

Building the Market from Scratch and From All Sides: Brattleboro's Blueprint for Clean Energy Finance in Rural Vermont

Building a Clean Energy Investment Pipeline in Brattleboro, Vermont

AT A GLANCE

Investment Priorities

Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Building Efficiency and Electrification, District Geothermal Feasibility and Development, Residential Plug-and-Play Solar + Battery (Priority Communities), Downtown Mixed-Use Ownership Transition Energy Upgrades

Pipeline Value

The pipeline spans capital-ready commercial and institutional projects with defined scopes and cost estimates, through capital-readiness projects requiring additional predevelopment work; residential solar portfolio estimated at \$300,000 for approximately 150 households; Brattleboro Industry and Technology Park geothermal anchor project will require several times the \$3.25M Congressionally Directed Spending already secured over a 10 to 20-year investment horizon (per PPP plan; aggregate pipeline total not consolidated in source documents)

Key Partners

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC, lead); Town of Brattleboro; Green Mountain Power; Efficiency Vermont; Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA); Vermont Bond Bank; Brattleboro Savings and Loan; Windham and Windsor Housing Trust; Brattleboro Housing Partnership; Tri-Park (resident-owned manufactured homes); SEVCA (Southeastern Vermont Community Action); Brightsaver

Community Impacts

100% LIDAC designation; approximately 150 low-income households targeted in residential solar pilot; 350 jobs projected at BIT Park upon full buildout; pipeline spans renters, manufactured housing residents, small businesses, nonprofits, and industrial employers — all priority community segments

Strategic Role

Market Enabler / Project Originator

The Path Forward

Predevelopment capital needed to advance capital-readiness projects to investable stage; CGC credit enhancements to fill financing gaps in commercial and industrial stacks where Vermont C-PACE and CHIP are not yet enacted; continued feasibility investment at BIT Park geothermal to reach financial close

THE BIG PICTURE

Brattleboro is a small rural Vermont city of approximately 11,000 residents with an outsized concentration of economic anchors — an active industrial park, a historic downtown with notable mixed-use commercial buildings, a resident-owned manufactured housing community, and a network of mission-driven nonprofits and institutions. It also has a clean energy transition problem that is textbook rural: fragmented property ownership, limited local lender fluency in energy project finance, no Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) enabling legislation yet in Vermont, and a gap between the projects people can envision and the market infrastructure needed to execute them. MIF gave the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) the resources to build that infrastructure — not just identify projects, but systematically move them along a continuum from concept to investable.

The Challenge: Brattleboro's barriers are not unique, but they are mutually reinforcing in a rural context. Small commercial and industrial property owners lack the technical capacity to define project scopes, model returns, or engage lenders. Local financial institutions have limited experience underwriting energy efficiency and clean energy deals. State-level tools that work in larger Vermont markets — particularly C-PACE — do not yet exist in statutory form. For renters and manufactured housing residents, the absence of a permitting pathway for portable solar has historically locked out an entire segment of the community from clean energy adoption entirely. Notably, many of the projects identified are below the threshold of interest for clean energy financing initiatives.

The Solution: The Town of Brattleboro and BDCC's approach builds the market from both ends simultaneously. For commercial, industrial, and institutional properties, they are advancing projects along a defined readiness continuum — from audit and feasibility through capital stack formation — while convening lenders to build fluency in energy finance and developing standardized evaluation tools that reduce transaction costs across future deals. For priority communities, the Town partnered with Brightsaver and coordinated a statewide permitting pathway announcement with Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) to establish plug-and-play solar as a viable, accessible technology for renters and manufactured housing residents. The two tracks reinforce each other: early visible wins in residential deployment build public confidence while BDCC's institutional pipeline demonstrates market depth to lenders.



"This program is enabling the Town of Brattleboro to extend the benefits of the clean energy transition to all residents and energy users, both big and small. We are enthusiastic to see what new opportunities open up after completion of this work."

- Stephen Dotson, Town of Brattleboro Sustainability Coordinator

BUILDING THE MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE BRATTLEBORO DIDN'T HAVE

Every investment in this module directly addresses a barrier that, without MIF, would have remained in place for years.

- **Lender fluency and financing pathway development:** BDCC and the Town of Brattleboro convened structured meetings with local and regional financial institutions — including Brattleboro Savings and Loan, VEDA, and the Vermont Bond Bank — to map financing pathways by project type, identify gaps where existing products don't fit, and build shared frameworks for evaluating clean energy and efficiency projects. Three February 2026 training sessions advanced this work across the lender community.
 - **Impact:** lenders and partners in the community are working together to develop shared pathways to engage earlier in the project development process, reducing the deal-by-deal education burden that currently slows every transaction.
- **Standardized project evaluation tools and capital stack modeling:** BDCC is developing standardized approaches for project documentation, capital stack development, and financing gap identification, drawing on its expertise in complex public-private real estate development. By modeling how tools interact within specific capital stacks — testing how CHIP, the proposed C-PACE legislation (Vermont Senate Bill 138), federal tax credits, and BDCC's own Windham Investment Fund (WIF) and Windham County Economic Development Program (WCEDP) funds "play together" — BDCC is converting one-off project negotiations into repeatable frameworks.
 - **Impact:** each project that closes under this framework reduces the cost and time of the next one.
- **Plug-and-play solar permitting pathway and residential pilot:** The Town of Brattleboro launched a portable solar pilot in September 2025, coordinated with a statewide permitting pathway announcement through VPIRG, making Vermont one of the first states with a clear regulatory framework for plug-and-play solar deployment without permanent building modifications. Deployment is concentrated at Tri-Park, the state's largest resident-owned mobile home park, with SEVCA (Southeastern Vermont Community Action) supporting outreach and eligibility screening to prioritize low-income households. Brattleboro Savings and Loan is developing a tailored loan product for residential participants. A public delivery and learning event in April 2026 is advancing customer engagement.
 - **Impact:** this pilot directly solves the access barrier that has excluded renters and manufactured housing residents from clean energy adoption — and generates the demand data that installers and lenders need to develop dedicated products for this market segment.

- **C-PACE advocacy and policy development:** BDCC has been researching and supporting localized efforts to identify the market and impact of C-Pace financing with the view to establish a statewide C-PACE framework (Vermont Senate Bill S.138) allowing municipalities to designate C-PACE districts and enable private lenders to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, and resilience improvements through long-term property tax assessments of up to 30 years. C-PACE would provide up to 100% project financing with the obligation transferring on property sale — directly addressing the working capital barrier that stops commercial and industrial property owners from moving forward on projects that pencil over time but require upfront investment they don't have.
 - **Impact:** if S.138 passes, it unlocks a financing mechanism for precisely the commercial and industrial pipeline.
- **Vermont CHIP integration for district energy enabling:** BDCC is exploring Vermont's Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), which allows municipalities to finance upfront infrastructure — including underground utilities and potentially district geothermal — with repayment from incremental future property tax value, similar to tax increment financing. This "infrastructure-first" mechanism addresses the sequencing problem in mixed-use development where shared energy infrastructure must be in place before private vertical development can proceed.
 - **Impact:** CHIP creates a pathway to finance district geothermal infrastructure ahead of private development at BIT Park and in the downtown, without requiring private developers to carry that cost on their own balance sheets.



A PIPELINE BUILT FOR SUSTAINED MARKET ACTIVITY

BDCC structured its pipeline along a deliberate continuum from capital-ready to capital-readiness, ensuring the work produces sustained deal flow rather than a single cohort of projects.

- **Capital-ready commercial, industrial, and institutional projects:** These are properties with defined scopes, ownership alignment, and cost estimates where financing conversations can begin immediately once the right capital tools are in place. Projects include efficiency and electrification upgrades at commercial and institutional facilities across Brattleboro, structured around Efficiency Vermont technical assistance, Green Mountain Power programs, and BDCC's gap-filling financing tools. The pipeline includes LIDAC-serving businesses, nonprofits, and institutions that face persistent barriers to engaging lenders directly.
- **Capital-readiness projects (predevelopment pipeline):** A larger set of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use properties where barriers to project definition — lack of energy audits, incomplete financial modeling, limited owner capacity — are preventing otherwise viable projects from becoming investable. For some projects, BDCC is advancing these through energy audits, electrification readiness assessments, load analyses, technical and financial feasibility studies, early design and engineering, interconnection screening, and project-level capital stack modeling. Each completed audit or feasibility study converts a concept into an investable project.
- **Brattleboro Industry and Technology Park anchor:** The Park is BDCC's flagship long-term project — a planned 130,000 SF of new development plus upgrade of an existing 100,000 SF historic factory, still in active use but unrenovated since original construction over 80 years ago, targeting 350 jobs upon full buildout. In 2026, BDCC secured \$3.25M in Congressionally Directed Spending to accelerate feasibility of a large-scale build out incorporating clean energy options into its buildout. A potential district-scale geothermal system could reduce long-term energy costs for multi-tenant industrial and commercial users, stabilize employer operating costs, and demonstrate how geothermal infrastructure can anchor economic development in rural communities. Total investment over the 10 to 20-year development horizon will require several times the CDS award (per PPP plan).
- **Residential Solar and Battery Portfolio (~150 households, \$300,000 estimated aggregate):** The Town of Brattleboro is leading aggregated deployment of portable solar units with battery storage to approximately 150 primarily low-income households, including renters and manufactured housing residents. System costs range from \$1,500 to \$7,500 per household. These systems provide immediate electricity cost savings and resilience during outages without requiring permanent structural modifications. Aggregated demand creates scale efficiencies for installation and generates the market data needed to develop dedicated financing products for this segment.
- **Downtown ownership transition portfolio:** Mixed-use and commercial buildings entering ownership transitions — when capital planning and renovations are already underway — are targeted for integrated energy assessments, electrification pathways, and financing options embedded directly in the real estate transaction. Projects typically include envelope improvements, electrified heating systems, and rooftop or shared solar sized to building-specific loads. This pathway reduces the incremental cost and complexity of adding energy upgrades to projects that are already raising capital.

PROVEN IMPACT & NEXT STEPS

Scale and Replication — A Rural Market Model That Vermont Needs

Brattleboro is building what most rural Vermont communities don't have: a network of local partner intermediaries with the project finance expertise, lender relationships, and community trust to move clean energy investments from concept to close across multiple building types and ownership structures simultaneously. That combination is rare at any scale. In a community of 11,000 people without C-PACE, without a green bank, and without a mature solar installation market, it is genuinely distinctive.

The Brattleboro Industry and Technology Park geothermal project is the most visible proof point on the horizon. \$3.25M in Congressionally Directed Spending is secured. The feasibility work is underway. If viable; a district-scale geothermal system serving a multi-tenant industrial park in a rural New England community, it will be a direct demonstration that mission-based developers can anchor economic development and clean energy infrastructure simultaneously. That could be a replicable model for the dozens of rural Vermont communities in ICLEI's network that have industrial parks, downtowns, and priority communities but no clear pathway to district-scale energy investment.

The residential plug-and-play solar pilot is the second proof point, and it matters for a different reason. By establishing a statewide permitting pathway through VPIRG coordination, Brattleboro converted a local demonstration into a statewide policy infrastructure change. Any Vermont municipality can now build on the permitting framework Brattleboro helped establish. Brattleboro Savings and Loan's tailored loan product, once developed and tested at Tri-Park, becomes a replicable financial product for community lenders across the state.

The remaining activation gap is predevelopment capital to advance the capital-readiness pipeline to investable status, and CGC credit enhancements to fill the financing gaps in commercial and industrial stacks that C-PACE would eventually solve, but cannot yet, pending S.138. BDCC's WIF and WCEDP can bridge some of this. CGC capital fills the rest. The projects are identified, the lender relationships are built, and the market infrastructure is in place. Predevelopment funding and targeted credit enhancement are what convert a well-built pipeline into a series of closed transactions.

This case study was funded through the Municipal Investment Fund, a partnership between ICLEI USA and CGC to support local governments, tribes, and their partner not-for-profit organizations develop public-private partnership plans that can accelerate the deployment of capital to clean energy projects.

