

Welcome to Smart Growth Vermont's August E-newsletter! This month, read about our new board chair and new members, celebrate downtown Saint Albans and learn how smart growth principles can result in stronger local economies. If you haven't already, reserve a ticket for this September's Art Gibb award. **Register early**, as capacity is limited.

Like what you read in our e-newsletter? **Let us know**. Better yet, support this publication and our work in Vermont communities by becoming a sustaining member. **Find out more**.

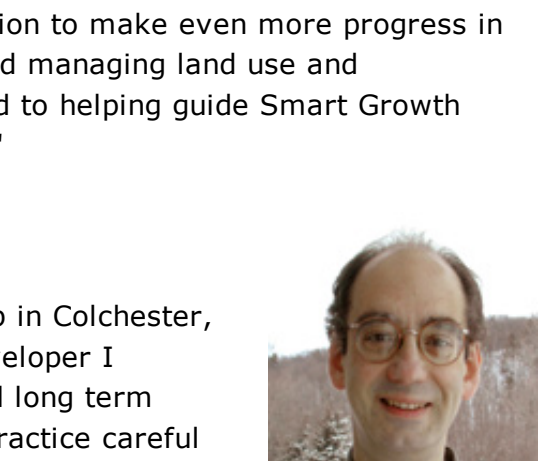
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Smart Growth Vermont Announces Board Changes

Robin Scheu, Executive Director of the Addison County Economic Development Corporation in Middlebury, is our new board chair. John Ewing will continue as an active member of the board with his new title of Founder. "After 12 years as Chair I am delighted to transfer the office to Robin who has a long history of non-profit leadership," said John.



"John was the visionary for this organization," said Robin, "and it's had a great impact across Vermont under his leadership. Thanks in large part to John, Smart Growth Vermont is in a strong position to make even more progress in assisting communities with planning for and managing land use and development. I look forward to serving and to helping guide Smart Growth Vermont on the next stage of the journey."

Chuck Lief Joins the Board

Chuck Lief, principal of The Hartland Group in Colchester, the newest board member, said, "As a developer I understand the economic opportunities and long term stability which arise in communities that practice careful land use. Smart Growth Vermont has long been the leader in supporting good planning-both visionary and practical. It emphasizes the essential need to balance growth and conservation as we improve the economy and preserve our heritage." For a complete bio of all our other Board members, visit [About Us](#).

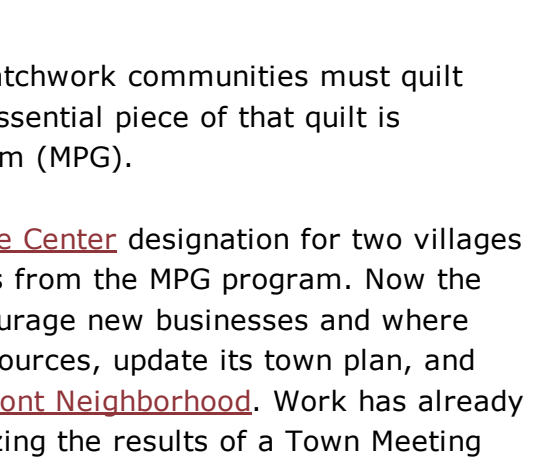


The committee chose Gus for this prestigious award based on his outstanding track record of creating affordable housing in Vermont and protecting historic landmarks and open land.

Knights Island in North Hero was one of the earliest land preservation projects completed by the VNCB under Gus' leadership.

Community Update

Planning and implementing a community's vision for a sustainable, healthy future is largely a volunteer affair in many of Vermont's smaller communities. Projects with two longstanding community partners, Burke and Bristol, highlight the critical nature of the state's municipal planning grant program. Assistance and funding from private non-profits such as Smart Growth Vermont is just one piece of the patchwork communities must quilt together to get such work done. Another essential piece of that quilt is Vermont's municipal planning grant program (MPG).



Burke's volunteer planners achieved [Village Center](#) designation for two villages in the town in the last round of grant funds from the MPG program. Now the town seeks to determine how best to encourage new businesses and where they should be located, protect natural resources, update its town plan, and potentially create a state-designated [Vermont Neighborhood](#). Work has already started with Smart Growth Vermont analyzing the results of a Town Meeting Day survey developed by the Selectboard.

The current project with Bristol will help them revise their Town Plan and update their zoning districts and standards to align with their goals and objectives in this new Plan. A key piece of this new project is extensive public outreach including a project website, public meetings, and local news publications.

For more information about Municipal Planning Grants, please go to the [MPG Program](#) section of the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs [website](#).

For more information about all our partner communities, please visit the [Community Planning Partnership](#) section of our website.

Member Spotlight
Rosanne Greco, South Burlington

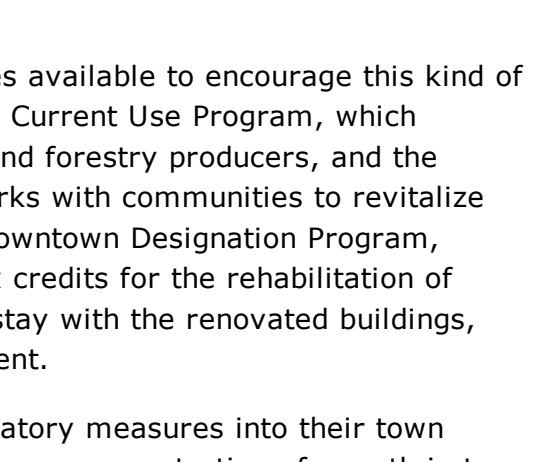
I support Smart Growth Vermont because they know the immeasurable value of the natural world, and they work to preserve these precious resources. Smart Growth Vermont gives a voice to many of us who feel powerless to stop the destruction of Vermont's environment because of wasteful practices and reckless development.


UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out [Upcoming Events](#) on our website! You'll find information about conferences, lectures and presentations on a wide variety of topics.

Smart Growth in Action: Fundamental Principles

Principle 8: Support a diversity of viable business enterprises in downtowns and villages, including locally-owned businesses, and a diversity of agricultural and forestry enterprises in the countryside.



Downtown Bellows Falls

An abundance of diverse and viable local businesses is an important part of any community. Local businesses create jobs, bring in tax revenue, share resources, and showcase the skills and talents of local people. Studies done in cities across the United States show that local economies are successful. For every \$100 dollars spent at a local business, around \$52 stays in the community.

Not only is it important to develop a diverse collection of local businesses, it is also important to locate these businesses in downtowns, villages, and growth centers. When local growth occurs in a mixed-use downtown, village or growth center in which people can work and live, the whole community's quality of life benefits. Downtowns with vibrant and diverse businesses create walkable, livable communities where people of all ages will want to live and work - where they can walk their children to school on the way to work, meet neighbors at the park, library, or coffee shop, enjoy recreational activities, and appreciate the sense of history brought by the preservation of buildings used for generations.

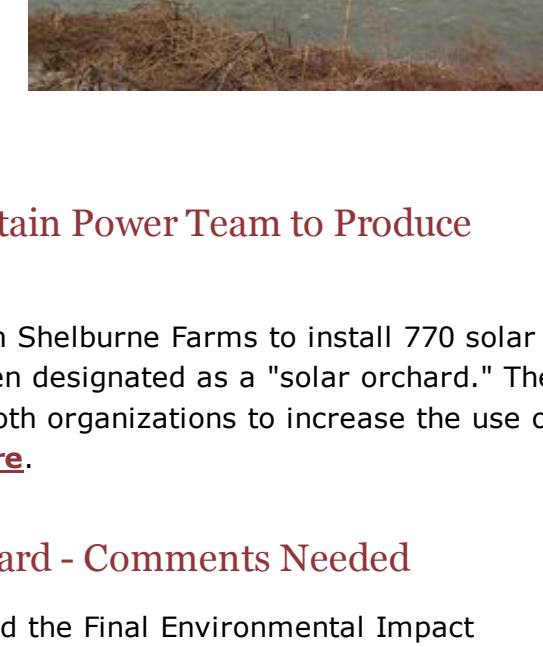
When such business growth and development is focused in compact centers, the surrounding landscape can be utilized for agricultural and forest industries, recreational activities, and to maintain Vermont's beautiful and unique open space and wildlife habitat. For example, we can enjoy Vermont's famous natural resource -- maple syrup -- because of the preservation of forests untouched by commercial development. The Vermont Farm to Plate Initiative aims to foster economic development and job growth in the farm and food sector. Preserved farmland makes such agricultural development possible.

There are many programs and resources available to encourage this kind of sustainable growth, including Vermont's Current Use Program, which provides tax incentives to agricultural and forestry producers, and the Vermont Downtown Program, which works with communities to revitalize downtowns and villages. Through the Downtown Designation Program, Vermont municipalities may receive tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The tax credits then stay with the renovated buildings, encouraging further business development.

Communities can also incorporate regulatory measures into their town bylaws and zoning codes to encourage more concentration of growth in town centers. Check out our Community Planning Toolbox for more information.

Community Spotlight: Saint Albans

Incorporated as a village in 1896 and later as a city in 1902, Saint Albans has long been recognized for its importance as a terminus for the Vermont and Canadian railroads. Today, it continues to function as a commercial hub throughout Franklin County and Northwest Vermont, balancing its growth efforts with sustainable city planning strategies.



Saint Albans historic downtown is the focus of community life and recently became the sixth Vermont community to gain approval as a state-designated Growth Center. The Growth Center, which encompasses most of the city limits, will guide infill, historic renovation and brownfield development plans. The City is currently in the midst of a major revitalization effort since completion of the Saint Albans Downtown Master Plan, which recommended improvements such as the expansion of outdoor dining and picnicking areas in Taylor Park, a focal point of the downtown. During the summer months, the Park is host to a Friday evening concert series and the Northwest Farmers Market, which runs from May through October, and as the site of many of the activities during the annual Maple Festival in April.

Additional components of the downtown revitalization effort include the renovation and redevelopment of some historic buildings, such as the Old Saint Albans Hotel and the Foundry Building, as well as construction of a new multi-modal center in the downtown to provide more efficient connections between bus lines, Amtrak service and walking paths within the city.

With assistance from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and the Vermont Downtown Program, Saint Albans has developed several successful tax-credit projects involving the redevelopment of abandoned buildings in the downtown area into mixed-use spaces. These include the Waugh Opera House, the Fishmans Department Store building, and several buildings along Lake Street. These projects combine living space in the form of family and senior housing with first floor retail and office spaces, concentrating commercial and residential life within the heart of downtown.

Moving beyond the city limits, Saint Albans Town offers visitors numerous recreational activities. Burton Island State Park, located directly on Lake Champlain, offers a variety of recreational activities like camping and canoe and rowboat rentals. Further inland is Hard'ack recreation area which offers a field for lacrosse and soccer, and mountain biking trails. This is also the location of the Saint Albans Winter Carnival which offers a winter running race, children's activities, sleigh rides and maple syrup tastings.

Saint Albans City is in the midst of an exciting period of redevelopment and revitalization, providing examples of innovative and smart city planning by attracting commercial and residential development without sacrificing recreational spaces and natural areas.

VERMONT NEWS
Partnership Forms to Fight Hunger

Thanks in part to the Vermont Land Trust and one innovative farmer, the Vermont Foodbank, a hunger-relief organization, recently completed the purchase of the 20 acre Kingsbury Farm in the Mad River Valley, with the goal of providing fresh, local and nutritious food to Vermonters in need. This summer alone, Kingsbury Farm has yielded over \$30,000 worth of produce to support Vermonters in need. [Read more](#).


Shelburne Farms and Green Mountain Power Team to Produce Solar Power

Green Mountain Power is teaming up with Shelburne Farms to install 770 solar panels in a field on the farm that has been designated as a "solar orchard." The effort combines goals that were set by both organizations to increase the use of renewable energy in Vermont. [Read more](#).

Plan for Circ Highway Moves Forward - Comments Needed

In July, transportation agencies completed the Final Environmental Impact statement for a boulevard roadway along the Circ right of way through Williston. Public Comments are due by August 27. More information on the project and [sample comments](#) from the Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative are available on their site. You can submit comments online at <http://www.circeis.org>.

NATIONAL NEWS
Mixed Use Developments Outperform Big Box Stores in Property Tax Revenue Per Acre

According to a recent analysis of property tax revenue in Sarasota, Florida, big box developments generate only about \$150 to \$200 more per acre than single family housing developments, and they rank significantly lower than mixed use projects. In fact, a mixed-use development in Sarasota's downtown that sits on less than an acre generates \$800,000 in tax per acre -- ten times more than either a single family suburban house or big box store. This analysis adds to the mounting evidence of the benefits of compact, in-town development. [Read more](#).

Over-developed in New Jersey

During 2002 to 2007, land development accelerated throughout the Garden State at a rate of 5.3 percent, even though the population rate increased by only 1.1 percent. As this trend persists, New Jersey has replaced forest land with buildings, parking lots and lawns. [Read more](#) about New Jersey's growing development pressures and what some studies have shown for the state's future.