WELCOME TO THE BETTER BLOCK
STOP PLANNING, START DOING!
Reclaiming cities for the public good, one block at a time.

Helping neighborhoods, towns and cities to become great places for people of all ages.
BETHEL BETTER BLOCK
Community Walk & Talk

A community-led walk of the Bethel Downtown took place in June of 2016, and was followed by a resident conversation discussing opportunities for pop-up businesses, street modifications, new public spaces and many other small interventions aimed at improving livability.

Residents filled in maps and surveys with ideas that were culled by the Vermont Better Block team into a series of concepts that had the greatest potential for implementation.
WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE FOR BETHEL?
02. Concept Map

Working with key property owners, advocates, designers and residents the Team conceptualized ideas for landscaping, storefront facade improvements, and reprogramming to the area. The concept plan below highlights areas for temporary interventions using materials that can be borrowed, built and bought for a weekend intervention to reveal the true potential of downtown Bethel.
Community Build
Community Build
PARKLET
- NEW CAFE SEATING

BULB OUT
- BEAUTIFICATION
- PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION

BLUE LANE
- NEW TRANSPORT
- TRAFFIC CALMING
Blue Lane

The largest intervention to the street was the addition of over 700 feet of a dedicated lane for people using alternative transportation. Bethel’s blue lane was the first test of a multi-purpose lane like this in the United States.
Blue Lane

While no horses used the blue lane during the weekend test, many bicyclists, walkers, scooter riders, and dog walkers approved. Many adults and children alike mentioned that this was the first time they had safely biked downtown.

BLUE LANE

Open to:

BIKES
STROLLERS
HORSES
DANCERS
ROLLERBLADERS
FLYING CARPETS

WHEELCHAIRS
SEGWAYS
DOG WALKERS
SKATEBOARDERS
CARTWHEELERS
SCOOTERS

Please be considerate and share the lane. Keep right and pass on the left.
Parklet

Parklets calm traffic by narrowing the street, like a bulb-out, and give another visual cue to drivers that this place is different and worth a stop.
4 POP-UP SHOPS

- KIDS ART
- FEED YOUR MIND
- LOOM INATIONS
- MADE IN BETHEL
- OLD SIGNS REMOVED
- WINDOW DISPLAY
- NEW SIGNS
- DOORS OPEN
- LIGHTS ON
This map shows the disinvestment within downtown Battle before the Better Block project began.

Today, the overwhelming number of changes to the built environment, costs invested, and spaces impacted and hours of volunteer time made since Better Block are staggering. Battle stands as a holism Better Block project that continues to surpass its initial investment.
Volunteers created a pop-up sweet shop, vinyl music store, and arts and craft center in the Blossom Block Building. Over the three-day event, the stores saw many patrons and sales generated from the once dormant, vacant spaces.

The Arnold Block building was sold in December 2019 and is now home to a community-owned multi-part business: Bethel Works, Bethel Groves, Bethel Meets, and Bethel Cooks (@ the Arnold Block). The new owners started this venture to support local entrepreneurs and professionals, to meet community needs by acting as a business incubator and a resource for freelance workers, and by offering accommodations for community gatherings. So far, the Arnold Block is furnishing office space to several area freelance professionals and graduate students. It has also hosted several informal happy hour get-togethers and a town center brainstorm meeting that shelf would not have been possible (due to the poor Internet service in the area). It will soon host a gathering of regional and statewide stakeholders interested in the technical aspects of the trash-compacting pilot program. This event will be made possible by AACV Vermont, our Better Block sponsor.
Today, the Jepot bar has been sold and opened in June 2018 as Babo’s Bar. The couple from Chicago who purchased the building directly used some Better Block (or new business plans) as evidence of energy in downtown Bethel, and also used input from Better Block to help shape some of their business offerings.

In spring of 2017 BRI won a $15,000 Infrastructure grant from the Vermont Arts Council to make possible three public art projects in downtown Bethel. A trout mural—designed by artist Mary Lacy and executed by the artist and the Bethel community, was placed on the retaining wall at the intersection of routes 12 and 100. This inspiring piece of art is seen by hundreds of daily passersby, and covers an ugly, cracked retaining wall.
Rubber Meets Road in Bethel
Devices Meant To Slow Drivers

In 2019 Bethel Revitalization Initiative (BRI) won the Project of the Year Award for Bethel Better Block from the Vermont Planners' Association. It was accepted in a ceremony at the Vermont State house by BRI volunteers.
If you’re passionate, you have all the skills you need to change the world.
Give it a name.

FRUIT BELT
BETTER BLOCK, BETTER LIFE

PITTSFIELD
BETTER BLOCK

ash crescent
BETTER BLOCK
Set a date.
Make it public.