

## Performance Progress Report

<b>Grantee:</b>	Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD)
<b>Project Title:</b>	Economic Development Implementation for the Northern Vermont Economic Development District
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<b>CEDS Performance Year:</b>	2022
<b>Reporting period end date:</b>	December 31, 2022
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<b>Five-year CEDS Time Period:</b>	2021-2025

### Regional CEDS Updates:

This 2022 Annual Report of the Northern Vermont Economic Development District is the second update on the economic conditions of the district based on implementation of actions recommended in 2021-2025 NVEDD CEDS Plan. The Plan identifies six interconnected goals that promote a thriving, resilient region with a diverse, sustainable economy:

- Goal 1: Building Economic Resilience;
- Goal 2: Cultivating Business Growth;
- Goal 3: Improving and Expanding Infrastructure;
- Goal 4: Developing the Workforce;
- Goal 5: Investing in the Quality of Life in Communities; and,
- Goal 6: Disaster Preparedness and Recovery.

The disaster preparedness and recovery goal creates a foundation of economic resilience in the region and is both an outcome and a strategy that informs the development of five other interdependent goals. Investments made in the development of each of these goals can have a positive impact on each of the other goals. What follows is a snapshot of economic indicators with highlights of investments in some of the goals across the region.

The importance of building the outdoor recreational economy throughout the NVEDD region and has only increased with the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This statewide initiative leverages local outdoor recreational assets to increase visitor traffic to the region, increase consumer spending and create new jobs in the region, promote healthier communities, and strengthen stewardship and management of land and water resources that are the foundation of the outdoor recreational economy. While travel and tourism came to a standstill with the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, the outdoor recreation economy has rebounded in 2021 and continued to grow in 2022, with more visitors wanting to get away from urban centers and spend time biking, hiking, and enjoying the natural beauty of the NVEDD region.

Both the agricultural sector and creative economy are playing important roles in supporting this boom in outdoor recreation tourism. The continuing development of specialty foods and culinary arts through the farm to plate strategy are creating new products and markets for both established and new business growth that visitors are making travel plans around. Many visitors plan their outdoor adventure around these other amenities, often taking an afternoon off from mountain biking or enjoying one of the region's many lakes to embark on a brewery tour or explore some of the cultural offerings of the region's many unique downtowns and villages. Long under-valued as having significant economic value, the region is beginning to quantify

creative enterprises and industries, to better understand their economic value and impact on communities across the district.

The district continues to face long-term challenges that will have a significant impact on future economic prosperity. Declining birthrates and an aging population have impacts on the current and future workforce, however lack of housing is the biggest barrier to attracting workers to the region followed closely by lack of quality, affordable childcare options. These challenges are significantly exacerbated by the lingering effects of the COVID-10 Pandemic.

*The 2022 NVEDD Region at a Glance*

<u>Population</u> Population: 146,285* Average household size: 2.31 Unemployment rate: 4.2% Median age: 43.4	<u>Income</u> Median household income: \$62,496 Median per capita income: \$31,104
<u>Business**</u> Total Employees: 58,173 Total Businesses: 5,087	<u>Education*</u> No high school diploma: 7% High school graduate: 34% Some college: 18% Bachelor's/grad/prof degree: 41%

\* Source: Lightcast, Regional Overview: Northern Vermont Economic Development District, 2023.

\*\* Source: Chmura's JobsEQ, Industry Snapshot: Northern VT Economic Development District, 2023.

**Summary of Accomplishments:**

Activity	Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
<b>Cultivating Business Growth</b>	Liquid Measurement Systems (LMS)	FCIDC was awarded \$15,000 on behalf of LMS to cover partial cost of expansion into a portion of the old Energizer Building in St. Albans creating 100 new jobs.	December 2022.
	Purpose Energy, Inc. (St. Albans Town Industrial Park)	Purpose Energy has a purchase and sales agreement on a 3-acres site in the St. Albans industrial Park to develop a bio-energy project to create electricity. They will be using manufacturers food waste for a biodigester and will retain 400 jobs.	Anticipated building construction in 2023
	Perley Block Purchase (Enosburg Falls)	FCIDC plans to purchase and revitalize the Perley Block, located at 366 Main Street, in Enosburg Falls. Planned uses are some retail, childcare and offices. Renovations continue on this \$1.8 million project with Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union occupying a portion of the space November 2022.	Ongoing
	Support for Yellow Barn Business Accelerator (Hardwick)	The construction project, once completed, will support two large cheese processing businesses and an agricultural support organization. 50+ new jobs will be created.	Groundbreaking scheduled for Summer 2023
	Support for	NVDA provided support to the Northeast Kingdom	Ongoing.

	Bogner Building Redevelopment (Newport)	Economic Development Corporation (NEKDC) toward the purchase and redevelopment of a former manufacturing facility in Newport. NEKDC obtained construction management services to assist with the rehabilitation and fit-up of the building for <a href="#">Track, Inc.</a> , a growing snow and utility equipment business, which is expected to create 25+ new jobs in their first year once the building is occupied. NVDA and partners have helped to secure 2 grants for the purchase and rehabilitation of the property. NVDA is now awaiting final project estimates before borrowing to complete the project.	CM services procured in October 2022. Pre-development budget expected in January 2023.
<b>Infrastructure Improvement and Expansion</b>	Support for Communications Union Districts (CUDS)	NVEDD partners provided, and continue to provide, support to <a href="#">Lamoille FiberNet</a> , <a href="#">NEK Broadband</a> , <a href="#">Northwest FiberWorx</a> to bring reliable, high-speed (100 mbps symmetrical) internet that is locally controlled and cost-effective to every address in the NVEDD region.	Ongoing
	Assistance with water and wastewater infrastructure planning.	Lack of public water and wastewater systems remain a barrier to local development and the creation of thriving, vibrant villages (North Hero, Wolcott Village, North Hyde Park, Elmore, Jeffersonville, East and West Burke, etc.). NVEDD partners are working with these communities to help them explore options, including the use of State and local ARPA funds, to build, replace, and expand village water and wastewater systems. FCIDC is working on a project to extend the Swanton Village water and sewer from MVU high school to the Airport to benefit the Highgate Airport and a private industrial park. Montgomery has also successfully funded a major multi-million-dollar wastewater project that will allow for business growth and the addition of much-needed housing. The Trout River, one of two nationally designated wild and scenic rivers, flows right through Montgomery and about 40% of current septic systems are in its protection area making the wastewater project vital for maintaining water quality.	Ongoing
	LVRT Infrastructure support	NVEDD partners assisted municipalities along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) with successful VTrans Community Grant applications to improve trail amenities and visitor experience.  Scoping and Feasibility Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyde Park – Trailhead scoping, Depot Street triangle, \$30,400</li> <li>• Regional amenities study including St. Johnsbury, Danville, Cabot, Walden, Greensboro, and Hardwick, \$64,000</li> <li>• Sheldon – Scoping for parking and amenities at Grist Mill Park, \$36,000</li> </ul> Design-Build Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swanton – Trailhead on Robin Hood Drive (western terminus of the LVRT) with lighting, portalets, picnic pavilion, bike rack, and bike repair station, \$375,164</li> <li>• Greensboro – Trailhead in Greensboro Bend with picnic tables, portalets, and bike repair station, \$191,466</li> </ul>	Awards announced December 6, 2022

	Funding Opportunities Search Tool	NVEDD launched the new <a href="#">Funding Opportunities Search Tool</a> on the NVEDD <a href="#">website</a> , which allows businesses, nonprofits, and municipalities in the NVEDD region to easily navigate existing funding opportunities and tailor their search to fit their project needs.	Launched June 2022, updates are ongoing
<b>Workforce Development</b>	CTE Networking	The RDCs continue to meet with leadership from regional <a href="#">Career &amp; Technical Education (CTE) centers</a> to discuss the alignment of workforce needs with local education and training opportunities.	Ongoing
<b>Quality of Life</b>	Walk/Bike Friendly Montgomery	Montgomery will construct 1,600 feet of sidewalk, a bike lane, marked crosswalks, and parking along the north side of Route 118, from the Recreation Center to the village center at River Street. The project will improve the quality of life for current and future residents while building economic resilience by providing additional access to recreational activities and goods and services in the downtown.	2023
	Technical Support for Weekend in the Islands Festival	LCIEDC provided technical support for the expansion of festival programming and website capabilities to provide automation of business registration and a more interactive visitor experience.	Weekend in the Islands" 2023 will be October 7th and 8th
<b>Disaster Recovery</b>	NVEDD Recovery Plan Implementation	Continued implementation of an action-oriented recovery plan for the 6-county NVEDD region, which was accepted by the NVEDD Board on October 5, 2021.	Ongoing
	NVEDD Partners provided grant application support to business entities seeking Community Recovery and Revitalization Program (CRRP) funds from VT ACCD.	Across the NVEDD region nine projects funded in Round 1 and six projects funded in Round 2 will spur economic recovery and revitalization in communities across the NVEDD region.	Ongoing, the application portal will stay open until all funds are allocated.

**Challenges and Mitigation:**

The impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic are still being felt throughout the NVEDD region. The lack of housing options prevents workers from relocating to fill open jobs and will continue to negatively impact economic development in Northern Vermont during the upcoming annual reporting period. Additionally, the lack of childcare options along with the cost of childcare continue to be impediments for parents looking to return to the workforce. The anticipated passage of [H.217](#) by the Vermont Legislature should help expand and improve childcare options in the region and throughout the State by infusing more than \$120 million annually into the chronically underfunded sector, extending subsidies to most Vermont families and significantly hiking reimbursements to providers.

### **Next Steps:**

- Maximize content on NVEDD's [website](#) including regular updates to the new [Funding Opportunities Search Tool](#) and adding a section highlighting regional success stories.
- Continue to support the region's three Communications Union Districts with the buildout of affordable, reliable high-speed broadband internet service throughout the NVEDD region, specifically currently under-served areas.
- The NVEDD partners will continue to work with State Agency partners to facilitate regional rail trail councils and a develop a trail friendly business program for the LVRT, modeled on the [MVRT Trail Friendly Business Program](#), to improve quality of life in the region and support economic development in our rail trail communities.
- NVDA, in partnership with Do North Coworking, will continue to work with the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) to develop the Northeast Kingdom's digital economy and ultimately apply for the EDA Build to Scale Venture Challenge in July 2023.
- The NVEDD partners will continue to work together to implement the NVEDD Recovery Plan.

### **Client Success Stories:**

#### Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail

The [Lamoille Valley Rail Trail \(LVRT\)](#) is a four-season, multi-purpose recreation and transportation corridor across northern Vermont following the former 93-mile Lamoille Valley Railroad (LVRR) rail line from St. Johnsbury to Swanton. The full 93-mile recreational trail, which traverses the entire NVEDD region, was completed in the Spring of 2023, with an anticipated Grand Opening in June of 2023. The LVRT will stimulate tourism opportunities for Vermonters and visitors to the State. The LVRT will provide an important link between several significant recreational trails in Vermont and Canada, including connections to the VAST snowmobile trail network, the Long Trail, the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, the Three Rivers Path, and the Cambridge Greenway.

#### Forestry Accelerator

Six startups from Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania completed the rigorous Forestry Accelerator, a program of Northern Vermont University and Do North Coworking, in the Fall of 2022. The four-month program is open to Northern American-based pre-seed and startup companies that are commercializing new and improved products, services, and technology in the forest industry. The program includes an intensive curriculum developed by ecosVC with in-person and virtual workshops, webinars, and 1:1 coaching, as well as connections to industry experts, customers, suppliers, and partners. The Forestry Accelerator supports both the northern forest economy and emerging companies bringing products and services to market in three key areas: 1) products that use chips, dust, resins, and other byproducts and low-grade wood; 2) Technology that improves forest management and operations; and, 3) Products that develop and improve advanced wood heat, fuels, and energy. Northeast Kingdom based [Sylvacurl](#) was the winner of the 2022 cohort's \$10,000 peer-selected prize. Applications for the second cohort will be accepted in the Spring 2022.

### Jeffersonville Granary

LCPC provided support for brownfields assessment and redevelopment planning of the former Jeffersonville Granary. Waterman Orchards of neighboring Johnson plans to renovate the building as hub for value added-agricultural products. The redevelopment plan will also connect the site to nearby biking and walking trails like the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

### Highgate Water/Wastewater Extension

The extension of Swanton's municipally owned water/sewer system down Vermont Route 78 will open the opportunity for commercial and residential sites to hook onto the system, attracting new businesses and diversifying the economy. This infrastructure expansion coincides with the expansion of Franklin County Airport and the surrounding industrial park, targeting several goals of the Northwest Regional Plan and the district's CEDS.

### Riviere Hotel

The Riviere Hotel, built in the mid-1800s and once famous for live bands, was partially destroyed by fire and sat vacant for decades in Swanton's downtown area. With an eye to the future, Brownfields remediation finally began in 2018 and the property was purchased by Swanton Village in 2021. Soil sampling and historic preservation site work was completed, allowing demolition of the structure in 2023. Once mitigation is complete, Swanton Village is looking forward to private development of additional commercial space and/or housing units, critical needs identified through Northwest Regional Plan and the district's CEDS.

### Bayview Crossing

The years long effort to expand senior housing in the islands bore fruit with the official opening of [Bayview Crossing](#) in South Hero on November 14, 2022. Bayview Crossing offers 30 mixed-income, one- and two-bedroom apartments for older adults ages 55 and up in scenic South Hero, Vermont. It is named for the view it affords of Keeler Bay and a railroad that used to cross nearby. It is situated next to the health center, Worthen library, Wally's Place Bagel & Deli, a soon-to-open dental office, and offices for the nonprofit Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources (CIDER). Bayview crossing makes it possible for more island residents to age in place while also opening up local housing stock for younger families.

### Bravo Zulu Lakeside Bar & Restaurant

Summer of 2022 saw the opening of the islands newest lakeside dining option, [Bravo Zulu Lakeside Bar & Grill](#) on the property of Shore Acres in North Hero. The state-of-the-art facility includes a retractable awning, boat mornings, sweeping lake views, and created over 60 seasonal jobs for the region.

### **EDA Assistance-Needed:**

None at this time.

### **Press Engagements/Opportunities:**

- Grand Opening of Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (July 15, 2023) or other local LVRT events.
- Yellow Barn Groundbreaking or other Yellow Barn project events.