the TIF District and other key properties, met with local stakeholders, and reviewed materials. Thus far, our impression is as follows:

1. Bennington has had some solid successes in the past several years that did not require large amounts of public investment.
2. There is more ambient background growth naturally occurring than in many other parts of the state.
3. There are several strategic development opportunities currently pending where the Town's direct participation could make the difference between a successful project and another good idea that never got off the ground.
4. ARPA funds are restricted to a limited range of uses. Analysis should be done on a project-by-project basis regarding whether a given project may be eligible.
5. Tax Increment Financing offers the most potential for providing the public support to bring these projects to fruition.
6. Housing demand (at all levels) is high and can provide substantial ballast for the TIF district to accomplish mixed use and non-housing development projects.

Priority Projects

We recommend starting with the most shovel-ready initiatives with active players at the table, and then building momentum to the more complex projects requiring a heavier Town lift. As can be seen on the attached matrix, we suggest a new tier system for the needs and ideas shared by the Town. Tier 1 projects are those with a near-term opportunity, players at the table, and a possible role for the Town. We believe these will create the momentum needed to implement an effective economic development initiative and maximize the use of TIF. The three priority projects that separate themselves from the field are Benn High, Downtown Grocery Store, and Putnam II.

Benn High Redevelopment

Benn High seems ripe for the Town to participate directly and launch this project from the drawing board to the permitting office and construction. Success at Benn High would demonstrate the power of Tax Increment Financing and inspire voter confidence in future, more complicated projects. It might also generate some increment that can be used to fund planning and predevelopment work on future projects.

Whether subsidized, market rate, or a combination, the majority of Benn High redevelopment would likely be housing. But the potential to include recreational and senior services as a part of the ground floor build-out to complement the residential component creates the opportunity for a public-private partnership that can spread risk, liability, and cleanup costs over a wider base. The Town could fund a series of tasks such as land acquisition, site development, cleanup, fit-up, and other capital costs by qualifying as a public facility under TIF. The remainder of the building could be renovated as housing, either affordable or market rate or a mix of both.

Affordable units can typically pay more toward development costs but pay lower taxes; market rate units can typically pay less up front but more in taxes over the long haul. The two different ownership scenarios would impact the incremental property tax revenue, so the Town would need to calculate how much of the up-front cost of the recreational and senior space could be financed with TIF as a public facility. But this project strikes us as a perfect opportunity to kick off the TIF District and give the property the boost it needs to get it in motion.

A development agreement could be negotiated with the developer calling for the private development to be completed no later than a certain date and at no less than a certain

grand list value. With a known date when the value would hit the grand list, we can determine how much bonded debt the incremental taxes could support. For example, if there are 40 residential units worth \$150,000 each, it would support about \$2 million in debt. This debt could be a substantial portion of the funds used to buy and renovate the east wing for the community uses. If other funding sources can be found to help, it could reduce the amount of TIF support that is ultimately necessary.

Through the development agreement, this project could be tightly packaged in a way that has little risk for the Town and local taxpayers. The Town would not incur any debt until and unless the private project was ready to proceed and contractually bound to do so. Voters could be shown how TIF funding fosters development without increasing their taxes.

Downtown Grocery Store

The effort to locate a new grocery store in the downtown may need support from the Town to close the financial gap and may also require the political and project management capacity the Town can provide. It is a worthwhile economic development initiative. A strong board and the existing momentum rise it into the group of top priorities. We understand the group has signed a LOI for the Laflamme property. We agree this may be the best site due to location, functionality, parking, and size.

ARPA funding should be explored for this project. ARPA funds, both the Town's allocation and possibly through the state's Capital Investment Program, are targeted to specific uses (see ARPA discussion below). This project may be eligible, given the conventional food scarcity within walking distance of downtown and the disproportionate impact of COVID on Bennington County. The State's CIP funds may be exhausted by the time this project is ready to apply, but there is already talk about additional dollars being allocated to this program.

We are not aware of any public infrastructure barrier for this project, so TIF may not have a role. However, the Town can play a considerable role through staff support to assist with researching grants and low interest loans, as well as preparing applications for such funding. USDA, SBA, and VEDA programs, all of which are briefly discussed in the appendices, may be helpful.

Putnam – Phase II

All our conversations with Putnam stakeholders paint the same picture. New investors and funding sources will be needed, including significant public subsidy. On the positive side, there is a track record to point to; housing demand has never been stronger; and there is the potential to scale up the project by adding additional units to overcome some of the hurdles.

The Town could be a pivotal part of getting the block completed. After a preliminary review of the financial summary, public investment in Putnam seems to be both necessary and offer the potential for substantial incremental tax revenue. If Putnam II could generate approximately \$20 million in incremental grand list value, that could likely service \$5-7 million in TIF debt, paid from the project's new incremental taxes. Much of Putnam II's increment might be needed to bring Putnam II to fruition, but it could also be a source of increment for the rest of the district to fund other economic development initiatives. It also raises a series of questions that need to be explored, such as 'what is the Town's appetite for managing a parking resource and how does it fit within the Town's overall parking management program?'

But \$20 million increment will require roughly \$45 million in private investment. That is a large project and one that may need to be split among multiple developers. The more the Town can use its governmental powers to absorb the elements that make the project less attractive, the easier it will be to attract private developers, and for them to spend their money on things that create increment and tax base for all.

If the Town is willing to consider a larger role in the project, there are a series of questions to explore with M&S Development in order to understand the financial gap and how best to fill it.

Flexibility

While at present the above three projects appear to be the readiest, in economic development it is important to be ever flexible and respond to changing opportunities. Perhaps unexpected stumbling blocks will arise that halt one of these projects. Maybe other possibilities will gain momentum they don't appear to have today. New ideas may

come forth. Our economy fosters such shifts and effective economic development efforts must be prepared to respond and assist private initiative.

Using TIF to Advance the Projects

It has been our experience that the quickest path to economic development in smaller downtowns like Bennington is typically to support the private sector and eliminate barriers to development through property acquisition, parking, and environmental remediation. These are steps that put the municipality in the driver's seat with direct investment and in partnership with the developer that enables development to happen quicker and, in a manner more consistent with the Town's vision.

In order to pursue this approach, the existing TIF plan would need to be amended through the substantial change process. This amendment is necessary anyway due to a pending deadline. But the new plan implicitly envisions a different role for the Town. The new role envisions the Town as a critical player in advancing the projects and without whom the projects can't happen.

We understand that TIF Districts can be burdensome to administer. But, in our experience, the cost is well worth the benefit. Using TIF, the Town could unlock approximately \$7 million in funds that can be used to advance priority development projects that align with the Town's redevelopment vision. Without the infusion of those funds, the three projects above seem likely to linger on the drawing board.

Financial Considerations

In preparation for a substantial change application, we would identify a funding source to cover the debt service until the increment is produced. This is a common problem in TIFs since it is typically three to five years from project conception to the point where it is creating increment. Typically, this is handled by some form of borrowing, either directly from the bank or from a Town reserve fund, and those funds are then replenished when the increment arrives. This delay is addressed within the financial model and can address any short-term decrement that has arisen. Many communities that choose to pursue Tax Increment Financing realized they needed to take a stronger role in economic development due to a flat or eroding grand list.

Utilizing ARPA for Economic Development

ARPA can be an important tool for economic development in a) Qualified Census Tracts and/or, b) when serving “disproportionately impacted... populations, households, or geographic areas impacted by the pandemic”.

Bennington’s 2022 QCT does not match up with the location of the contemplated projects in the core of downtown, thus eliminating that path for the priority projects. Regarding the second path, the law does not specify how to measure “disproportionate impact”. If it can be shown that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact in the downtown area and/or that the specific projects will serve disproportionately impacted populations or households, they may be ARPA eligible. For example, some of the programs contemplated for public uses at Benn High, such as the senior center or meals program may serve disproportionately impacted populations.

The law limits ARPA funds to the following uses:

- To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

ARPA may be a good fit to address infrastructure needs of the Town. With this context, you will see that we have broken out the list of concepts provided by the Town into economic development and infrastructure project types. Both categories are important in a successful community. The infrastructure improvements for running and supporting the Town (i.e., computer hardware and rec center facility upgrades) are part of a solid capital investment plan and require a prioritization strategy of their own.

The town should continue to evaluate use of ARPA funds as more information emerges regarding eligible uses, and especially regarding how to measure “disproportionate impact”. In any instance when the Town intends to use ARPA funds, the eligibility should be carefully documented. Particularly if the Town is relying on “disproportionate

impact” to justify the use of ARPA funds, the Town should do the research to determine whether the population or area being served has been disproportionately impacted by Covid and should retain the supporting data in its records.

Other Funding Sources

There are numerous federal, state, and private sources for funding economic development and downtown revitalization. There is no one program or group of programs that can be said to be best for Bennington. Our experience is that economic development does not begin with financing programs, rather it begins with identifying one or more specific development projects and then exploring which funding programs may be suitable for those specific projects.

Each funding program or source has its own eligibility requirements, financing terms, and limitations. Consequently, one should begin with the project and then build the financing that makes most sense for it.

In the appendices we provide brief descriptions of many of the available sources of funding. This includes most of the major sources but is not intended to be comprehensive.

Remember this: first identify the project, then seek the funding.

Next Steps

Imagine what downtown Bennington would look like in ten years with the Benn High, Downtown Grocery Store, and Putnam II projects complete. Now imagine Bennington in ten years if none of those projects are complete. The greatest likelihood of achieving the former vision is using the transformative power of TIF.

To use TIF, Bennington needs to amend the TIF District plan to focus on the above projects and get this approved through the substantial change process. We understand that internal capacity is limited, so additional consultant support will be critical. Once this is approved by VEPC, the Town can ask the voters to authorize the borrowing of funds to advance the projects as outlined in the plan. Funds would be used to obtain site control of key properties, pay for the consultants to assemble the projects, and the professional services to determine redevelopment costs. These voter-approved, borrowed funds can reimburse funds advanced to prepare the substantial change application.



Appendix of Town-Identified Needs and Ideas

We have characterized the other prospective development projects and developable sites as Tier 3 level priorities. These Tier 3 projects seem more speculative in nature (some more than others) and the Town needs to be prudent about the time and resources being devoted to each one. We intentionally did not assign any Tier 2 priorities because we think there should be a discussion with the Town to move only the most viable to Tier 2, requiring some Town resources. Of course, with all economic development work, should any one of these projects gain traction and there is a role for the Town, that project would ascend the list in terms of importance.

The properties identified as Tier 4 were part of the original TIF Plan, but it is unclear what barriers exist that the Town could address to incent further development there. In addition, there are three properties that do not seem to have any burgeoning opportunity or needs from the Town, and thus have been marked 'None.'

As mentioned previously, the other initiatives and needs are marked as town infrastructure. While these are important efforts, they will not be addressed as part of our scope. Our scope is focused on economic development initiatives and prioritizing what could be most catalytic and most feasible in the near term. While there are many needs in the community and many opportunities, we focused on the low hanging fruit that would have the highest return on investment and tracked closest to the Town's long term strategic goals.

Bennington Needs and Ideas

Compiled 10/11/21, updated 12/15/21

Project Name	Description	Recommendation	
		Priority Recc	Project Type
Putnam Block Phase II	Project with plans	Tier 1	Econ Dev
Benn High	Project with plans	Tier 1	Econ Dev
Downtown Food Market	Needed use	Tier 1	Econ Dev
Alcaro/LaFlamme's Building	Developable site	Tier 1	Econ Dev
Friendly's Building	Developable site	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Downtown Hardware Store	Needed use	Tier 3	Econ Dev
People's Bank Building	From TIF Plan	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Catamount School	Project with plans	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Tuttle Lot	Developable site	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Energizer	Developable site	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Everett Estate (SVC Campus)	Developable site	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Bennington Brush	Project with plans	Tier 3	Econ Dev
Cone Building	From TIF Plan	Tier 4	Econ Dev
Nichols Building	From TIF Plan	Tier 4	Econ Dev
Ritchie Block	From TIF Plan	Tier 4	Econ Dev
Greenawalt Lot	From TIF Plan	Tier 4	Econ Dev
Sleeman Lot	From TIF Plan	Tier 4	Econ Dev
120 Depot Street	From TIF Plan	Tier 4	Econ Dev
Expanded Revolving Loan Programs	Initiative	TBD	Econ Dev
Purchase by Municipality of Blighted Properties	Initiative	TBD	Econ Dev
Harte Block	From TIF Plan	None	None
Banner Building	From TIF Plan	None	None
Old Drysdale Building	From TIF Plan	None	None
Armory Building	Project with plans	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Improvements to Streetscape, Infra, Facades	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Wastewater Dept Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Water Dept Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Highway Dept Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Police Dept Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Rec, Parks & Pathway Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Town Facilities Dept Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Town Admin Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure
Other Proj	Infrastructure	N/A	Town Infrastructure



Project Funding Sources

For downtown development projects in Vermont to be viable they typically require numerous financing sources. Depending on the specific project, there are myriad funding programs that may be considered, each with its own eligibility requirements, benefits, constraints, and application process. Some funding sources may work for one project, but not another. Consequently, consideration of funding begins with understanding the project in detail, including its location, uses, anticipated tenants, population(s) being served, whether it's a brownfield, new construction or historic renovation, whether there is any missing or inadequate public infrastructure holding it back, and numerous other considerations specific to each project. Once these are well understood, one can begin looking at possible sources of funding.

I) Powerful Programs for Economic Development

In broad terms two of the most powerful financing programs are Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and New Market Tax Credits (NMTC). Both are limited to specific defined geographic areas. Fortunately, much of downtown Bennington is eligible for both.

a) Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

TIF can be used to finance public improvements *that directly support or incentivize private development*. Because it only uses *new incremental taxes that would not otherwise exist*, it finances public investment without increasing property taxes.

TIF cannot be used for operating expenses or for a municipality's general capital needs. Public improvements financed with TIF to incentivize private investment may include utilities, transportation improvements, public facilities and amenities, and site preparation for development or redevelopment including acquisition, demolition, and environmental remediation of contaminated property. TIF funds cannot be directly invested in private development projects.

Experience with TIF in Vermont shows that often it can be powerfully used to leverage private development through site preparation investments described above and through development or expansion of public parking.

b) New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)

NMTC is a federal program that provides tax credits for certain investments. It is one of the most powerful sources of funding for private investments in NMTC's designated geographic areas. It typically can pay for 20% to 25% of the total project costs. That said, it is extremely complex and has very high transaction costs, which can reach \$500,000 or more. Due to NMTC's complexity and transaction costs, it is generally not used for small projects costing less than, say, \$10 million. It also has limited funds and is highly competitive. Obtaining NMTC awards for a project are not assured.

Due to the competitive nature and complexities, specialized professionals are typically required. Both for-profit and non-profit businesses are eligible for NMTC. Government entities can facilitate acquisition of NMTC funding for private businesses but are not themselves eligible to use NMTC.

II) Second Tier Programs for Economic Development

Calling these "second tier" may be misleading. For many projects these sources are critical. In fact, even for projects that use NMTC and/or TIF, most will also require one or more of these. Among the more important ones for general economic development projects are Opportunity Zones, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, brownfield remediation funding, and VEDA. Projects that include housing have their own list of significant funding sources.

a) Opportunity Zones (OZ)

Opportunity Zones help attract equity investment into private projects in designated geographic areas. Most of downtown Bennington is in an OZ. OZs are a federal program that provides a tax incentive for private parties to invest in eligible projects. An OZ investment allows an investor that has a capital gain from some other investment to defer the capital gains taxes if the proceeds are invested in an eligible OZ project. If all the rules are followed successfully, the capital gains are not only deferred, but also reduced. Moreover, if the investor leaves the investment in the OZ project for at least 10 years, no capital gains taxes are due on any gain from the OZ investment itself.

For the OZ project, the benefits are two-fold. First it helps attract needed equity. Second it marginally reduces the amount of return on investment the investor will require from the OZ project because a portion of the investor's return will come from reduced capital gains taxes. But in general, this should not be expected to make a dramatic difference in the project's cash flow.

b) Historic Preservation Tax Credits

Both the state and federal governments offer tax credits for renovation of historic buildings, so long as the renovations conform with the Secretary of the Interior's

standards for historic rehabilitation. For the right projects these are a valuable financing source.

c) Brownfield Funding

There are numerous programs that help pay for environmental remediation of contaminated sites. The amount of funding, requirements to be eligible, and process vary from time to time. In all cases of which we are aware, accessing these funds requires working closely with the VT Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to develop and implement a corrective action plan.

d) VEDA

The Vermont Economic Development Authority can be an excellent source of subordinate financing. This makes a project more attractive to a conventional lender by giving greater security. We have successfully used VEDA financing for downtown projects.

e) Other Sources

We are attaching an extensive list of other funding sources for projects in designated downtowns (of which Bennington is one) published by the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development. We are also including a list of additional funding sources we compiled that are not included in ACCD's publication.

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Historic Buildings

1

Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit*

State tax credit for qualified historic rehabilitation, façade, and code improvements for properties at least 30 years old and located within a state designated downtown or village center.

Range: 10 – 50% of eligible expenditures

Eligibility: Income-producing and nonprofit properties within a [state designated downtown or village center](#)

Deadline: Annually the first week of July

Contact: Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>

Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit

Federal tax credit for 20% of the rehabilitation costs (including labor, materials and architects or other consultant fees) for income-producing buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Range: 20% of eligible expenditures

Eligibility: Owners of income-producing historic buildings

Deadline: Rolling application deadline; file application before construction

Contact: Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov

Website: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>

State Historic Preservation Grants*

State 50:50 matching grants for the repair and restoration of historic buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Range: \$1,000 - \$20,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually the first week in October

Contact: Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>

Cultural Facilities Grant Program

Matching state grants for community facilities used to provide cultural activities to the public and to enhance or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural programming.

Range: \$1,000 - \$30,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually at the beginning of May

Contact: Michelle Bailey, (802) 828-3294, mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org

Website: <http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/cultural-facilities>

VHCB Outstanding Historic Building Grants*

Funding for acquisition or rehabilitation of "outstanding" historic buildings located in downtowns and village centers as determined by VHCB. Projects are protected by a historic preservation easement.

Range: Varies. Match required for locally significant historic projects; no match required for buildings of statewide significance, but matching funds make applications more competitive

Eligibility: Municipalities; nonprofit housing and conservation organizations

Deadline: Multiple, depending on the availability of funding; deadlines on VHCB website

Contact: Karen Freeman, (802) 828-5067, karen@vhcb.org

Website: <https://vhcb.org/our-programs/conservation/apply-for-funding>

Preservation Trust of Vermont

Implementation and planning grants available to preserve and rehabilitate historic buildings.

Range: Varies

Eligibility: Municipalities and nonprofit organizations

Deadline: Varies

Contact: Ben Doyle, (802) 839-9914, ben@ptvermont.org

Website: <https://ptvermont.org/grants/>

** Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.*

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Buildings and Infrastructure

2

Human Services and Educational Facilities Grant Program

Matching state grants for capital costs associated with the major maintenance, renovation, and development of facilities used for human services and health care, or educational opportunities.

Range: \$1,000 - \$25,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations Deadline: Annually in July

Contact: Judy Bruneau, (802) 828-3519, judy.bruneau@vermont.gov

Website: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

USDA Rural Development Programs

The USDA offers federal support for towns and villages through a variety of loan and grant programs aimed at enhancing rural quality of life through investing in housing, essential community facilities, municipal infrastructure, and economic development.

Range: Loan and grant support varies by program

Eligibility: Varies by program

Deadline: Varies by program

Contact: Misty Sinsigalli, (802) 622-4119, misty.sinsigalli@usda.gov

Website: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt>

Vermont Arts Council - Animating Infrastructure Grants

Animating Infrastructure Grants support community projects that integrate art with infrastructure improvements.

Range: Grants range from \$1,000 to \$15,000; no match required.

Eligibility: Projects must engage an artist to develop community projects that integrate public art with infrastructure

Deadline: Letters of intent due December 2020 with full proposals due March 2020.

Contact: Michele Bailey (802) 828-3294, mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org

Website: <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/animating-infrastructure>

ANR Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund*

State Revolving Loan to assist in the planning, design, and construction of municipal wastewater and stormwater systems. Details on various programs on website.

Range: No maximum or minimum project amount

Eligibility: Municipalities

Deadline: Accepted on a continuing basis for planning and design loans. Construction loans must apply by February 15 of each year to be on the priority list for the year.

Contact: Tom Brown, (802) 622-4205, thomas.brown@vermont.gov

Website: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/cwsrf>

ANR Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Construction Fund*

State Revolving Loan to assist in construction of public, private and nonprofit community water, wastewater and stormwater systems. Details on various programs on website.

Range: \$2,000,000 per funding cycle and \$6,000,000 cap for any one project. No minimum project amount.

Eligibility: Municipalities, private developers and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually in February

Contact: Celia Riechel (802) 585-4904, celia.riechel@vermont.gov

Website: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/dwsrf>

ANR Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Planning Fund*

State Revolving Loan to assist in the planning and design of public, private and nonprofit community water, wastewater and stormwater systems. Details on various programs on website.

Range: \$100,000 maximum. No minimum project amount

Eligibility: Municipalities, non-profit organizations and private developers

Deadline: Accepted on a continuing basis.

Contact: Celia Riechel (802) 585-4904, celia.riechel@vermont.gov

Website: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/dwsrf-water-planning-loan>

** Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.*

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Transportation and Housing

3

Sales Tax Reallocation Program*

Municipalities and the developer of a qualified project jointly apply for a reallocation of sales taxes on construction materials. Qualified projects must be located within a state designated downtown.

Range: Based on sales tax generated in excess of \$100,000 to \$1M depending on the size of municipality

Eligibility: Joint application between municipality and developer located within Designated Downtown

Deadline: Annually the first week of July

Contact: Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/sales-tax-reallocation>

Vermont Community Development Program (CDBG)*

Accessibility Modification Grants – Federal grants to bring existing municipal buildings and non-school libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Implementation Grants – Federal grants for economic development, housing, public facilities, and public services that will benefit low to moderate income individuals, eliminate slums or blight, or address an urgent need.

Planning Grants – Federal grants for community development planning, downtown planning studies, and project development to benefit people with low to moderate incomes and/or eliminate “slums and blight.”

Scattered Site Grants – Federal grants to rehabilitate scattered site housing projects to benefit people with low to moderate incomes and/or eliminate “slums and blight.”

Range: \$3,000 - \$1,000,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and/or municipalities on behalf of organizations and private owners

Deadline: Open application with funding decisions made throughout the year

Contact: Cindy Blondin, (802) 828-5219, cindy.blondin@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>

Downtown Transportation Fund*

State grants for municipalities to finance transportation-related capital improvements in support of economic development, within or serving a state designated downtown, including construction or alteration of roads and highways, parking facilities, pedestrian and streetscape improvement, rail or bus facilities or equipment, and underground relocation of electric utility, cable and telecommunications lines.

Range: 50% of overall project costs up to maximum of \$100,000

Eligibility: Municipalities with a Designated Downtown Deadline: Annually in March

Contact: Gary Holloway, (802) 522-2444, gary.holloway@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/downtown-transportation-fund>

VTrans Transportation Alternative Program*

State matching grants for the construction, planning, and design of bike and pedestrian facilities (on or off road), sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, lighting, and others.

Range: \$50,000 - \$300,000. Local match of 20% for construction and scoping studies

Eligibility: Municipalities, transit agencies, school district, and regional planning commissions

Deadline: Annually in November

Contact: Scott Robertson, (802) 793-2395, scott.robertson@vermont.gov

Website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>

VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program*

State matching grants for the scoping, design, and construction of bike and pedestrian facilities, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, crosswalks, shared-use paths, and lighting.

Range: No minimum or maximum range. Local match of 20% for construction, 50% for state-funded small scale construction grants; and 20% for scoping projects

Eligibility: Municipalities, transit agencies, school district, and regional planning commissions

Deadline: Annually in July

Contact: Jon Kaplan, (802) 498-4742, jon.kaplan@vermont.gov

Website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>

** Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.*

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Recreation and Conservation

4

ANR Recreational Trails Grant Program

Matching state 80/20 grants for the maintenance, restoration, design and construction of recreational trails. Both motorized and non-motorized trail projects may qualify for RTP funds.

Range: Maximum of \$50,000. Local match of 20%

Eligibility: Municipalities, non-profit organizations, and other governmental entities may apply.

Deadline: Annually February 1st. Mandatory pre-applications due in December

Contact: Sherry Winnie, (802) 760-8450, sherry.winnie@vermont.gov

Website: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program>

BGS Recreational Facilities Grants Program

State matching 50/50 grants for the development and creation of community recreational opportunities.

Range: \$1,000 - \$25,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually in July

Contact: Judy Bruneau, (802) 828-3519, judy.bruneau@vermont.gov

Website: <http://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

ANR Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program

State grants for the design and construction projects that target nonpoint sources of pollution that cause or contribute to the state's surface waters.

Range: Maximum of \$250,000. Local match varies

Eligibility: Municipalities, regional organizations, non-profits associations, citizen groups, and state agencies

Deadline: Two rounds annually, varies depending on funding

Contact: Allison Lewis, (802) 490-6124, allison.lewis@vermont.gov

Website: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/cwi/grants/opportunities>

ANR Caring for Canopy Grant Program

State 50/50 matching grants to help communities care for tree canopy by taking the necessary actions to developing and sustaining a community-wide tree program, including tree plantings, inventories, maintenance, and planning.

Range: \$500 - \$5,000. Local match of 50%

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profits associations

Deadline: Annually in January

Contact: Elise Schadler, (802) 522-6015, elise.schadler@vermont.gov

Website: <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/programs/financial-assistance/caring-canopy-grants>

ANR Land and Water Conservation Fund

Assists in acquiring land for parks and public outdoor recreation, as well as the development of new facilities and/or renovations of existing facilities or outdoor recreation.

Range: Not specified. Local match of 50%

Eligibility: Municipalities

Deadline: Annually in February, pre-applications due in the fall

Contact: Jessica Savage, (802) 828-1399, jessica.savage@vermont.gov

Website: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/land-and-water-conservation-fund>

VHCB Local Conservation Projects*

Local conservation projects for agricultural and recreational land, town parks and forests, swimming holes, green- ways, and historic buildings for public use.

Range: Up to \$150,000. Match required, at least 33%

Eligibility: Municipalities, eligible non-profit organizations and certain state agencies

Deadline: Multiple, depending on the availability of funding; deadlines on VHCB website

Contact: Ethan Parke, (802) 828-0795, ethan@vhcb.org

Website: <https://vhcb.org/our-programs/conservation/apply-for-funding>

** Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.*

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Economic Development, Planning, and Efficiency

5

Northern Border Regional Commission Grants*

A federal/state partnership that invests in economic and community development projects in Vermont.

Range: Grants up to \$250,000. Match of 20%-50% of total project cost, depending on location.

Eligibility: Participating member states, local governments (city and county), nonprofit and Native American entities

Deadline: Annually in June

Contact: Kristie Farnham, (802) 398-5268, kristie.farnham@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Border-Regional-Commission>

BGS Regional Economic Development Grant Program

Matching state grants to stimulate the creation and development or retention of economic development of individual or regional Vermont communities.

Range: \$1,000 - \$25,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually in July

Contact: Judy Bruneau, (802) 828-3519, judy.bruneau@vermont.gov

Website: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

Certified Local Government Program

Federal grants available for resource identification and planning, National Register nominations, downtown planning, public education, archeological studies, and building feasibility studies.

Range: \$500 - \$25,000

Eligibility: Municipalities that are enrolled as Certified Local Governments

Deadline: Annually in December

Contact: Devin Colman, (802) 585-8246, devin.colman@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/clg-grants>

VTrans Park and Ride Grant Program

Supports the engineering and construction of small municipal owned park and ride facilities to reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles on the roadway.

Range: No minimum or maximum range

Eligibility: Municipalities. Location must be on a municipal, state or leased property on or near a state highway

Deadline: Annually, in August

Contact: Tina Bohl, (802) 793-1743, tina.bohl@vermont.gov

Website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/parkandrides>

Efficiency Vermont Incentives*

Efficiency Vermont offers technical assistance, incentives, and financing for energy-related projects for homeowners and businesses seeking to use less energy, save money, and support a clean energy future.

Range: Varies by program.

Eligibility: Homeowners and business owners. Contact us for details

Deadline: Ongoing, no deadline

Contact: Customer Support, (888)-921-5990, info@efficiencyvermont.com

Website: <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates>

Vermont Community Foundation

A variety of grants are available to support projects to improve environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, social justice, historic preservation, and vitality of Vermont communities

Range: Up to \$25,000. No local match required

Eligibility: Municipalities, nonprofit organizations, grant availability varies by geographic area

Deadline: Varies by grant, throughout the year

Contact: Sarah Waring (802) 388-3355 x 283, swaring@vermontcf.org

Website: <http://www.vermontcf.org/Nonprofits/AvailableGrants.aspx>

** Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.*

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Planning and Financing

6

Municipal Planning Grant Program*

State grants for a wide range of municipal planning projects including municipal land use plans, zoning and subdivision bylaws, designated downtown, village and neighborhood planning.

Range: \$2,500 - \$20,000. Local match required

Eligibility: Municipalities with adopted plans confirmed by their regional planning commission

Deadline: Annually in September

Contact: Jennifer Lavoie, (802) 828-1948, jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Provides grants to implement long-term hazard mitigation actions that reduce structure damage or loss of life due to natural disasters. Examples include upsizing culverts, floodproofing buildings and mitigation planning.

Range: No minimum or maximum. Local match of 25%

Eligibility: Municipalities, state agencies, regional planning agencies, non-profits in select circumstances. Eligible entities on behalf of private owners.

Deadline: Funding available after a major disaster declaration. Rolling application deadlines

Contact: Ben Rose, 802-241-5386, ben.rose@vermont.gov

Website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/funding/mitigation>

VTrans/ACCD Better Connections Program*

State 90/10 matching grants for planning that align land use planning and community revitalization with transportation investments.

Range: No minimum. Maximum is \$67,500. Local match of 10%

Eligibility: Municipalities, located outside of Chittenden County with a confirmed planning process

Deadline: Fall 2020. Pre-application meetings conducted prior to December 31

Contact: Jackie Cassino, (802) 272-2368, jackie.cassino@vermont.gov or Richard Amore, richard.amore@vermont.gov

Website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>

Vermont State Infrastructure Bank

State low interest loan program for the construction or reconstruction of highways, roads and bridges, and pedestrian facilities, as well as certain capital facilities related to rail transit, public transit or electric vehicle charging stations.

Range: No minimum or maximum range. Loan term may not exceed 30 years and requires borrower equity of 10-20%.

Eligibility: Municipalities, Regional Development Corporations, or political subdivisions of the state or private sector companies that have entered into a contract with a public authority.

Deadline: No deadline, ongoing loan program

Contact: Cassie Polhemus, (802) 828-5627, cpolhemus@veda.org

Website: <http://www.veda.org/financing-options/other-financing-option/state-infrastructure-bank-program/>

VEDA Commercial Loan Programs

Low interest loans are available to for profit and non-profit companies to finance downtown revitalization projects under VEDA's Direct Loan Program and its Vermont Small Business Loan Program.

Range: Loans for 40% of project costs to a maximum of \$1.5 million or for \$2 million on renewable energy projects

Eligibility: Projects involving redevelopment of vacant or significantly under-utilized buildings or lots in downtowns or villages that spur employment and economic vitality

Deadline: No deadline, ongoing loan program

Contact: Thomas Porter, (802) 828-5627, tporter@veda.org

Website: <http://www.veda.org/financing-options/>

Brownfield Revitalization Fund*

Grants and loans for remediation of brownfield sites.

Range: Grants are capped at \$200,000

Eligibility: Municipalities, non-profit organizations and private developers

Deadline: Rolling

Contact: Kristie Farnham, (802) 398-5268, kristie.farnham@vermont.gov

Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/brownfields-initiative>

** Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.*

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444

Designated Downtown and Village Centers

Funding Directory - Planning, Placemaking, and Capacity Building

7

VNRC's Small Grants for Smart Growth*

Provides seed money for community-based initiatives related to smart growth, including efforts related to housing, transportation, community revitalization, conservation, public participation, and advocacy.

Range: \$500 - \$1,500.

Eligibility: Local or multi-town entities, such as a municipality, municipal commission or committee; non-profit organization; or citizens group that is either working with a non-profit or seeking 501(c)(3) status

Deadline: Rolling throughout year

Contact: Kate McCarthy, (802) 223-2328, x. 114, kmccarthy@vnrc.org

Website: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-small-growth/>

AARP Vermont Placemaking Projects for Changing the Built Environment Grants*

Provides funding for small projects that will employ temporary or semi-permanent changes with the goal of leading to permanent change to enhance the livability of the community for people of all ages and abilities.

Range: Up to \$3,000

Eligibility: Statewide, regional and local government entities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually in the spring

Contact: Kelly Stoddard Poor, (802) 393-9187, kstoddardpoor@aarp.org

Website: <https://states.aarp.org/vermont/>

Vermont Council of Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visits

The Community Visit program is a way for towns to engage and bring together their residents, set common goals, and directions in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals.

The Community Visit program, provided at no cost to communities by VCRD, gets citizens engaged in *workingfortheir* communities and connects them to the resources they need to be successful.

Range: Municipal commitment to a community dinner and mailing

Eligibility: Vermont communities

Deadline: Rolling throughout the year

Contact: Jenna Koloski, (802) 225-6091, jenna@vtrural.org

Website: <https://www.vtrural.org/programs/community-visits/about>

Local Motion

Local Motion is Vermont's statewide advocate for active transportation, vibrant communities, and safe streets. The organization provides technical assistance to communities and helps build local capacity, advocates for safer, more livable streets at the local and state level, and teaches bike skills to students and adults.

Eligibility: Vermont communities

Contact: Karen Yacos, info@localmotion.org or (802) 861-2700

Website: <https://www.localmotion.org/>

* Grant program awards priority consideration for state designation.

For more information, please contact:

Richard Amore: richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802.585.0061

Gary Holloway: gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802.522.2444



Project Funding Sources and Techniques
to Supplement ACCD's
Funding Directory for Designated Downtowns and Village
Centers

December 2021

I. General Economic Development Funding Programs

- 1) **US Department of Agriculture (USDA).** USDA has a number of programs that can potentially support economic development projects in downtowns. These include Rural Business Development Grants, Rural Cooperative Development Grants, Business and Industry Loan Guarantees, Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program and more.
- 2) **US Small Business Administration (SBA).** The SBA has at least two programs that can be used for some projects – 504 loans and 7(a) loans.
- 3) **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.** This is the approximately \$1 trillion funding program passed by congress and signed by the President in November 2021. It is focused on hard infrastructure projects. Little specifics are known yet. But this should be watched closely for possible uses in downtown.
- 4) **VT Capital Investment Program.** The VT Legislature passed Act 74 which established the Capital Investment Program to make funding available for transformational projects that will provide each region of the State with the opportunity to attract and retain businesses, create jobs, and invest in their communities by encouraging capital investments. Visit the ACCD website for program details. <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/capitalinvestmentgrant>
- 5) **Community Heart & Soul.** The Community Heart & Soul Seed Grant Program is uniquely designed for small cities and towns (population 2,500-30,000). Successful applicants will receive \$10,000 grants to match funding from a participating municipality or a partnering organization. Apply [Here](#). Read the [Grant Guidelines](#) for more information. Awards are made on a rolling basis.

40 College St., Suite 100 / PO Box 1007 / Burlington, VT 05402-1007 / P: 802.862.1225 / F: 802.862.3601

www.whiteandburke.com

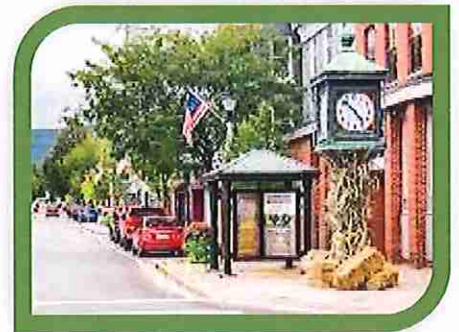
- 6) **Better Places.** The Better Places program will provide “placemaking” grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 that improve the vitality of state designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas. The Better Places partnership is a place-based economic development program.
- 7) **Vermont Community Foundation.** In addition to direct grants described in ACCD’s Funding Directory, VCF also occasionally makes Program Related Investments. These are typically low interest loans that help fill financial gaps in projects that have a social benefit. The concept is that VCF must invest their funds to maintain and grow their resources so that they can continue making grants. They have decided that instead of putting all their funds into conventional investments, such as stocks and bonds, a portion of those investments could be made in community projects that support their mission. This can provide subordinate debt with lower interest cost, and other flexible terms.
- 8) **Patient Capital.** In many communities, including Bennington, there are potential investors that will make an investment in a project because they want to support the community benefits the project is expected to provide. These can be individual investors, institutions, or major employers. The recent Putnam Block project included a number of such investors who were critical to its success.
- 9) **Master Leasing.** Sometimes a lender is reluctant to commit to a project because of uncertainty around whether the planned spaces will fully lease up at the projected lease rates. One way of handling this is for some entity that has financial strength to master lease the space, thus effectively guaranteeing the rental income. Of course, this moves the risk from the bank to the entity that signs the master lease.
- 10) **Rent Guarantees.** A similar approach is for an entity to sign a rent guarantee that commits that entity to paying any shortfall in rental income from some agreed threshold, which is generally the amount of rental income required to pay all operating expenses and all debt service. In effect this guarantees the lender there will be sufficient income to make payments to them.

II. Housing Programs

There are numerous funding programs for housing projects serving low- and moderate-income people. There are few for so-called “workforce housing” and none that we know of for fully market rate housing. We will not describe these in detail, but among the main ones are Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF), and the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) which allocates Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

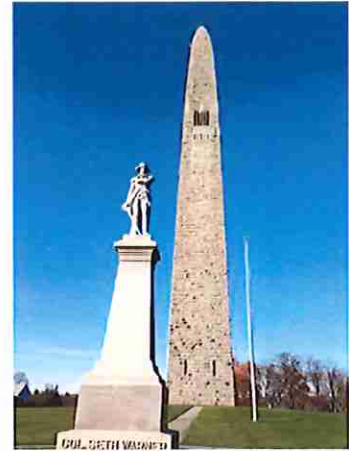
Town of Bennington Tax Increment Financing Substantial Change Proposal

December 2021



Background

The Town of Bennington established a downtown TIF district in 2017 with the goal of stimulating economic development. Since then, the focus of efforts has been on the Putnam Block, the first phase of which did not require TIF, and two sites that have become priorities outside of the TIF District. The Town has yet to incur any TIF debt or commence any of the projects outlined in the TIF District Plan. Legislation in 2020 and 2021 extends the total time period in which Bennington can incur debt to be repaid with TIF to March 2029. However, the deadline to incur first TIF debt is March 31, 2022. To extend the window and preserve the opportunity to use TIF until 2029, the Town needs to apply to VEPC for a substantial change before the end of March 2022. Time is of the essence.



Scope of Services

White + Burke will lead the effort to prepare and apply To VEPC for substantial change to the Town's TIF district, the main objective of which will be to obtain authorization to extend the debt incurrence window to March 2029.

Tasks will include:

- 1) Prepare an updated TIF District Plan;
- 2) Prepare an updated TIF District Finance Plan;
- 3) Warn and hold at least one public hearing;
- 4) Request selectboard approval for the revised plans and submission to VEPC;
- 5) File the updated District Plan and updated District Finance Plan with the municipal clerk;
- 6) File the substantial change request with VEPC;
- 7) Communicate with VEPC staff regarding any questions they may have;
- 8) Prepare for and attend one or more VEPC meetings;
- 9) Provide any follow up with VEPC that may be required.

Steps 1-6 must be done before March 4 to be heard at the March 31 meeting (although if it is submitted before March 31, it will comply).

Related Experience

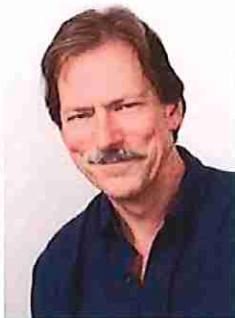
White + Burke has been involved in community and economic development since its beginning in 1990, including managing the successful formation of six of the seven TIF districts established in the past decade.

Who's Involved

Stephanie Clarke will act as project manager for this work, with assistance as appropriate from White + Burke's President, David G. White, and other staff members.



Stephanie Clarke (Vice President) Stephanie has developed six TIF Districts in the State of Vermont. Her work on behalf of these clients included area due diligence, financial analysis, stakeholder meetings, development of application and materials, public relations, testifying at legislature, representing municipalities before VEPC, and project management. For some municipalities, she has also consulted on public-private partnerships and negotiated development agreements. Her other work includes development projects such as the Hannaford Supermarket in Bradford, VT, the Radiation Oncology project for the University of Vermont Medical Center and has worked extensively on asset management for a variety of clients and estates.



David White (President) A love of downtowns was the genesis of David's real estate career. As a volunteer, he was a founding member of the board of a non-profit downtown revitalization organization in Vermont's state capital, Montpelier. That led to him later becoming its first executive director and then earning a Master of Science degree in Community Economic Development. He subsequently moved inside city hall to become the Director of Community Development for Montpelier. Fast forward 40 years and helping downtowns remains one of his passions. David has been deeply involved in the implementation of the St. Albans TIF district, with a focus on financial analysis and negotiating public-private partnerships. He is particularly adept at identifying overlooked opportunities, brainstorming creative solutions, negotiating development agreements, and packaging diverse sources of funding for project financing.

Cost and Time

We propose to do this work on a time and materials basis, per the attached rate schedule.

We cannot be certain of the time it will take to manage the substantial change process. The time required will depend on how many issues arise, whether more than one meeting with VEPC is required and similar variables beyond White + Burke's control. Nonetheless, based on previous similar assignments, we propose not to exceed \$15,000 without prior approval from the Town. This is a good faith estimate but does not constitute a guaranteed maximum. We stay in close touch about costs each month, with the client retaining the ability to terminate the contract at any time.

If you are in agreement with the terms of this proposal, we will submit a contract to be signed before we proceed.



2021 FEE SCHEDULE

Fees for services are billed and payable monthly according to the following schedule:

Principal: David G. White	\$ 275.00 per hour
Senior Consultant: Tim Burke	\$ 215.00 per hour
Senior Project Managers: Stephanie Clarke Gail Henderson-King Joe Weith	Range: \$ 145.00 - 195.00 per hour
Project Managers:	Range: \$ 90.00 - 145.00 per hour
Administrative/Project Support: Emily Shaw	Range: \$ 70.00 - 90.00 per hour

All work requiring one or more overnight stays will be billed at the greater of actual time spent on client work plus travel time or 10 hours per day.

Mileage will be billed at the applicable IRS-approved rate. In-house black & white prints will be billed at \$0.15 per page. In-house color prints will be billed at \$1.00 per page. Large-scale black & white and color prints will be billed at \$5.00 and \$8.00, respectively. All other expenses will be billed at cost plus a 10% administrative fee.

Hourly rates are adjusted for each calendar year.

Payment is due within 20 days of receipt of invoices.

Payments 30 days or more past due will be charged 1.5% interest monthly.