

Franklin County Projects

Here is a list of Franklin County economic/community development projects as compiled by Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC) and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC).

Priority Projects (in order by priority):

1. **Franklin County State Airport Infrastructure** – The Town of Highgate and the Village of Swanton are collaborating to extend water and sewer from Swanton to the Franklin County State Airport in Highgate and to the proposed industrial park adjacent to the airport. Franklin County has no vacant industrial space and turns away potential businesses regularly for that reason; the region continues to have a strong manufacturing base and with its proximity to Canada, and the number of businesses looking to enter the US market, the industrial park is ideally situated. We have also seen Chittenden County businesses look to Franklin County as space availability becomes tighter in that county.

A feasibility study funded by a Municipal Planning Grant has been completed and funding opportunities are being pursued; Highgate recently successfully completed a Northern Border Regional Commission application for \$482,000 and has submitted an EDA Public Works application. The Highgate voters also approved a \$500,000 bond vote in September 2021.

2. **St. Albans Town Industrial Park Infrastructure** – FCIDC has invested more than \$3.5 million into the St. Albans Town Industrial Park and needs an additional \$1 million to finish the infrastructure. FCIDC has secured funding through Northern Border Regional Commission and the USDA Rural Business Development Grant program to fund engineering and permitting costs to make two lots ready for development. In addition, the Town of St. Albans applied for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Grant Program to construct a sidewalk in the industrial park; FCIDC will be responsible for matching funds, should the project be selected for funding. FCIDC is in discussions with several businesses who have expressed interest in locating in the park.
3. **Fonda Site Development** – This is being developed as a small business park. The proposed site plan shows three facilities on the site. St. Albans City recently completed the sale of the site to a developer who will then lease part of it for the Railroad Dispatching Center, which plans to construct a 10,000 sq. ft. building to house operations. The project includes contamination clean-up for the entire lot in hopes of developing the remaining two lots. More funding for roads, water, and wastewater will be required as well. This site was awarded \$2,000,000 in FY 2022 federal appropriations funds.

4. **Perley Block (Enosburg Falls)** – FCIDC, working with the current property owner, has gotten the property listed on the National Register of Historic Place, which made it eligible for \$250,000 in federal tax credits. Redevelopment will include 2-3 retail spaces, a childcare facility, and office space; the existing apartments will remain. The project, from purchase through development will cost approximately \$1,800,000. The project is in the State’s BRELLA program. Funding for the Phase II ESA was secured through the BRELLA program. No Corrective Action Plan was needed; monitoring wells are in place due to possible contamination from an adjoining property. FCIDC is seeking funding for the project from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
5. **MVRT & LVRT Rail Trail Improvements** – Franklin County hosts the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail (MVRT) and a portion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT), which intersect in Sheldon. Given the physical and economic impacts the completed MVRT has had and the impacts of a completed LVRT, a collaborative effort that includes Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RiseVT, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation, VAST, and neighboring municipalities continues to seek funding sources to maintain and upgrade portions of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail and to plan funding for the maintenance of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.
6. **Montgomery Village Septic System Upgrades** – Sewage disposal is an issue in the village center and often dictates the density at which development can occur. Small lot sizes and existing old malfunctioning septic systems are an economic limitation to the current and future residents of Montgomery. The project also includes streetscape improvements for a total cost of approximately \$18,000,000. Montgomery has received \$250,000 from the state’s Clean Water Revolving Fund, \$507,000 from Northern Border Regional Commission, \$6,000,000 from USDA Rural Development, and a low-interest loan for the remaining balance. Montgomery received \$2,800,000 in FY 2022 federal appropriation funds.
7. **Champlain Theater (Swanton)** - This project involves repurposing the historic Champlain Theater into three retail spaces that will then be rented to tenants. The existing theater space will be subdivided while maintaining much of the building’s historic nature. The Champlain Theater is located in the heart of Swanton’s downtown, at the intersection of US Route 7 and VT Route 78, which provides for high visibility. Exterior work has begun and the Winters are seeking funding from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
8. **Healthy Roots Collaborative** – HRC is an effort to improve food access, provide local farm and food education, and develop essential infrastructure that support farm viability – all of which directly impacts the health and wellness of our Northwest Vermont Communities. A large portion of the funding for Healthy Roots came from NMC but has been reduced and we are expecting bigger cuts in the coming year.

9. **Brigham Academy Conversion** – located in Bakersfield the structure has been vacated for 25 plus years and is currently being evaluated by a private developer to convert the space to Senior Housing. This would be a huge project for Bakersfield and surrounding communities. Architectural plans have been completed. In 2020 Bakersfield successfully applied for a Community Development Block Grant to partially fund the planning phase. Additional funding sources are being considered, with FCIDC pledging technical assistance as well as \$15,000 in financial support.
10. **Re-establishing a WIB Coordinator** – If the region had had a WIB Coordinator in place over the last year we feel there could have been better coordination between employers and prospective employees. The pandemic has shown the value of having a liaison in place to assist those on both sides of the hiring process navigate challenges and realize opportunities more easily.
11. **Riviere Hotel** – The Village of Swanton recently purchased this site for mixed-use redevelopment in the Northern Gateway area. This has been a project long on Swanton’s list and now has momentum with funding for the Phase II ESA, estimated at \$31,000, pending. This project is in the State’s BRELLA program.
12. **Enosburgh Streetscape** – In 2019 the Village of Enosburg Falls successfully applied for a Better Connections grant to promote economic development and community health-focusing on strengthening the tourism and recreation economy and developing a coordinated marketing identity for the Village Center. Concepts included in the project are streetscapes and community enhancements in and around the designed village such as promoting complete streets, access management, improved multi-modal connections, beautification, wayfinding, and storefront façade enhancements.

This project is part of those efforts. The project has identified key priorities, including:

1. Streetscape Improvements: Main Street
2. Streetscape Improvements: Rail Trail Intersection
3. Streetscape Improvements: Depot Street

An initial master plan was submitted for public comment and then DuBois and King was hired in 2020 to complete the feasibility study. At that point the village will begin seeking funding for implementation.

Projects to be Monitored (in alphabetical order):

- **Cadillac Motel** – This is a CHT project where they will purchase the motel and convert it into a motel model to support homelessness.
- **Colony Square Housing Upgrades** – The apartment complex is located on the former site of the St. Albans Gas and Light Plant, which produced coal tar as a byproduct. The additional assessment and anticipated cost of the clean-up of the site are a deterrent to investors who would otherwise be interested in making upgrades to the neighborhood housing units. This project is seeking funds and interested parties to upgrade available housing stock; there are currently 22 apartments on site.
- **Enosburgh Armory** – This building, received by the Town of Enosburgh as a donation from the State, is currently moving towards a Phase II ESA.
- **Fourth Street Property** – This property is located in Swanton along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail making it a key location in the region. Currently owned by the Town, a group of citizens is discussing plans for development and will be presenting alternatives to the Selectboard in December.
- **Georgia South Village** – This is a collaboration between the Town of Georgia, VTrans, and Northwest Regional Planning and includes:
 - Upgrades to the US-7/VT104-A intersection, which will remove the VT-104A right turn slip lane and install a new traffic signal (roundabout is being considered considered.)
 - Updates to the I-89 northbound ramps and Skunk Hill Road intersection, where a new connected traffic signal and left turn lane on the I-89 northbound off ramp will be installed.
 - Relocation of the Park and Ride, which will move and expand the existing Park and Ride to a new location within the existing highway right-of-way. All aspects of the project will integrate stormwater mitigation and a sidewalk network into design.
- **Highgate Village Core** – Highgate has purchased a prominent lot, known as the Machia property, for redevelopment. This is part of a larger revitalization effort of the downtown that so far has seen the construction of sidewalk from the municipal complex to the library.
- **Richford Post Office** – The current tenant of the building is FNESU but will not be renewing their lease in 2022 as they have outgrown the space and have a desire to be more centrally located amongst their union towns. There is a need for some renovations on the building and finding new tenants. The building is owned by the Town of Richford.
- **Richford Senior Housing** – There is a need for Senior Housing in Richford which would in turn free up some homes in hopes of attracting families to the community.

The vision is to remove an existing blighted apartment house on Main Street and construct a senior housing facility overlooking the river.

- **Richford Slaughterhouse** – This project is in the early stages of discussion; Levi Irish, Richford’s Economic Development Director, is leading the discussion with Brault Slaughterhouse in Troy. They have a potential local site which has access to Town water and wastewater.
- **St. Albans Bay** – The Town of St. Albans has several projects in the Bay area:
 - Revamping the stone house into a year-round event space to accommodate weekend lake hockey tournaments
 - Raising and securing the dock
 - Constructing sidewalks from the new Town Hall to the dock
 - Making Route 36 a Class 1 Highway.
 - Turning the old garage property into a boat/kayak launch to take pressure off Hathaway and to host more fishing derbies
 - Extending the rail trail into the Bay
- **Swanton Downtown Redevelopment** – The Village of Swanton, working with consultant VBH, completed a feasibility study to look at improving pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular travel in the downtown core. In 2021, the village applied for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Grant program to fund some of the short- and long-term recommendations contained in the feasibility study report; results are pending.