

Press Release: State Board Designates Downtown Hardwick and Middlebury Neighborhoods for New Benefits

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Local action and leadership recognized by the Vermont Downtown Board to grow vitality and housing development.

MONTPELIER, Vt. — The Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Downtown Development Board has announced [two new state designations](#) for communities in Addison and Caledonia counties. State designations incentivize housing, business, and public infrastructure development in Vermont's civic centers and development-ready areas.

Vermont's [state designation programs](#) work together to provide incentives, align policies, and give communities the technical assistance needed to encourage new development and redevelopment in Vermont's compact, designated areas.

"People often remind me as I travel across the state how important and valuable these designations are for proactive planning and community development," said Housing and Community Development Commissioner Josh Hanford. "They nudge local action, extend important funding incentives, and unlock regulatory benefits that make placemaking, streetscaping, and new homes possible. As board chair, I'm thrilled to be able to support, recognize, and partner with local leaders in Middlebury and Hardwick."

The town of Hardwick, originally designated as a Village Center in 2003, received approval for Downtown Designation, joining [23 other downtowns across the state](#). This designation supports local efforts to restore historic buildings, improve housing, design walkable communities, and encourage economic development by incentivizing public and private investments. The newly established Hardwick Downtown Partnership will work with the town, business owners, and other partners to support community vitality and create opportunities for future development and improvements to existing infrastructure and public spaces.

“I am thrilled that we will be joining the network of other Designated Downtowns. Hardwick has been working for some time to achieve this goal and we are grateful for the encouragement that we received from the DHCD team,” said Shari Cornish of the Hardwick Downtown Partnership and select board chair. “The resources and opportunities that this designation offers will support our continued community planning and development.”

The town of Middlebury was granted the Neighborhood Development Area Designation (NDA). This program encourages municipalities and developers to plan for new development within walking distance of its existing designated downtown. Middlebury will be using this program to support partnerships to build much-needed new housing including the Stonecrop Meadows subdivision, a multi-unit, mixed-income housing development project by Summit Properties on land acquired by Middlebury College. With an NDA now in place, projects like Stonecrop Meadows can access program [benefits](#), such as a 50% Act 250 application fee reduction, exemption from the land gains tax, and \$50 state wastewater permit fees.

“Together, the new NDA and a recent zoning amendment funded by the Municipal Planning Grant program provide real tools for addressing our housing shortage by maximizing the development potential of parcels within walking distance of downtown,” according to Middlebury Planning Director Jennifer Murray. “Were it not for this NDA designation and the doors it opens for developers to access affordable housing financing, the Stonecrop Meadows project would not have been viable as proposed.”

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