

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) REVIEW & ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (for EDA-funded CEDS)

Planning Organization Information

Name:	Northern Vermont Economic Development District
Address:	75 Fairfield Street, St. Albans, VT 05478
POC Name, Title:	Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director Northwest Regional Planning Commission
POC Telephone, Email:	cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com / (802) 524-5958 ext 112

Organizational Review & Approval Process (to be completed by Organization)

Strategy committee roster included/attached:	☒ Yes ☐ No
Copy of CEDS provided to affected Regional Commission:	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
Dates of public review & comment period (at least 30 days):	June 5 - July 8, 2026
Date CEDS adopted by organization's governing body:	June 2, 2026
Attached documentation of public comment and adoption:	
• Governing body adoption of CEDS (minutes or resolution):	☒ Yes ☐ No
• Verification of 30-day public comment on the CEDS:	☒ Yes ☐ No
• Copy of all public comments received on the CEDS:	☒ Yes ☐ No
• Explanation from the Planning Organization stating how comments were incorporated into the final CEDS:	☐ Yes ☐ No X
CEDS self-assessment checklist completed & attached (optional):	☒ Yes ☐ No

EDA Review & Approval Process (to be completed by EDA)

Reviewer Name, Title, RO:	Katherine Trapani, EDR ME/NH/VT, Phil. Regional Office
Reviewer Phone, Email:	215-514-6572, ktrapani@eda.gov
Date CEDS Received by EDA:	
Date CEDS Review Completed:	
CEDS Review Determination:	☐ Approved ☐ Deficient
Date CEDS Review Letter & Checklist Sent to Organization:	
CEDS, Review Letter, & Assessment Checklist Filed at RO:	☐ Yes ☐ No
CEDS Receipt, Review Notification, & Status Entered in OPCS:	☐ Yes ☐ No

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) REVIEW & ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (for EDA-funded CEDS)

Overview

“A CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.” This definition comes from the “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS,” published by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 2015. It frames the nature and purpose of a CEDS. The checklist below is an optional assessment tool intended to help area/regional development organizations prepare viable strategies that meet EDA’s guidelines. Likewise, it is a tool for EDA staff to use in reviewing and approving a CEDS. Although it is not a required form, it is a useful tool.

Structure

The checklist follows the structure of EDA’s CEDS guidelines. The assessment elements relate to the stated requirements and recommendations contained in the guidelines. **Requirements, which are noted as such, are few. Most of the elements are recommendations.**

Instructions

The following instructions will optimize the use of this checklist for CEDS reviews and self-assessments:

- Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not the element is present and has been satisfactorily addressed. For certain elements not applicable to the area/region, indicate “NA.”
- Where requested, note the location of the element in the CEDS by showing the section or page number(s) where the topic is addressed.
- Include comments to clarify the review, as needed, or to indicate deficiencies to be addressed, or to acknowledge exemplary treatment of the element.

Self-Assessment

It will be helpful for a CEDS-preparing organization to conduct a self-assessment of its strategy using this CEDS checklist. In so doing, the organization should be able to identify and address deficiencies prior to submitting the document for EDA review and approval. It will also be helpful for the organization to submit a copy of its self-assessment with its CEDS.

References

“Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS,” <http://www.eda.gov/ceds/>

EDA Regulations: 13 C.F.R. § 303.7; http://www.eda.gov/pdf/edas_regs-13_cfr_chapter_iii.pdf

CEDS REVIEW & ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

1. OVERVIEW

In accordance with EDA's regulations and guidelines, the following sections must be included in the CEDS document:

Summary Background	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Page 6-7
SWOT Analysis	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Page 36-37
Strategic Direction/Action Plan	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Page 39-47
Evaluation Framework	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Page 39-47

Comments:

The CEDS must incorporate the concept of economic resilience (i.e. the ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, the impacts of climate change, etc.)

The CEDS meets this requirement.	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Page 33-34
----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	-----------	------------

Comments:

2. CONTENT

The CEDS meets the following general criteria:

It was developed with broad-based community participation.	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Page 14-15
It is readily accessible to regional stakeholders.	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	Regional planning websites
It is usable to stakeholders as a guide to the regional economy and for action to improve it.	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	
Seen through the lens of economic resiliency, the four required elements (see 'Overview' above) logically build upon each other to result in a coherent, targeted document.	X Yes ☐ No	Location:	

Comments:

2-A. SUMMARY BACKGROUND

The “Summary Background” section meets the following criteria:

Answers the question, “Where have we been?” and presents a clear understanding of the local economic situation, supported by current, relevant data. ☒ Yes ☐ No

The information is presented in a clear and concise manner, and can be easily understood by the general public. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Data presentation allows for clear, relevant connections to the SWOT analysis and strategic direction. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

The “Summary Background” section provides information in the following areas that affect the regional economy, as applicable:

Demographic & socioeconomic data ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Environmental, geographic, climatic, and cultural information ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Infrastructure assets that relate to economic development ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Emerging or declining clusters or industry sectors ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Relationship of the area’s economy to the larger region or state ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Factors that directly affect economic performance in the area (e.g. workforce, innovation assets, industry supply chains, etc.) ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Other factors that relate to economic performance (e.g. housing, health services, etc.) ☒ Yes ☐ No
Location:

☐ NA

Page 20-30

Page 20-30

Page 20-30

Page 20-30

Page 20-30

Page 20-30

Page 20-30

Comments:

The CEDS includes content that meets the following related criteria:

It is a vehicle that promotes the integration of economic development with other regional plans (e.g. sustainability, transportation, land use, housing, environmental protection, etc.)

X Yes ☐ No

Location:

It identifies opportunities for the integrated use of local, state, private, and federal funds.

X Yes ☐ No

Location:

The research for the CEDS includes a review of the long-term trends of the area.

X Yes ☐ No

Location:

Throughout

Page 52

Comments:

2-B. SWOT ANALYSIS

The “SWOT Analysis” (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Strengths) section meets the following criteria:

Answers the question, “Where are we now?” and identifies the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s unique assets and competitive positioning.

X Yes ☐ No

Considers economic resiliency, specifically, factors that can ensure the long-term success, viability, and durability of the regional economy.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Comments:

The “SWOT Analysis” assesses a wide-variety of regional attributes and dynamics, including the following specific areas and tools:

State of the regional economy

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 8-17

Regional clusters

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 8-13

External trends and forces

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 15-17

Workforce considerations	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 44-45
Spatial efficiencies/sustainability	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Throughout
Broadband needs	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 25-26
Energy needs	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Throughout
Natural hazards	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 17-18
Equitable development	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Throughout
Partners for economic development	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Throughout
Resources for economic development	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Throughout

Comments:

2-C. STRATEGIC DIRECTION/ACTION PLAN

The “Strategic Direction/Action Plan” section meets the following criteria:

Answers the questions, “Where do we want to go?” and “How are we going to get there?” by applying the SWOT analysis.	X Yes	☐ No		
Includes a vision statement, goals, and objectives.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 2, 38-47
Includes an action plan for the implementation of the stated vision, goals, and objectives.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47

Comments:

The Vision Statement, Goals, and Objectives meet the following criteria:

They respond to the analysis of the area’s development potential and problems (i.e. SWOT analysis).	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47
The process used to create the vision statement involved broad community participation.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 2

The draft vision statement was widely circulated for review and comment to ensure maximum stakeholder engagement.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 14-15

The goals are statements of broad outcomes and general intentions that build upon the vision statement.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 7

The goals reflect the desires of most regional stakeholders, are realistic, and are limited to a manageable number.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 38-47

The objectives are specific, measurable, concrete, and support the attainment of the stated goals.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 38-47

The goals and objectives are prioritized, with consideration for the factors outlined in the CEDS guidelines.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 38-47

Comments:

The Action/Implementation Plan meets the following criteria:

It must be clearly linked to the prioritized goals and objectives stated in the framework for strategic direction.

X Yes ☐ No

It identifies and describes a limited number of key projects with the highest priority and potential for regional impact.

X Yes ☐ No
Location:

Page 38-47

Comments:

The Action/Implementation Plan describes explicitly how the region will work together to achieve its goals and measurable objectives by including the following elements:

An outline of the steps required to take each selected high-priority activity from inception to successful completion.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 38-47

A roster of the key individuals and institutions that will be responsible for implementing and supporting these steps.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47
A reasonable estimate of the costs associated with implementing the activity.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47
A list of the integrated funding sources (public, private, non-profit) to support the costs.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47
A realistic time frame for execution (i.e. implementation schedule), with relevant benchmarks and performance measures that address overall impact.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47
The identification of prioritized activities includes broad-based participation from regional stakeholders, including those affected by the proposed activities and those that can ensure their success.	X Yes	☐ No	Location:	Page 38-47

Comments:

2-D. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The "Evaluation Framework" section meets the following criteria:

It answers the questions, "How are we doing?" and "What can we do better?" by applying the SWOT analysis.	X Yes	☐ No	
It cascades from the strategic direction and action plan.	X Yes	☐ No	
Performance measures are identified to evaluate the progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals and objectives.	X Yes	☐ No	Location: Page 38-47
Performance measures go beyond job creation to address linkages to other important factors, such as conditions the region needs to reverse or create, and what regional assets can be leveraged.	X Yes	☐ No	Location: Page 38-47

Comments:

2-E. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The “Economic Resilience” section addresses the following two approaches in harmony with the principles outlined in EDA’s CEDS Content Guidelines:

“Steady State” Initiatives: Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region.

X Yes ☐ No
Location:

Page 33-34

“Responsive” Initiatives: Establishing information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors. The “Economic Resilience” section demonstrates how the region serves as a source of information to deal with an economic challenge and a convener of regional stakeholders to gather data and encourage collaboration in the post-disruption stage.

X Yes ☐ No
Location:

Page 33-34

Comments:

3. FORMAT

The structure and presentation of the information in the CEDS takes the following factors into consideration:

Keeps the audience in mind with respect to the length of the document, the presence of an executive summary, the placement of supporting data, etc.

X Yes ☐ No

Communicates creatively by having a professional and appealing look and feel, by including attractive and informative graphics and photos, and by using both hard-copy and electronic formats.

X Yes ☐ No

Thinks beyond the document by finding ways to use it to engage stakeholders in meaningful conversations, and to leverage its relevance and use through social media.

X Yes ☐ No

Comments:

4. PREPARATION

The preparation of the CEDS included the following key steps and elements:

A strategy committee, which broadly represents the main economic interests of the region, was formed to facilitate the planning process, and to develop and update the CEDS.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 3

The CEDS documents how the planning organization collaborated with its diverse set of stakeholders in the formation of its strategy committee and the development of the CEDS.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Page 14-15

The planning organization has or will collaborate with EDA and other entities funded by EDA (e.g. University Centers, Economic Development Districts, Tribes) on the development and implementation of the CEDS.

X Yes ☐ No Location:

Comments:

Minutes of NVEDD Board Meeting held in Hyde Park on Tuesday, June 2nd at 1:00

- Meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM by Tasha and introductions were made.
- The guest presenter was Christine Hallquist. Christine serves as the Executive Director of the Vermont Community Broadband Board. Christine gave a very informative presentation about where the State of Vermont is, in regards to our broadband network. Here are a few takeaways from the presentation:
 - If it is not fiber it is not broadband
 - Copper is inadequate, fiber is the ultimate technology
 - As of 2026 75% of all Vermonters have access to fiber, access being the key word.
 - The State has received \$223 million in grants but has only spent \$93 million and there is a deadline looming.
- CEDS: Abby gave an overview of the CEDS adoption process. The Board received questions from Katherine Trapani, our EDA representative, relative to our CEDS Draft. The Board discussed the questions and our process moving forward. Abby will be putting the Draft out for public comment. **The Board entertained a motion from Brent Raymond which was seconded by Andy Julow. The motion was to approve the CEDS with the discussed changes and the motion passed unanimously.**
- Legislative Updates:
 - Morgan shared that Congresswoman Balint named Jessica Norhouse as the new State Director of the Balint office. Calls to the office to discuss any topic were encouraged.
 - Funding for DHS and ICE is being discussed again
 - The Congressional Discretionary Spending came upon us fast, the office had 20 applications.
 - Summer visitations schedule is being worked on by the staff, more to come.
 - Fauna with Senator Welch's office shared the Senator was the graduation speaker at St. Johnsbury Academy.
 - An overview of the Disaster Recovery funding was shared.
 - People were encouraged to share any comments on the Tariff Refund Process
 - Women's Business Conference will be held on Saturday, September 19, 2026
 - USDA will be going thru a reorganization
- Partner Updates:

- o Elisabeth Nance – ACCD is making recommendations for \$2 million allocation from the Federal government for Brownfield dollars. NBRC awards will be announced on June 12th. NBRC fall funding will be accepting applications for funding in the amount of \$6.8 million.
 - o Joe Kasprzak shared there will be a groundbreaking ceremony coming up for a 27 unit housing project located at 1244 Main Street.
- Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Pat seconded by Scott at 2:42 PM and was approved unanimously.

Please note that the October Board meeting has been moved from October 6th to the 13th the location is TBD

CEDS Public Comment Documentation

Comment Due by July 8, 2026

Explanation from the Planning Organization stating how comments were incorporated into the final CEDS

The draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was released for a 30-day public comment period beginning on June 9 - July 8, 2026. To ensure broad regional outreach, each Regional Planning Commission distributed the draft through its email listserv and published public notices in local newspapers. During the public comment period, three comments were received. These comments were compiled and shared with the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) Board for review and consideration. The Board determined that the feedback was appropriate and was incorporated into the final CEDS. The revised document reflects the public input received through the comment process.

Fri, May 29, 10:15 AM (13
days ago)

Tasha Wallis

Abby,

Could you add this Lamoille information below somewhere in the intro or wherever you think best. , I should have sent earlier, but I noticed -on a third reading that the CEDs language was very NEK focused. Thank you.

For the last few years, Lamoille County has been the second fastest growing county in Vermont. The County saw rapid additional growth, especially in the Stowe area, during COVID. Although many new housing units have been built in the region, including Morristown, there is still a significant housing shortage in the County.

The County's economy is primarily tourism and recreation based. There are two major ski resorts as well as the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and numerous biking and hiking options, and the network of mountain bike trails in the region continues to grow. There is also a growing number of home-grown, nationally-renowned businesses, such as Concept 2, MSI, Butternut Mountain Farm, and The Alchemist.

Tasha Wallis

Executive Director

Lamoille County Planning Commission

52 Portland Street | 2nd Floor | PO Box 1637 | Morrisville, VT 05661

email: Tasha@lcpvvt.org | website: www.lcpvvt.org

direct dial: 802-851-6346 | main number: 802-888-4548

10:37 AM (0 minutes
ago)

Praneet Menon

<praneet.menon@pm.me>

to me 

Dear Ms. Long,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2026–2031. I'm a resident of the town of Coventry (Orleans County), and serve as Chair of the Coventry School Board and the North Country Supervisory Union Board. I

recognize and appreciate the amount work it takes to put a strategy like this together and am thankful that we have something in place. I do have a few brief suggestions for the Orleans and Lamoille County communities I work with. These comments reflect my own views and are not an official position of the Coventry School Board or NCSU Board.

1. The apprenticeship and CTE partnerships in Goal 4 are very valuable, considering how much the manufacturing sector means for our communities economically. In light of that, I'd encourage highlighting barriers to apprenticeship and CTE partnerships/programs. These would include things like transportation to CTE center (something I'm quite familiar through my board work), dual enrollment costs, etc. My hope is that mentioning these in the strategy will help shape solutions to these barriers to open pipelines to communities that really need it.
2. Goal 5 correctly dovetails workforce housing to job growth, but doesn't touch on what I consider to be one of its major levers, which is permitting reform. Rural Vermonters and the Legislature rolled back some of Act 181 this year, which is a step in the right direction. I believe there is more work to be done in this arena and encourage the CEDS to explicitly name permitting reforms under goal 5, especially given the older housing stock in our communities.
3. Childcare is correctly flagged as a worsening trend. That said, I did not see a goal or action item that addresses it. What I'd suggest is adding some language in Goal 4 or 5 in support of childcare that opens discussions on possible solutions, like home-based or employer-based childcare models.
4. Progress toward our communities getting broadband is a welcome change. Orleans however is lagging behind. I know of neighbors who rely on satellite internet, which though fast, is getting pricier year by year. There are other alternatives, but they boast speeds from a decade ago. So, I'd ask the CEDS to prioritize completing the NEKCV build-out so that Orleans isn't last in line.

Thank you again for the opportunity to weigh in. I look forward to seeing the final strategy.

Sincerely,

Praneet Menon

Coventry, VT



9:29 AM (5
hours ago)

Christa Shute

Did I ever send you comments on CEDS? In case I didn't - the biggest thing that I think is missing is AI. I don't think we can be looking at the next 5 years without considering the integration and importance of AI to the business development of the region. If people are not educated on how to use it safely, how to leverage it to their benefit, then we will be as behind as we were when we didn't have high speed broadband. I don't have time to dig in more at the moment - couple of big BEAD things going on - but I wanted to get that on your radar.

Christa

https://www.caledonianrecord.com/news/local/draft-economic-plan-puts-focus-on-floods-housing-broadband-and-rural-business-growth/article_dce30ce3-a2fe-50cb-87ae-056f3a641c7f.html

FEATURED EDITOR'S PICK

Draft Economic Plan Puts Focus On Floods, Housing, Broadband And Rural Business Growth

Public Encouraged To Comment

Andrew McGregor mcmgregora@caledonian-record.com Staff Writer

Jun 12, 2026

A new five-year economic development plan for northern Vermont identifies housing, flooding, aging infrastructure and workforce shortages as major challenges for the region, while pointing to outdoor recreation, forestry, maple, food production, broadband and rural entrepreneurship as areas for growth and success.

The Northern Vermont Economic Development District has released its draft 2026-2031 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for public review. The district serves Grand Isle, Franklin, Lamoille, Orleans, Caledonia and Essex counties. Public comments are due by July 8 to Abby Long, executive director of the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative, at abby@nekkollaborative.org.

The CEDS is intended to guide economic development investments and priorities across the region, including resilience, business growth, infrastructure, workforce development, quality of life and disaster preparedness. The draft says the plan is meant to help communities, businesses, local governments and nonprofit organizations coordinate planning and leverage federal, state, private and nonprofit resources.



Edward Jones > [edwardjones.com](https://www.edwardjones.com) | Member SIPC

Northeast Kingdom: The power of personal attention working for you
Our process? We listen. Really listen. Stop by.

 **BettyAnn Gwatkin**
Financial Advisor
1033 Broad Street
Lyndonville, VT 05851
802-427-1221

EJB-19325-A-E-04-4 AECSPAD creative

Long said Thursday the effort would benefit from any and all comments and feedback on the draft. “There are no wrong answers and anyone can contribute,” she said, noting the economic development plan is a useful tool for a wide variety of businesses, organizations and communities.

For the Northeast Kingdom, the draft describes the three-county region as having significant natural and cultural assets but persistent economic pressures. Stakeholders who participated in the planning and draft writing identified flooding as the greatest external threat to local economies. They also cited a lack of affordable housing and aging infrastructure in flood-prone areas as major weaknesses. Workforce availability, skill gaps, access to capital, infrastructure, regulations and limited market opportunities were also identified as barriers to business growth.

The new draft continues the district's six broad goals: building economic resilience, cultivating business growth, improving and expanding infrastructure, developing the workforce, promoting quality of life and disaster preparedness and recovery. Compared with the prior five-year plan, the new draft places more emphasis on flooding, housing and broadband deployment as current and emerging issues.

Flooding is presented as a central economic risk. The draft cites repeated federal disaster declarations since 2021, including the major flooding disasters in 2023 and 2024 and notes rural towns are vulnerable because of aging infrastructure, limited response capacity and historic

https://www.caledonianrecord.com/news/local/draft-economic-plan-puts-focus-on-floods-housing-broadband-and-rural-business-growth/article_dce30ce3-a2fe-50cb-8... 2/5
7/29/26, 2:50 PM Draft Economic Plan Puts Focus On Floods, Housing, Broadband And Rural Business Growth | Local News | caledonianrecord.com

development patterns along rivers. Proposed strategies include local emergency and hazard mitigation planning, flood-resilient zoning, recovery funds, green infrastructure, mutual aid agreements and support for development in safer areas less prone to flooding.

Housing is another major topic. The draft cites a statewide housing assessment that indicates the broader northern Vermont region could need 9,401 additional housing units by 2030 and 37,704 by 2050 if post-pandemic trends continue. It notes that the Northeast Kingdom generally has more affordable housing than some other parts of the district, but warns that prices have recently risen faster than incomes and that more than 25% of housing stock in Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties was built before 1940.

The draft's demographic data show Essex County with a median age of 51.4, 45.6 in Caledonia and 45.4 in Orleans. Median household income is listed at \$58,985 in Essex, \$66,075 in Caledonia and \$66,426 in Orleans. All below the statewide median income of \$72,331. Poverty rates are 14.3% in Essex, 12.6% in Caledonia and 10.8% in Orleans, compared to the statewide average of 10.2%.



Commuting patterns also show the limits of local job markets. In Essex County, 82.8% of workers commute out of the county an average of 28.3 minutes; in Caledonia, 49.6% commute out; and in Orleans, 39.3% commute out. All three counties have negative net job flow.

The plan also highlights several strengths of the Northeast Kingdom. Forestry remains important in Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties, where logging, trucking, milling and wood manufacturing support rural employment. The draft cites Columbia Forest Products, Built by Newport, Rygate Power Station and North Country Hospital's use of locally sourced woody biomass as examples of

https://www.caledonianrecord.com/news/local/draft-economic-plan-puts-focus-on-floods-housing-broadband-and-rural-business-growth/article_dce30ce3-a2fe-50cb-8... 3/5
7/29/26, 2:50 PM Draft Economic Plan Puts Focus On Floods, Housing, Broadband And Rural Business Growth | Local News | caledonianrecord.com

the importance forestry plays in the region. It also notes that Island Pond is home to Sweet Tree Holdings, with just under 500,000 taps, and that Orleans County hosts about 10% of Vermont's tapped trees.

Outdoor recreation remains a major priority. The draft cites the Beebe Spur Trail in Orleans County, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail from St. Johnsbury to Swanton as well as Kingdom Trails. The Beebe Spur and LVRT were noted as being in development in the 2021 version of the CEDS report.

Food, agriculture and entrepreneurship are also emphasized. The draft points to the Yellow Barn Business Accelerator in Hardwick, the adjacent Vermont Food Venture Center, Do North Coworking in Lyndon and InnovateNEK, an initiative at NVDA intended to support tech entrepreneurship and high-skilled job creation.

The draft also highlights the creative economy, describing arts, culture and creative enterprise as more than amenities. The report says Northern Vermont's creative sector includes artists, artisans, designers, performers, cultural nonprofits, media workers, museums, galleries, festivals, historic sites, downtown arts venues and small businesses tied to culture and place-based identity. It frames that sector as a rural development strategy that can help animate downtowns and village centers, reuse historic and underused buildings, support tourism and hospitality, attract residents and entrepreneurs, and strengthen community identity.

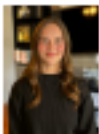
Broadband is one of the clearest areas of expected change and a point of anticipated success compared to the report from 5 years ago, which identified broadband as a critical need. The draft says major investments through communications union districts are expected to bring northern

Vermont broadband coverage to roughly 99% of on-grid E-911 locations by the end of 2027. For Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties, the draft says 50% of locations were served as of 2025 and 49% had funded commitments for the expected buildout over the next couple of years.

Long called out the progress in broadband as a key accomplishment for the region and noted the inclusion of forestry and maple in the report, which is indicative of their importance to the local economy and identity.

The public comment period gives residents, businesses and organizations a chance to respond before the strategy is finalized. The draft says survey results helped shape the action plan, and 92% of respondents reported improvements in their communities over the past five years that contributed to quality of life.

https://www.caledonianrecord.com/news/local/draft-economic-plan-puts-focus-on-floods-housing-broadband-and-rural-business-growth/article_dce30ce3-a2fe-50cb-8... 4/5
7/29/26, 2:50 PM Draft Economic Plan Puts Focus On Floods, Housing, Broadband And Rural Business Growth | Local News | caledonianrecord.com



Draft Economic Plan Puts Focus On Floods, Housing, Broadband And Rural Business Growth 1.47 MB

Download PDF file

Andrew McGregor