

Bennington County Regional Commission 2019 Annual Report

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) works with and on behalf of its member municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. The BCRC plays an important role in coordinating work among local governments, state and federal agencies, regional public and nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and private interests.

In addition to its ongoing role in supporting the comprehensive planning work of municipal officials and volunteer boards and commissions, the BCRC serves as a regional center for work in community and economic development, transportation, energy, environmental conservation, water quality, solid waste management, and emergency management. The BCRC regularly conducts and sponsors public meetings and workshops on these topics throughout the region.

During the past year, the BCRC has worked to implement its comprehensive plan through a variety of programs and cooperative work with member municipalities. Economic development planning in the region has become one of the BCRC's main program areas. Economic development planning at the BCRC, including dedicated staff directed by a committee with representatives appointed by the regional development corporation, supports business retention, growth, and recruitment. An outgrowth of this economic development work involves a cooperative effort across the region and with Windham County to develop a US EDA approved Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The BCRC also has provided staff support for a major downtown redevelopment project in Bennington that grew from brownfields and community development work overseen by the Commission. Concern over the state's water quality has led the BCRC to identify and implement local projects that not only reduce stormwater runoff, but also protect roads, bridges, culverts, and private property. Other important accomplishments have included: assistance with updates to several municipal comprehensive plans and land use bylaws, development of municipal energy plans and support for local energy committees, village center and neighborhood development area designations, implementation of the regional solid waste management plan in cooperation with the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, and planning for transportation and other local infrastructure.

Some of the key projects to be undertaken by the BCRC in the coming year include: continued work on the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, energy plan implementation activities, workforce and business development initiatives, cooperative programs with the Lightning Jar entrepreneurial center, water quality management plans and projects, assessment of brownfield sites throughout the region, building redevelopment and reuse strategies, regional food systems planning, expanded education and outreach to support waste reduction and recycling goals, completion of municipal hazard mitigation plans, and management of intersection improvement and multi-use pathway projects.

The BCRC is governed by locally appointed commissioners from seventeen area municipalities and commissioners who represent interests ranging from public health to economic development. Our office, located at 111 South Street in Bennington, is open Monday through Friday. Regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of every other month, with frequent special meetings throughout the year (information at: www.bcrcvt.org).

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Sullivan, Director