

Community Investment Board

Application and Issues Summary

September 23, 2024

This supplement to the agenda is intended to highlight issues, focus the discussion, and promote consistent and efficient decisions.

Community Planning and Revitalization (staffing the meeting)

Richard Amore, Manager of Placemaking and Community Partnerships

Chris Cochran, Director

Natalie Elvidge, Planning Coordinator

Jacob Hemmerick, Planning & Policy Manager

Gary Holloway, Downtown Program Manager

Jenni Lavoie, Contracts & Grants Manager

Meeting Guests:

Town of Topsham

- **Jim Bulger**, Topsham Selectboard Chair
- **Jim Clark**, Topsham Planning Commission
- **Brian Kovalick**, TRORC planner

Town of Colchester

- **Cathyann LaRose**, Director Planning & Zoning
- **Kathi Walker O'Reilly**, Director Economic Development

City of Montpelier

- **Mike Miller**, Planning Director
- **Bill Fraser**, City Manager

Village Center Designation

The village center designation program recognizes and encourages local efforts to revitalize Vermont's traditional villages. Once designated, the community receives priority consideration for state grants and other resources. Commercial property owners are eligible for tax credits to support building improvements.

"Village Center means a traditional center of the community, typically comprised of a cohesive core of residential, civic, religious, and commercial buildings, arranged along a main street and intersecting streets. Industrial uses may be found within or immediately adjacent to these centers." The application guidelines document further states "the boundary should be drawn around the center or core of the village including its traditional anchor points such as the post office, commercial buildings, town hall, churches and other public buildings that typically comprise the center of a village."

Renewal Applications (1) – Consent Agenda Items

1. Town of Woodstock – [Woodstock Village](#)

The town submitted a complete renewal application. There are no proposed changes to the [designated boundary](#).

Recommendation: Approve application and renew designation

New Applications (3)

1. Town of Topsham – [Topsham Village](#)

The proposed boundary runs along Powder Spring Road, Topsham/Corinth Road, Galusha Hill Road, and Harts Road and next to the Tabor Branch of the Waits River. It includes the town hall and town clerk's office, fire department, post office, Presbyterian Church, local businesses, and single and multi-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Recommendation: Approve application and award designation

2. Town of Topsham – [Waits River Village](#)

The proposed boundary runs along VT Route 25 and includes the New Hope United Methodist Church, Waits River Country Store, Carl Sweet Woodworking Shop, Historic Waits River Schoolhouse, and local businesses, and single and multi-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Recommendation: Approve application and award designation

3. Town of Topsham – [West Topsham Village](#)

The proposed boundary runs along VT Route 25 and includes the post office, Riverside Grange, fire department, community hall, Countryside Baptist Church, Gramp's Country Store, and local businesses, and single and multi-family residences. The town worked with staff to define the boundary that meets statutory definition and submitted a map that meets the program's requirements.

Recommendation: Approve application and award designation

Tax Credit Review

This round's tax credit applications were reviewed by staff and checked for completeness and accuracy. As in previous years, to simplify your review, we have already verified tax credit calculations are accurate and removed supplementary approvals (proof of various required state or federal approvals and reviews) so you can focus your efforts on reviewing the aspects of each submittal that correspond to the scoring criteria.

FY 2025 (September Round) Overview:

- Total Tax Credit Applications Received: 48
- Total Sales Tax Applications Received: 1
- Total Request: \$7,688,489 with \$4,186,102 available

[Scoring Memo](#)

Scoring is based on the information provided in each application. Applicants understand the projects are scored in advance and judged solely on the information supplied in their application. Other than the Public Comment Period on the agenda, no official time is allotted for applicants to speak in support of projects at the board meeting.

- Staff will bring the tallied score sheets and project rankings to the meeting. The board may discuss projects and may revise scores or allocations at its discretion.
- Upon conclusion of the deliberation, the board will vote to ratify or modify the allocations.

Downtown Designation

Downtown designation recognizes and supports the commitment of local leaders to revitalize historic downtowns and strengthen Vermont's communities. The state supports the designated community with a variety of benefits, training and tools that work together to increase the health and vitality of the district.

"Downtown" means the traditional central business district of a community that has served as the focus of socio-economic interaction in the community, characterized by a cohesive core of commercial and mixed use buildings, some of which may contain mixed use spaces, often interspersed with civic, religious, residential, and industrial buildings and public spaces, typically arranged along a main street and intersecting side streets that are within walking distance for residents who live within and surrounding the core and that are served by public infrastructure such as sidewalks and public transit. Downtowns are typically larger in scale than village centers and are characterized by a development pattern that is consistent with smart growth principles.

Renewal Application (1)

1. [Town of Bristol](#)

The Town of Bristol received Downtown Designation in 2006, and last renewed in 2016. The Town worked with staff on the application to ensure all program requirements are met and to offer any recommendations. The application is complete, no boundary changes proposed, and it meets all the program's requirements. The community will provide a short presentation to the Board summarizing their accomplishments in the last 8 years. **Recommendation:**
Approve renewal

Growth Center Designation

Planning for growth in compact centers helps balance economic, social and environmental priorities, creating more choices in housing and transportation. Growth center designation recognizes municipalities that demonstrate a capacity to plan and invest in vital, walkable, mixed-use centers.

Designated growth centers must include and support a designated downtown, village center, or new town center. A rigorous application and review process precedes designation. Growth center designation remains in effect for 20 years after growth center approval and the Vermont Downtown Board reviews the designation every five years. For details, see the [5-Year Review Process](#).

"Growth center means an area of land that is within or adjoining a downtown, village center, or new town center designated under this chapter and has clearly defined boundaries that can accommodate a majority of commercial, residential, and industrial growth anticipated by the municipality or municipalities over a 20-year period."

5-year Check-in (1)

1. [Town of Colchester](#)

The Town of Colchester was due for a check-in prior to the enactment of 181, which was delayed due to June and July conflicts. The Board's August meeting was cancelled. According to the Board's policy, reviews due before July will be finalized. This is the 3rd 5-year review for Colchester's Growth Center (year 15 of 20). 5-year reviews focus on changes that may have occurred over the past five years that may affect the findings of fact in the Designation Decision and any compliance with designation conditions, if applicable. The Town's submission is posted here.

Recommendation:

Determine that the Colchester Growth Center continues to meet the standards for designation in effect at the time it was originally designated.

Boundary Amendment (1)

1. [City of Montpelier](#)

The City requests approval of an amendment to the existing growth center boundary. The City presents two proposed boundaries. One proposal would add the 'Country Club Road property'. The second proposal would additionally add the properties in the 'Residential 9000 district'. Staff finds that portions of area 2 do not yet meet statutory requirements but could through additional capital planning and regulatory requirements that ensure safe transportation choice. Both areas are mapped in 'attachment 4' of the City's submission. An existing sidewalk map is also included. This action requires written findings from the Board. Draft findings of fact and conclusions of law are included in the linked materials, which explain the recommended motion.

Recommendation:

Approve the boundaries in proposed expansion areas 1 and 2, except proposal 2 (Zoning District: Residential 9000) parcels that do not front a street with an existing sidewalk connected to the designated downtown, authorizing the Chair to approve the final revised boundary.