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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Southern Vermont has been here before

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

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

We will get through the shifting federal funding landscape that

threatens small, rural states like Vermont.

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

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

Our region has a long history of coming together to face
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:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

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.

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

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