

# Area-Wide Brownfield Plan for Downtown, Bennington Vermont



## Services / Expertise

Environmental Assessment and Remediation  
Brownfield Redevelopment  
Area-Wide Planning  
Geospatial & Data Solutions  
Data Visualization  
ArcGIS Online Story Map  
Community Outreach & Stakeholder Engagement

## Markets

Local Government and RPCs  
Site / Property Owners  
Commercial Developers  
Community-Based Organizations

## Project Location

Town of Bennington, Vermont

## Project Owner

Bennington County Regional Commission

## Date Completed

2016–Present

## Budget

\$42,000

## Project Manager

Daniel Voisin

## Awards & Recognition



*Perspective of redeveloped block at Main and Washington with public green space, improved streetscapes, and new, mixed-use buildings to fulfill recreation, hospitality, and public needs in the downtown area.*

**IN 2015, STONE** Environmental, with team members GPI and Doug Kennedy Advisors, completed an Area Wide Brownfield Plan for Downtown Bennington, Vermont. Working with the Bennington County Regional Commission and VTDEC, Stone prepared a comprehensive existing conditions inventory and analysis of the entire downtown area using historical documents including Sanborn maps, local historical society photographs, the University of Vermont Landscape Change Program, and Manning’s city directories to establish historic land use patterns for and past uses of environmental significance. Natural and cultural resources and various assets within the Project Area were inventoried and reviewed from local and statewide databases. Existing files held by the VTDEC Sites Management Section were reviewed to assess the status of currently and formerly managed environmental sites with a specific focus as to what conditions may exist that would hinder redevelopment of properties within the study area. Data obtained during the environmental and infrastructure assessment were collected, stored, and managed within an ArcGIS Online geodatabase, allowing stakeholders to quickly access information for any parcel in the downtown area.

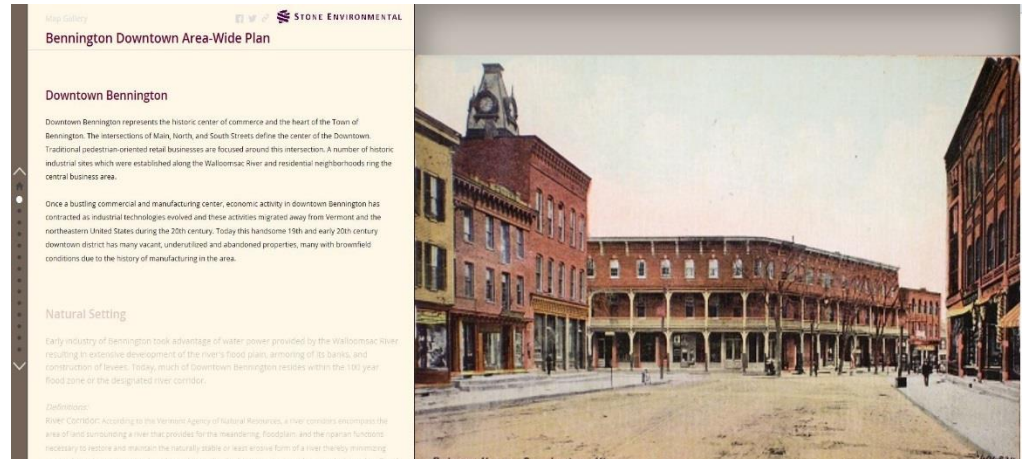
The Stone Team, BCRC, VTDEC, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and a group of 14 local business owners and stakeholders quickly identified a key set of properties for site-specific consideration for targeted analyses. These key properties comprised most of a contiguous block in the downtown core that are currently occupied by a vacant lumberyard, former historic hotel, and underutilized retail spaces. Redevelopment planning was conducted in close coordination with the stakeholder group and included a general market study, retail leakage analysis, concept development plans, and costs for the redevelopment. Furthermore, funding assistance was identified from a variety of state and federal grant opportunities.

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The Stone Team gathered public input of the proposed redevelopment in an unconventional manner – input was gathered at a local farmers market and a home brewers’ festival. Revised redevelopment plans were used by BCRC while they recruited a perspective development team. Findings from the existing conditions inventory and analysis, conceptual redevelopment plans, and 3-D renderings were presented at a well-attended public meeting in Bennington, as well as conveyed online using a Story Map.

The Bennington Downtown Area-Wide Plan Story Map (<http://www.stone-env.com/news-and-insights/resource-library/detail/bennington-downtown-area-wide-plan-interactive-story-map>) proved to be a key tool for developing stakeholder buy-in and building interest in the project. Community members were able to access the Story Map’s easily navigable platform to find information about the area’s history, setting, resources, and the concept redevelopment plans.



*The town of Bennington used the Story Map to gain community buy-in on redevelopment scenarios, allowing stakeholders to visualize outcomes of the area-wide plan, as well as attract potential investors to help redevelop vacant or underutilized sites in the downtown area with real or perceived contamination.*

The Development Team, which consists of a consortium of local business leaders, private investors, both Bennington College and Southern Vermont College, and the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, have recently submitted a Corrective Action Plan to support the redevelopment downtown living, offices, restaurants, and retail. Initial estimates indicate that the project will and will require 12–18 months to complete.’

In August, the Town of Bennington was awarded a \$1 million Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to move forward with a plan that closely resembles one of the proposed redevelopment scenarios outlined in the Area-Wide Plan. The Putnam Block redevelopment project is scheduled to begin this fall, with federal grant funding from the Town targeted to the first phase of the project, including site acquisition, environmental mitigation, demolition of blighted and unsafe commercial buildings, infrastructure improvements, and the renovation of existing historic buildings.