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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

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**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 Southern Vermont has been here before

#####END HED#####

#####BEGIN SUBHED#####

2 In Vermont, scale is not our limitation, it is our strength.

3 We will get through the shifting federal funding landscape that

4 threatens small, rural states like Vermont.

#####END SUBHED#####

5 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

6 AT THE Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation's  
7 recent 71st Annual Meeting, gathering with regional stakeholders  
8 and partners reminded me of the power of collaboration in rural  
9 economic development.

10 Our region has a long history of coming together to face  
11 challenges head-on. When the closure of Vermont Yankee

12 loomed, a neutral, policy-oriented task force formed to  
13 understand, not debate, the data and economic impact of losing  
14 600 high-paying jobs.

15 When Tropical Storm Irene devastated the region, we  
16 came together again, helping neighbors too proud to ask,  
17 cleaning up one stick at a time, and rebuilding smarter and  
18 stronger.

19 Those efforts took years, not months, and demonstrated  
20 the deep collaboration and shared intention that define this  
21 region.

22 When Covid arrived in the spring of 2020, it created a  
23 fast-moving, unprecedented crisis. Because we had already built  
24 regional and local networks in partnership with chambers,  
25 municipalities, and downtown organizations, BDCC was able to  
26 help bring federal and state resources to small businesses while  
27 guiding them through constantly changing regulations and relief  
28 programs.

29 In those uncertain early months, collaboration kept our  
30 businesses afloat and our communities informed. That same  
31 coordination sustained recovery in the years that followed.

32 Now, as storm clouds gather once again in the form of a  
33 shifting federal funding landscape that threatens small, rural  
34 states like Vermont, I am concerned but not discouraged.

35 \* \* \*

36 SOUTHERN VERMONT has been here before. We know  
37 what is possible when we all come together to tackle a defined  
38 objective. In Vermont, scale is not our limitation, it is our  
39 strength. It allows us to build deep partnerships, stay connected,  
40 and design systems that fit our communities.

41 In larger markets, the supports that help businesses,  
42 workers, and communities thrive are often provided by well-  
43 funded institutions or occur naturally in stronger economies. In  
44 rural Vermont, those systems do not exist at the same scale, so  
45 BDCC works with stakeholders and partners, and together we  
46 step in to fill the gaps.

47 Our work is to connect with all interested stakeholders to  
48 build and sustain the infrastructure of opportunity that would not  
49 exist here on its own.

50 \* \* \*

51 THAT WORK IS often invisible, but it is essential. Dozens  
52 of businesses in this region began in BDCC incubation programs.  
53 Hundreds of students have graduated with clear career goals  
54 through public-private partnership (P3) programs.

55 From first-time founders to seasoned business owners  
56 looking to transition, business programming participants are  
57 developing financial skills, accessing capital, and engaging in  
58 mentorship that supports innovation, growth, and resilience in  
59 their ventures.

60 New Americans are finding jobs and stability while  
61 employers gain the workforce they need. Brownfields are now  
62 clean and ready for new industry, and with the Tri-Park  
63 Cooperative Housing Corporation, we are creating more than 20  
64 new homes that protect affordability and community stability.

65 \* \* \*

66 GUIDED BY OUR Comprehensive Economic Development  
67 Strategy (CEDS), BDCC convenes this ecosystem of partners,  
68 including downtown groups, chambers, municipalities, planners,  
69 lenders, and educators, so that even with limited resources, we  
70 move forward together.

71 As federal resources tighten, our foundation of  
72 collaboration will carry us forward. There are no quick or easy  
73 fixes ahead, only the hard, steady work of strengthening the  
74 systems that support our rural economy.

75 Vermonters have always faced change with ingenuity  
76 and grit. By working together, focusing on fundamentals, and  
77 investing in the building blocks of economic development, we  
78 will ensure our communities remain strong and self-reliant, no  
79 matter what storms roll out of Washington.

#####END TEXT#####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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80       **ADAM GRINOLD** is executive director of the Brattleboro  
81       Development Credit Corporation. For more about the work of the  
82       organization and its regional partners, visit  
83       [brattleborodevelopment.com](http://brattleborodevelopment.com).

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#####END BIO/COATTAIL#####
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