

2025-2029 Consolidated Plan Public Hearing

Thursday, March 27, 2025, from 4:30-5:00 pm

Meeting Notes

Attendance:

Adam Grinold, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
Alex Halpern, FFF Architects
Amy Demetrowitz, Champlain Housing Trust
Ana Mejia, Windham Windsor Housing Trust
Bard Hill, Agency of Human Services
Ben Sturtz, EverNorth
Bob (last name unknown)
Bob Duncan, Duncan Wisniewski Architecture
Chris Brimmer, City of Fairlee
Elizabeth Nelson
Josh Crandall, FFF Architects
Kate Stallmann, Passumpsic Bank
Mike Ballard, FFF Architects
Sai Sarepalli, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
Sarah Shippee, Green Mountain Care Board
Stephen Devoto, Chelsea Farmers Market & Devoto Farm

Presenters & Staff Support:

Ann Karlene Kroll, Department of Housing & Community Development
Patrick Scheld, Department of Housing & Community Development
Ron Ruff, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
Jayme Bauer, Department of Housing & Community Development

Background:

The meeting began at 4:35, with a small technical delay. This is the 2nd Public Hearing for developing the 5 year Statewide Consolidated Plan. A draft of the plan as well as a link to a statewide survey is available at [Housing | Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#). Public comments are welcome through Friday, May 2, 2025, and can be emailed to ann.kroll@vermont.gov. The plan will be submitted to HUD on May 16, 2025.

Discussion:

Ann Kroll provided background on the federal funding that was covered through the Statewide Consolidated Plan i.e. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), National Housing Trust (NHT), Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), totaling approximately \$14 Million. The Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) is the lead agency for distributing this funding, but it works closely with partners like the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) on developing the Consolidated Plan. She added that public input is an important part of the process and that a draft plan is online for review and comments. The current plan is a strategic 5-year plan covering 2025-2029. Ann asked Ron Rupp of VHCB to add to her summary.

Ron Rupp said that VHCB receives approx. \$3 Million a year of HOME funds which are used for the development of affordable housing and most projects are paired up with other funding sources such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). They also receive approx. \$3 Million a year in National Housing Trust funds which are used for rental housing for extremely low-income households. He added that VHCB administers state funds that are used in these projects.

Ann Kroll then asked Patrick Scheld if he had anything to add to the summary and he said DHCD was excited to partner with municipalities to bring affordable housing online, rehab existing homes, assist with job creation and economic development initiatives, and provide support for infrastructure projects and facilities such as daycare centers.

Ann Kroll stated that most of the Agency of Human Services staff that administers ESG funding is at a national conference and said there were no major changes being proposed for the use of ESG funds. She added that there was a change being proposed for Community Development Programs (CDBG funds):

- Historically there were three rounds of funding. The last couple of years there were two rounds of funding. DHCD is proposing to do only one round of funding for the Scattered Site Program. This is mostly due to limited funding.
- DHCD is also proposing to increase the set aside from 35% of CDBG funds to 45%. The Scattered Site Program assists owner-occupants with needed home repairs. 70% of Vermont's single-family homes are owner-occupied and it is important to preserve this aging housing stock. Many owner occupants are low- and moderate-income households who need assistance.

Patrick Scheld added that the state works with 5 Homeownership Centers that operate in every county to administer the Scattered Site Program. Currently, they collectively do 110-120 rehab projects a year and DHCD is hoping with the extra funding that 130-140 rehabs could be completed.

Ann Kroll opened the floor for questions.

Ana Mejia said that she is a financial counselor at a homeownership center and doesn't work directly with the Scattered Site Program but wondered how the increased set aside would be distributed to the 5 homeownership centers, and if it would be split evenly among them. Patrick Scheld replied that the funds would be distributed based on past performance and community needs and DHCD would work with the homeownership centers with the goal of increasing the number of home rehabs.

Ana Mejia asked if she understood that the funds wouldn't be distributed in a prescriptive way but based on working with each homeownership center. Ann Kroll

Ann Kroll said that DHCD wants to incentivize the number of units being rehabbed. She added that many homeowners who need repairs can't qualify for the low interest loans because of their debt to equity ratio and DHCD would like to offer more grants and larger

grants to serve this need. She said, that for context, if a homeowner contacts a homeownership center about a leaky roof and the rehab specialist goes to the home to look at the roof and sees other health and safety concerns, they need to be addressed according to HUD's quality standards, so repairs can cost more than anticipated. The goal is to keep people in their homes and DHCD hopes that larger grants will help with that.

Jayme Bauer said that there was a question from online participant Steven Devoto about connecting low income, rural homeowners with resources. Patrick asked Steven if he was talking about home repair programs through the homeownership centers and if so, each homeownership center does their own outreach and marketing as part of their agreements with DHCD. Ann Kroll said maybe to clarify whether there other resources on top of the Scattered Site Program. She knows that the homeownership centers do their best to make these connections, including in worst cases where households need to be moved due to unsafe, deteriorated conditions of the home. Steven posted that his question was answered.

Ann Kroll said there were staff concerns about going down to one round of funding for the Scattered Site Program because after the June cycle, it will be almost a full year before more funds will be available. She added that with the construction cycle in Vermont, she believes it will be ok with only one round, but if it doesn't work DHCD will make any needed adjustments. Ann asked if anyone else had any questions.

Sai Sarepalli said he worked in Chittenden County and saw DHCD's online survey and wondered about funding for daycares and childcare centers. Patrick Scheld said that there is funding for childcare through the CDBG Public Facilities & Infrastructure program. Sai asked how the program works. Patrick replied that the applicant would need site control to qualify and that DHCD has recently funded a few new childcare centers that are going under construction this spring. Patrick added that if an applicant did not have site control but wanted to see if a project was feasible, they could apply for a planning grant.

Amy Demetrowitz of Champlain Housing Trust appreciated the effort that went into developing the draft Consolidated Plan, especially the discussions about barriers to creating affordable housing and how to address them.

- She wondered about the barriers created by federal programs such as Davis Bacon¹, BABA², etc. and she asked how we could make it less burdensome for cities and towns by allowing nonprofits to be the applicants with municipal support to reduce the risk for cities and towns.
- She said that CHT administers the Scattered Site Program, and federal funding is not the best source for homeowners because there are so many regulations tied to it. She would like to see the program use different funding sources and cited the

¹ [Davis-Bacon and Related Acts | U.S. Department of Labor](#)

² <https://www.epa.gov/baba/build-america-buy-america-baba-overview>

Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) as an example because it is funded with State General Funds.

- She also advocated against changing the 35% set aside to 45% because even through CDBG funds are a very small percentage of larger rental developments, they are an important resource.

Ann Kroll thanked Amy for complimenting DHCD on their hard work on the draft plan. She said that DHCD was increasing the set aside for the Scattered Site Program because there wasn't enough state funding to expand programs like VHIP.

Chris Brimmer is with the Town of Fairlee and said that they were working with developers on several affordable housing projects and that they are running into tax problems with grants and would like guidance on how to act as a pass-through for funds and provide forgivable loans rather than grants. Their attorney believes that forgivable loans would alleviate the tax burden that grants can create. He added that Fairlee is a small town with part-time staff, and they need better guidance on this issue. Ann Kroll said that DHCD would work with the League of Cities and Towns to provide training on tax credits, grants, forgivable loans, etc.

Kate Stallmann asked about increasing capacity for building Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as a way of creating affordable housing. Jayme Bauer said that VHIP can provide up to \$50,000 to create an ADU, but they need to be rentals and not for family members. Homeowners can get 5-year grants or 10-year forgivable loans. Jayme said she would be happy to provide more information about VHIP and that there was also info on the DHCD website (<https://accd.vermont.gov/vhip>). Patrick Scheld said that ADUs were allowable through the Scattered Site Program, but they had to be within the building envelope and not a stand alone structure. He added that DHCD had provided the City of Montpelier approx. \$200,000 to create 9-10 ADUs throughout the City. DHCD was looking at how this could be replicated. Kate asked for a contact for the program. Patrick referred her to Tyler Maas at Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA).

Ann Kroll and Jayme Bauer provided next steps:

- The 2nd Advisory Board meeting will be Monday, March 31 and the discussions from community engagement meetings and the formal public hearings would be taken into consideration.
- The public comment period ends on May 2, 2025.
- The 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan will be submitted to HUD on May 16, 2025.

Ann asked if there were any additional questions, and no one raised their hand or put a question in the chat.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15pm