The Bennington Battle Monument: Past, Present, and Future

Community Forum

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

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The Creative Discourse Group

Susan McCormack

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Tonight's Forum

1. Provide Monument Update

2. Share Possible Pathways Forward

3. Gather Input from Participants

4. Closing & Next Steps

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Group Agreements

- **Respect different viewpoints**

  People bring different values and ideas—let's stay open and constructive.

- **Acknowledge uncertainty**

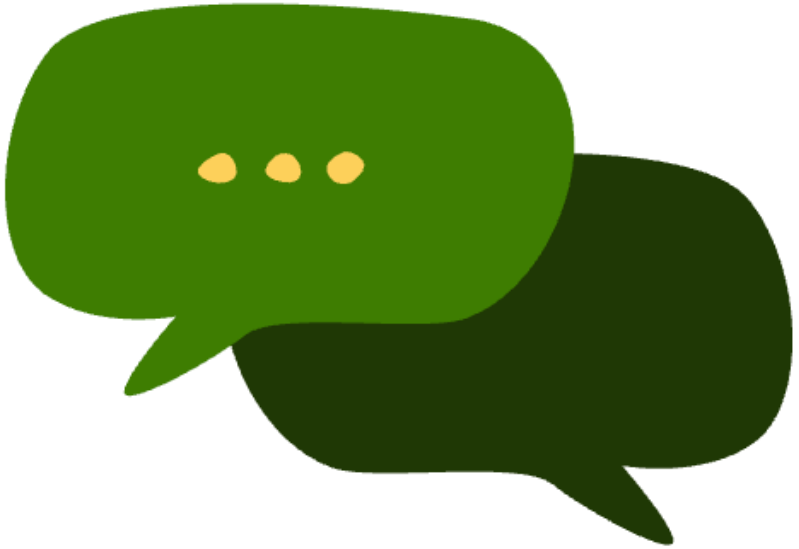
  Not all answers (including costs) are known yet; experts will share what they can.

- **Participate in Activities**

  We'll guide you through activities to make sure all input is captured.

- **Share your input**

  Your perspectives and priorities will help shape what happens next.



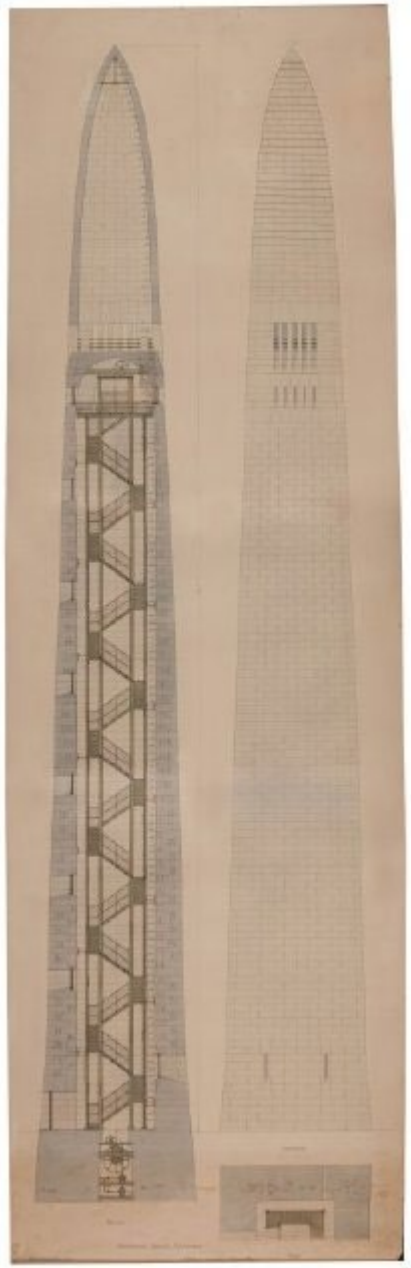
A MONUMENT TO THE BATTLE OF BENNINGTON

Typical Continental Army Storehouse

Present marker recording location Storehouse (incorrect location)

Battle of Bennington August 16, 1777, in Walloomsac, New York

Roughly 2,000 to 2,400 American troops from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and the Vermont Republic, and approximately 1,400 British and Allied forces involved. Resulting in 237 killed, more than 40 wounded, and over 700 captured/missing.



Architect J. Phillipp Rinn's Design

Hiland Hall, "father of the monument"

In progress construction images of monument

HISTORY FACTS

- Early Planning 1853-1854
- Active Fundraising 1876-1891
- Design Approved 1885
- Built 1887-1891

OWNERSHIP

1. Bennington Battle Monument Association 1876-1953
2. State of Vermont 1953-present

2018 – Division for Historic Preservation assumes responsibility for monument maintenance

REPAIR CAMPAIGNS

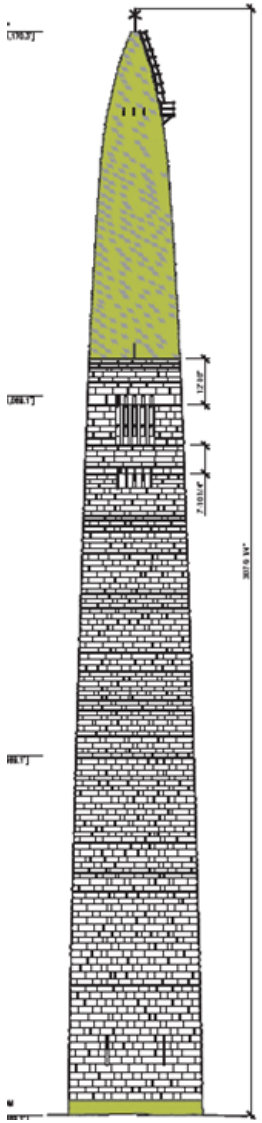
Early Maintenance (1907-1920s): to address humidity and water infiltration. By the 1920s, materials were already falling off.

1953: Elevator installed
1972: Heat turned off due to energy crisis

Late 20th Century Repairs: Numerous campaigns, often involving filling cracks with sealant or epoxy, which failed to address the root causes of deterioration.

1990 Masonry: large-scale effort documented and repaired between 2,000 and 5,000 cracks in the exterior stones.

2005: Exterior lighting installed
2016: Elevator system modernization



Previous repairs in yellow areas only

Failing Cement Patch

Failing Cement Caulk

2022-2025 Intensive diagnostic study

Comprehensive structural analysis involving 15 specialty contractors

Results identified critical failures that require immediate intervention:

Hydrological Stress
Saturated stone, persistent water infiltration, and internal high humidity

Structural Damage
Vertical cracking, stone spalling, and surface degradation

Climate & Airflow
'Inverse stack effect' compromising internal ventilation

Mechanical Failure
Moisture-driven corrosion of stairs and elevator mechanisms

Legacy Issues
Accelerated decay resulting from incompatible repair methods

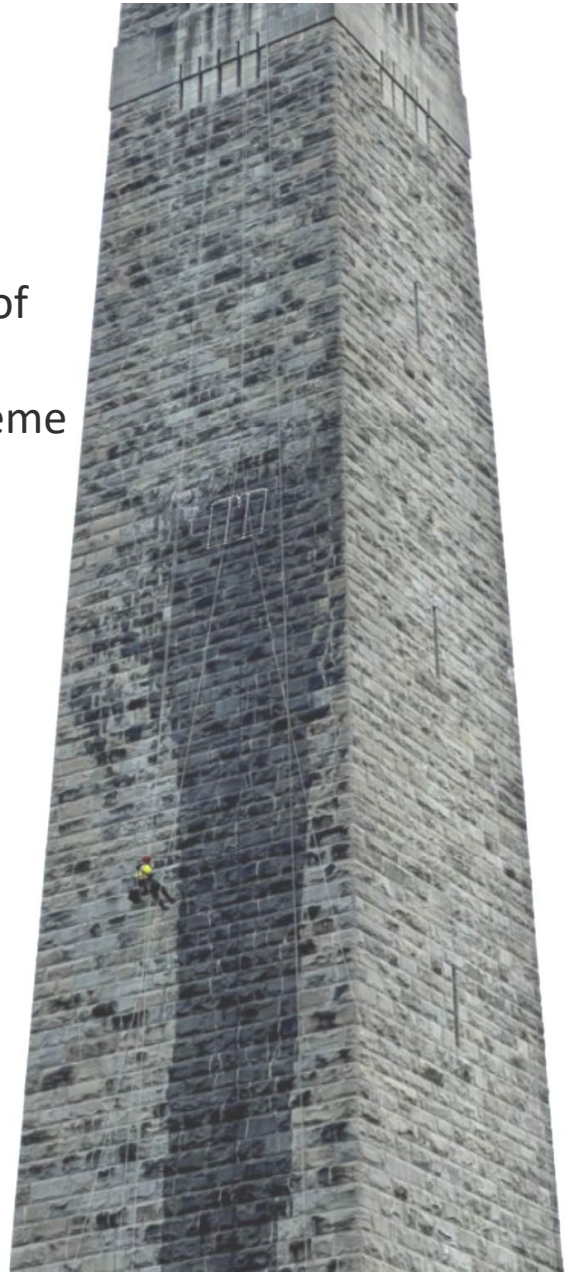
Outer Core Sample with Fossils

Goodman Jack test to evaluate stone's reaction to stress

Deformability testing measuring stiffness & stress-response of stone

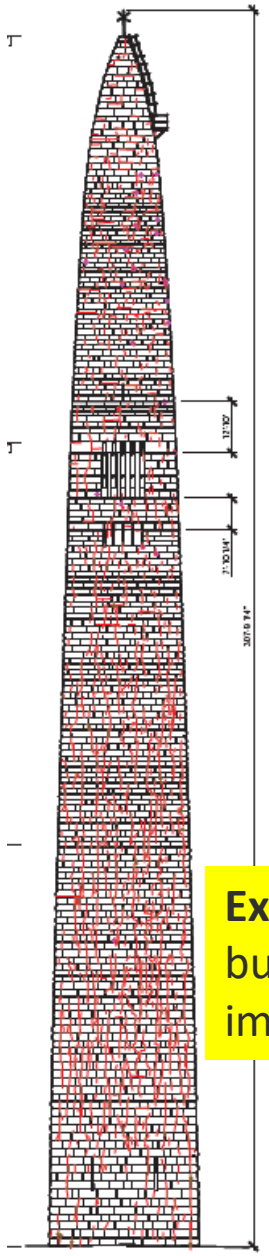
Visible Discoloration indicates Moisture, which Freezes

Discoloration of Exterior Stone indicates Extreme Moisture



High moisture reading on interior stone

Remnants of abandoned mechanical and electrical systems



Exterior Cracks in Red
(over 6,300 noted)

Delamination of stone

Spalling of Stone

Exterior Stone is Extremely Damaged and Vulnerable, but not irreparable. Drying out the **exterior stone** is imperative to future of the monument.

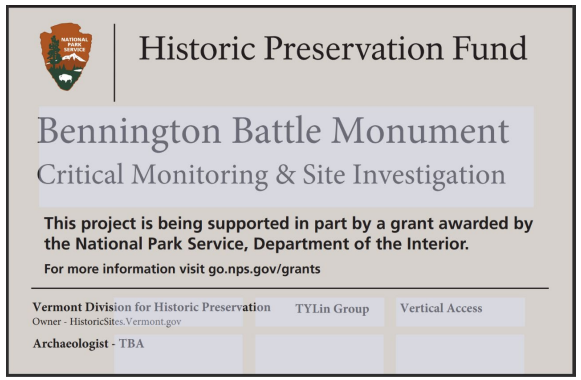
Open joint with crumbly mortar & debris

Damage from Metal Anchor Repair

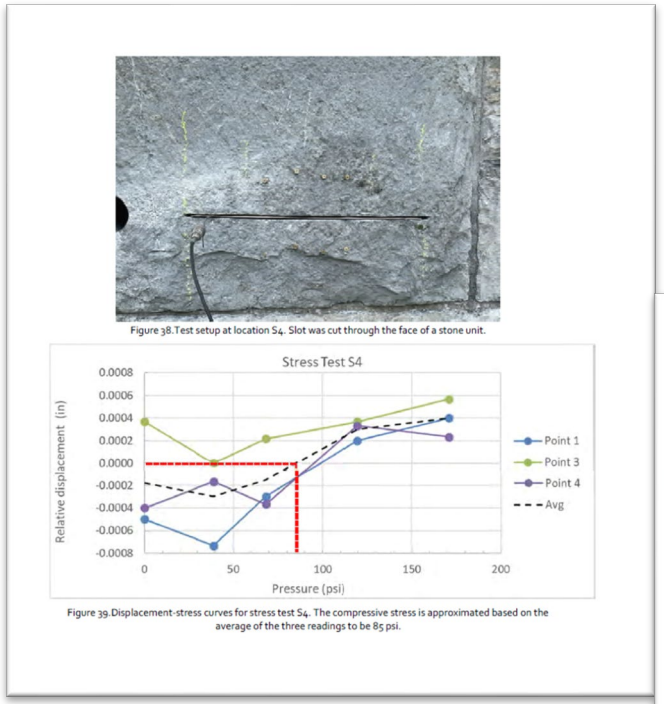
Active: Critical Monitoring & Site Investigation

Funding: $500,000 secured from federal grant

Scope: Seismic evaluations, archaeological investigation, monitoring of temperature/humidity, tilt meters and crack monitors, and high-rope safety inspections



Federal funding signage to be installed



Stress test Monitoring

Archaeology (pending 2026) and exterior safety inspection

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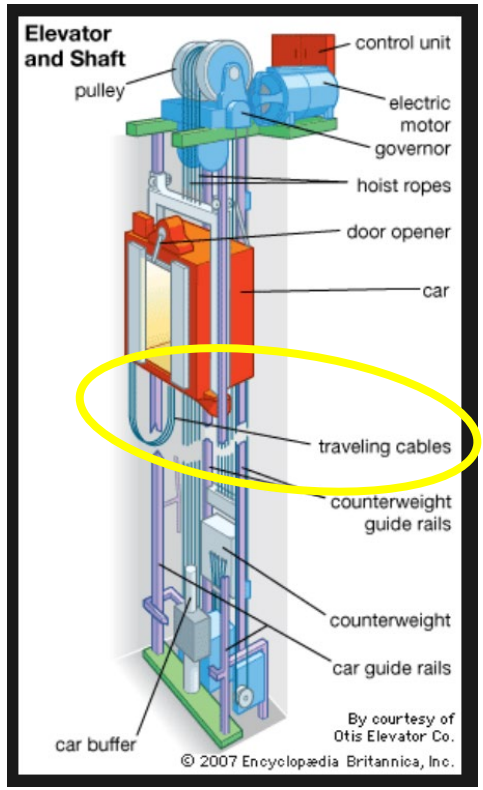
Pending: Immediate Infrastructure Needs

Funding: Estimate Pending for Cable Replacement

Scope: Elevator Audit & Cable Replacement

Strategic Goal: Extend elevator access for 8-10 years pending full replacement



Audit Identified Worn & Exposed Traveling Cable

Elevator at Observation Level

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CONSERVATION

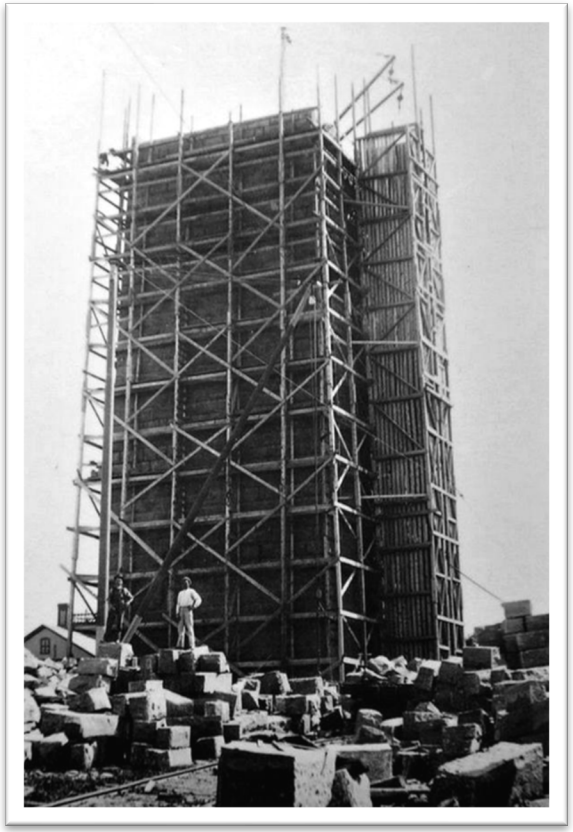
Phase 1A: Preparation & Site Stabilization

Phase 1B: Infrastructure & Schematic Design

Status: $400,000 (Secured State Funds)
Funding Target: $8M – $12.4M

Deliverable: Geotechnical engineering, site safety design, level 3 seismic study, schematic designs for mechanical/electrical and structural improvements, enclosure system engineering, construction of scaffolding and exterior enclosure, & physical mock-ups for exterior repairs

Strategic Value: By funding this work, we eliminate the ambiguity of broad estimates and convert specialists' estimates into documented, bid-ready construction costs.



Monument under construction, c. 1889

BENNINGTON BATTLE MONUMENT CONSERVATION: CONTEXTUALIZING COSTS & NEXT STEPS

ADDRESSING THE $40 MILLION BENCHMARK

The $40M figure is a **HIGH-LEVEL BENCHMARK** based on the historical scale of masonry conservation for other national landmarks (e.g., Washington Monument).

While this comparison establishes a context for complexity and scope, it is **NOT** a finalized cost for the Bennington site.

OUR DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH: PHASES 1A & 1B

We are moving beyond broad historical benchmarks to gather precise, site-specific data.

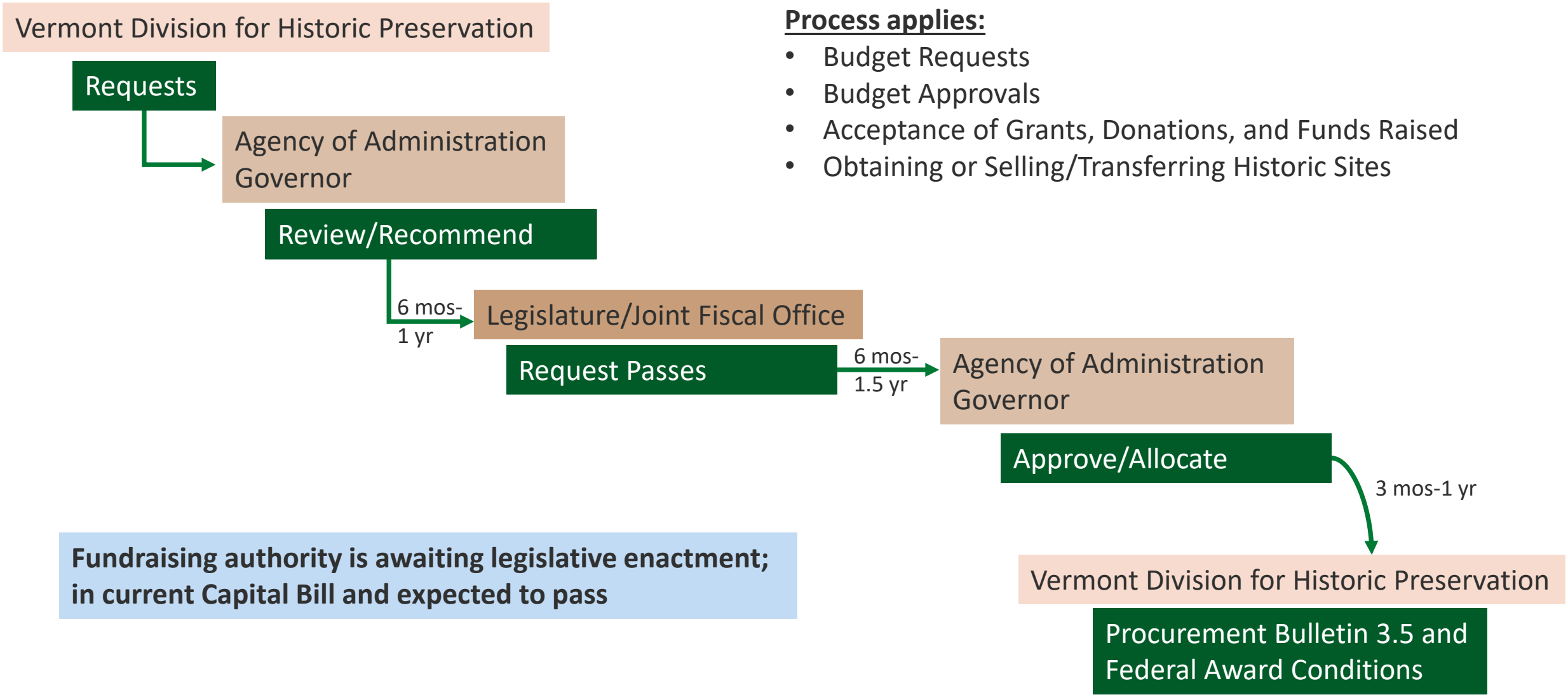
BUILDING THE ENCLOSURE: To safely dry the stone from an estimated **66,000 GALLONS OF WATER.**

DIAGNOSTICS: Saturated stone obscures true internal structural/elevator damage.

ENGINEERING DATA: Accurate testing is required before a final conservation plan and schedule can be developed.

The final conservation plan and cost will be based on precise findings from the dry-out process.

Decision and Funding Process for Vermont State Historic Sites

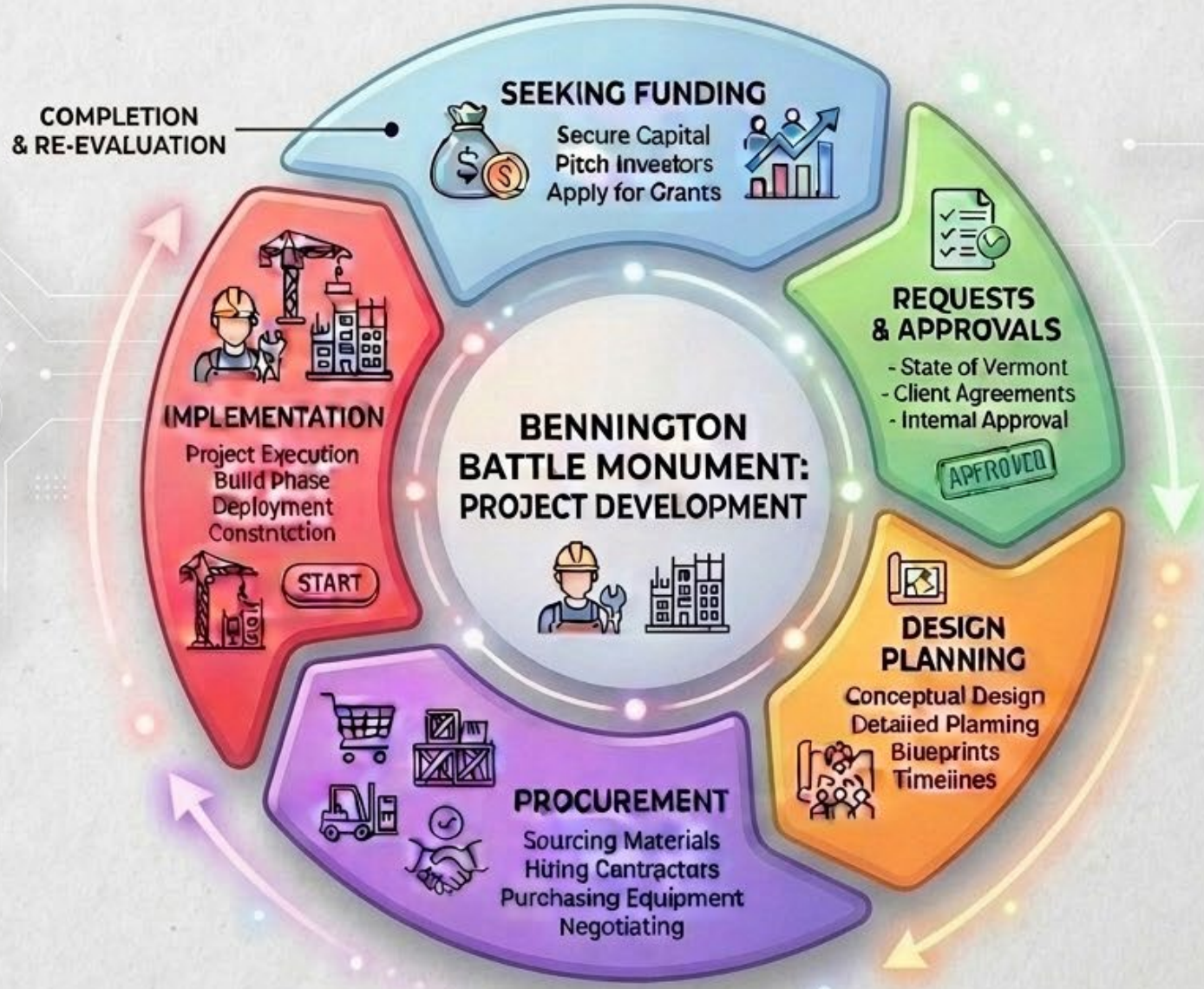


Process applies:

- Budget Requests
- Budget Approvals
- Acceptance of Grants, Donations, and Funds Raised
- Obtaining or Selling/Transferring Historic Sites

Fundraising authority is awaiting legislative enactment; in current Capital Bill and expected to pass

BENNINGTON BATTLE MONUMENT: PROJECT DEVELOPMENT LIFECYCLE



Defining the Path Forward: Actionable Alternatives for the Landmark

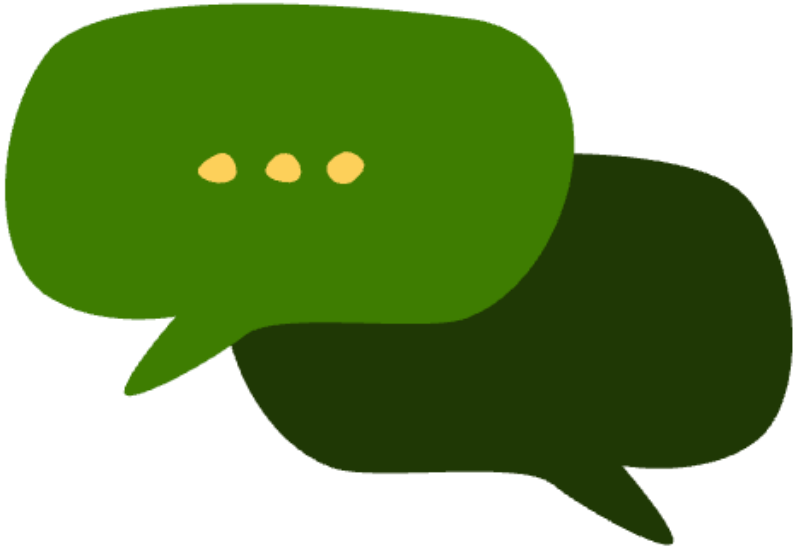
Reviewing physical and financial impacts of identified alternatives

Strategic Pathway	Estimated Timeline	Estimated Cost	Key Dependencies	Key Consequences
Decommission/ Removal	3-5 years	$20M	Requires Governor & Legislative Approval; remediation of materials	Profound cultural, financial, and historical loss to region and state historic sites program
Relinquish Ownership	Complex	Administrative	Requires Governor & Legislative Approval; requires preservation easement	Assume continued costs for safety maintenance, structural maintenance, repairs/conservation
Repurpose	Custom	To be defined	Dependent on repairs or conservation	No interior access or elevator; Requires ongoing safety maintenance
Limited Repairs	3-6 years	$5-$15M	Addresses immediate infrastructure needs as develop; triage for safety	Limited interior access & no elevator; Requires ongoing safety maintenance, Keeps fencing in place
Partial Conservation	5-7+ years	$10-$15M	Targeted structural fixes; safety measures required; Address issues as funding allows	Limited interior access & no elevator; Requires ongoing safety maintenance; Includes scaffolding for indefinite period; Extends conservation
Full Conservation	10-12+ years	$20-$40M	Permanent, generational solution; restores total public access	Cost and Timeline

We Want to Hear From You

Take a moment to reflect:

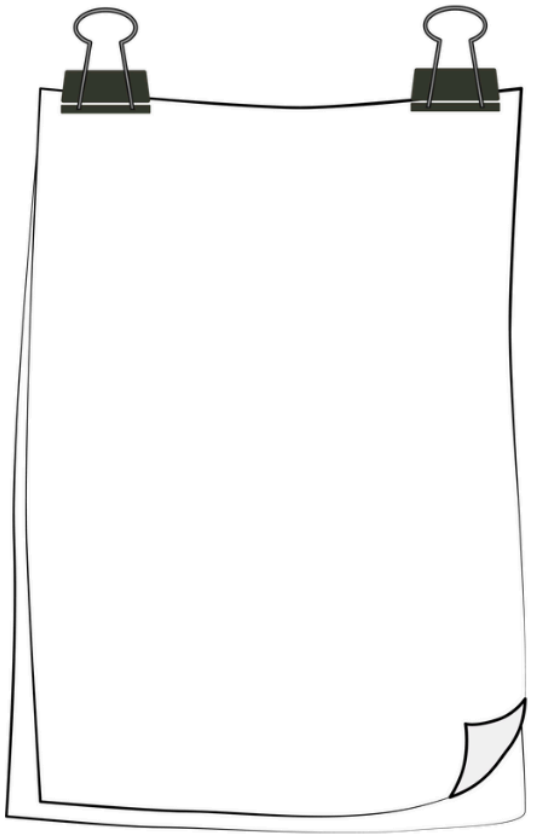
- Key takeaways, questions, or reactions



In your group:

- Share perspectives and priorities
- Add dots and comments at each station
- Build on others' ideas

Gallery Walk: How It Works



1. Move from station to station in small groups
2. Spend ~5 minutes at each station
3. Each station represents a different option.
4. Share your input in several ways
   - Place one dot to show your level of support
     (green = high support, yellow = mixed, red = do not support)
   - Add comments, questions, or suggestions
   - Build on others' ideas
5. Review previous comments—add checks or new thoughts.

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Credit: Jim Bowen

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Tuesday, May 12 at 6:00 PM (Virtual)

A virtual public meeting; the link will be provided on the Vermont State Historic Sites website.

Online Survey

Online survey designed to gather public input on how to address the building's critical conservation needs and shape its long-term future; the survey will be provided on the Vermont State Historic Sites website.

Email Comments

accd.benningtonbattlemonument@vermont.gov

The email address is available to share comments and suggestions.

Tuesday, October 6 at 6:00 PM (Virtual)

A virtual presentation summarizing community conversations, conservation updates, and laying out the next steps for the project.

2027 and onward: Regular community updates in-person and virtually

For a Copy of the Slides from Tonight's meeting, please email:

accd.benningtonbattlemonument@vermont.gov