

Bennington Battle Monument State Historic Site Operations & Future Planning FAQ

The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP), within the Department of Housing and Community Development in the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), is responsible for the stewardship and interpretation of state-owned historic sites. Through its programs, the Division for Historic Preservation integrates Vermont's history into community growth and planning, fostering research, education, and the adaptive use of historic properties across the state.

To help you better navigate our stewardship of the Bennington Battle Monument, we have compiled answers to the most frequently asked questions raised during our recent online survey. If you cannot find the information you seek, please [contact VDHP](#).

Is there an oversight committee or commission to guide the process of restoration and to ensure long-term maintenance and accountability?

The project is currently in its exploration, planning, and funding stages, managed by the immediate team of professional staff from VDHP. This phase includes close consultation with partners at the Department of Building and General Services, leadership at ACCD, and community partners like the Friends of Bennington Battle Monument.

Future phases of the project are expected to include a formal committee. This group will be tasked with guiding community outreach, fundraising, and the planning of subsequent restoration phases, each of which will incorporate both short- and long-term maintenance strategies.

Have experts been consulted?

Yes. Between 2020 and 2024, a team of fifteen consultants and firms with varying areas of expertise was charged with examining and reporting on the monument's construction and assessing its condition. The Phase I report provided a structural, electrical, and elevator assessment, and Phase II concluded with comprehensive structural and material testing, along with an evaluation and outline of restoration approaches. Those reports can be found on the [Bennington Battle Monument Restoration website page](#). A few of those consultants remain on contract with VDHP for continued monitoring and project development.



Have federal funds been sought?

Yes. VDHP is in regular contact with the staff of the Vermont congressional delegation to provide updates and explore funding options.

In 2025, VDHP received \$500,000 of congressional-directed spending that is funded through the National Park Service. This is the maximum amount available for historic and cultural resources. The grant covers four elements: 1) archaeology within Monument Circle and the foundation of the monument; 2) monitoring of cracks and loose material removal; 3) seismic and tilt monitoring; and 4) moisture and temperature monitoring. These elements will help inform the design phase. The archaeological work is expected to identify what remains of the 18th and 19th century tavern, print shop, courthouse, and, most importantly, locate the site of the militia storehouse. This work will also help determine the underground foundation supports of the monument and the weight-loads allowed at the site, information critical for the scaffolding needed during future restoration work and protection of these historic archaeological sites.

How will fundraising be handled for the restoration phases?

Historically, VDHP was legally restricted from actively soliciting donations. However, in 2026, the statutory language was changed to enable VDHP to have the formal authority to fundraise for the state-owned historic sites and archaeology heritage center.

Because this is a new mechanism, VDHP is carefully exploring various paths forward. While hiring a professional consulting firm to oversee a major fundraising campaign is a proven strategy, it represents an additional expense for an already thin operational budget. The project team is currently evaluating how to maximize this new fundraising tool effectively and responsibly.

What factors contributed to the current deterioration of the Monument and its systems?

The primary challenges stem from historical funding limitations and a lack of a comprehensive, systemic awareness of the building's complex structural dynamics; we did not have a full understanding of how it was constructed. Historically, maintenance efforts were reactive, addressing localized issues like cracking and moisture infiltration as they arose rather than operating under a cyclical preservation plan that considers the building's construction and materials. A clear example of this deferred lifecycle management is the interior elevator. Installed in 1955-1956, it received minimal, as-needed repairs despite far exceeding the standard 25- to 30-year operational lifespan of typical elevator systems.



What are the plans regarding the elevator?

The existing elevator, installed in 1955-56, has vastly exceeded its functional life expectancy and no longer meets current safety codes for public visitation. VDHP is currently evaluating two pathways forward, Repair versus Replace:

- **Option 1: Comprehensive Repair**
This approach addresses immediate mechanical issues, including replacing the damaged traveling cable and installing an automated lubrication system. This enables older equipment to function alongside new equipment, which must strike a balance for maintenance and safety. While this is the fastest option, estimated to take roughly 10 months once funding is secured, it is only a short-term solution. It is projected to cost between \$470,000 and \$670,000 and would only extend the elevator's operational life by an estimated 8 to 10 years.
- **Option 2: Replacement with a Modern System**
This option requires complete removal of the 1955-56 cab and its mechanical components, replacing them with a modern, code-compliant system (which will likely feature a wider cab). Because the shaft is subjected to highly variable, near-exterior environmental conditions, specialized preservation engineering would be required to protect the new components from moisture. This replacement could include a standard interior elevator system or an outdoor-grade system, as the elevator is functioning in exterior conditions. This permanent replacement is estimated to cost several million dollars (final estimates and schedules are pending). VDHP is currently exploring whether this installation can occur prior to the broader structural restoration, as it may not be feasible, advisable, or cost effective in the long run. It does delay operation of the elevator until funding is secured.

Public input from visitor surveys and community meetings strongly reinforced Vermonters' desire to have the elevator functioning as soon as possible to generate vital operational revenue. While a short-term repair is expensive and offers only a temporary fix, it cannot be greenlit automatically. Moving forward with either a temporary repair or a full replacement requires VDHP to first acquire comprehensive elevator replacement data and secure additional funding.

How are the operations and maintenance of the state historic sites funded?

Vermont's State Historic Sites are funded through four avenues.

1. General Fund: supports day-to-day operations (permanent staff, lights, internet, water, etc.)



2. **Special Fund:** Composed of operational revenue generated by state-owned historic sites, including admissions, special events, gift shop sales, and unspecified donations. These funds directly support seasonal staffing, gift shop inventory, new and temporary exhibits, and site activities.
3. **Major Maintenance:** supports cyclical projects like annual maintenance and HVAC replacements, and large projects like the foundation restoration of the boyhood home at President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site and water infiltration mitigation at the Senator Justin Morrill State Historic Site.
4. **Grants and Specified Donations:** External funding acquired from federal, state, or private organizations. These restricted funds are dedicated specifically to launching new exhibits, hosting community activities, and completing targeted large-scale maintenance and restoration projects.

VDHP is currently working with the friends' group, The Friends of Bennington Battle Monument, to engage the community and to work on new avenues for fundraising activities.

Is there a long-term stewardship and maintenance plan to prevent another cycle of deterioration?

Yes. Long-term stewardship begins with continuous, active health monitoring, and VDHP has implemented rigorous systems inside and outside the monument. We currently collect precise data on temperature, humidity, structural tilt, cracking, and seismic activity. Additionally, specialized contractors are regularly deployed to scale the exterior and inspect the masonry for loose debris. These ongoing measurements act as an early-warning system to detect and address structural vulnerabilities before significant deterioration can occur.

All these monitoring efforts are foundational components of our long-term care strategy, designed to continue seamlessly both now and after the restoration. This continuous data collection provides the exact empirical evidence needed to clearly justify and secure necessary investments for long-term cyclical maintenance operations involving a team of experts.

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What management and staff resources are dedicated to ensuring the operational and long-term restoration success of the Bennington Battle Monument?

The Bennington Battle Monument is supported by a multi-tiered team structured to ensure daily operational excellence, high-quality visitor experience, and expert historic preservation.

Daily on-site operations, community partnerships, and public programming are managed by a dedicated, full-time Site Administrator. The state utilizes three full-time Site Administrator positions across its network; Bennington is uniquely prioritized by having one of these professional roles entirely focused on a single property. During the operational season, a statewide team of 65 seasonal staffers is deployed to support visitor services, guided tours, and daily operations across our properties.

To ensure long-term structural success, the monument's multi-phase restoration strategy is centrally managed by our Director of Preservation, who provides administrative oversight across our entire 25-site network. Because the monument presents highly specialized engineering and structural challenges unique to its immense scale, VDHP expected to contract dedicated external expertise for the restoration and the long-term cyclical maintenance. Future implementation phases of the restoration will utilize a specialized team of contracted professionals, including an expert engineering project manager, a clerk of the works, and specialized historic preservation contractors, to design and execute the physical work on-site when those phases begin. Overarching system operations are guided by the Director of State Historic Sites. This combination of permanent on-site administration, a large seasonal workforce, and rigorous, specialized project procurement ensures the monument receives the expert care it requires for its long-term preservation.

What has been done to strengthen tourism, marketing, and educational programming to increase visitation and awareness of the monument's significance?

For the 2026 season, VDHP expanded our regular offerings at the Bennington Battle Monument to include new guided tours. These tours highlight how Vermont's historic landmarks are connected. Visitors can explore how Bennington's local history ties directly into



the Revolutionary War stories of Mount Independence and the Hubbardton Battlefield, as well as the founding of Vermont in 1777 commemorated at the Old Constitution House. Plans are underway to expand the tours to include the local landmarks of Old Bennington. Future events and activities are being organized in partnership with the Friends of the Bennington Battle Monument.

In October 2026, VDHP will host public programming and children's activities alongside our active archaeological investigations. These events will explore the history of the vibrant community and commercial buildings that occupied Monument Circle before the monument was built. As excavation work provides VDHP with new historical data, new wayside exhibits will be created to permanently expand and share this story. A new Vermont roadside historic site marker will be included in the circle on Bennington Battle Day 2027, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the battle and the 80th anniversary of the roadside marker program.

VDHP maximizes a modest marketing budget through highly targeted, statewide media partnerships. To share updates about our year-round events, strategic radio campaigns aired on *Vermont Public* and WCAX. Additionally, VDHP regularly broadcasts statewide press releases and features print advertisements in print materials.

How does the Monument tie into the broader Bennington economic and community development?

The Bennington Battle Monument is a critical economic driver for Bennington County. By investing in its restoration, VDHP aims to catalyze downtown redevelopment and boost regional tourism. As the tallest structure and traditionally one of the most visited state-owned historic sites in Vermont, the monument draws thousands of heritage tourists annually. These visitors generate vital economic activity for local restaurants, hotels, and retail shops. Furthermore, the monument serves as a cultural anchor. VDHP works alongside municipal leaders and organizations to create cross-promotional regional itineraries and will boost these partnerships in the future. With the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Bennington approaching in 2027, the monument will serve as the physical centerpiece for national celebrations, turning historic preservation into long-term community growth and private-sector investment.

