

Welcome to our December E-newsletter! This month, we're showing how we put your membership investment to work -- additions to our Toolbox, what to watch for in the next legislative session, and our work with Essex and Jericho protecting their views to the mountains. Got ideas for our e-newsletter?

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### Rise to the Challenge

Want a 50% return on your investment? Help us meet our membership challenge.

A generous donor is challenging people like you who value our work. By becoming a new member, or increasing your membership, you can help us meet our challenge. Make your **membership** investment today and your support will be multiplied.

Even more importantly, you will help underwrite all we do to encourage communities to plan for a future Vermont that is vibrant, economically strong, and that retains its rural character. Your support will also keep e-newsletters like this, and our legislative alerts, coming to your in-box. Consider becoming a Sustaining member and keep your investment secure. **Join us today!**

*In a complex topic area that is too often polarizing, Smart Growth Vermont works overtime to unite us in maintaining what makes Vermont special as our communities grow and change.*

– Peg Elmer, South Royalton

### The Legislative Session is Nearing: Are You Ready?

We are getting ready! Soon the holiday season will be a distant memory and the legislative session will be in full swing. With tough budgetary times and a new administration, 2011 may be an interesting year. Smart Growth Vermont and our legislative partner, Preservation Trust of Vermont ([link](#)) will be tracking and working on the following issues:

- Economic stimulus through an improved designated downtowns and village centers redevelopment tax credit program. There is a waiting list for tax credits for projects that are ready for renovations. These restoration projects utilizes more labor than a new development project - creating local jobs! To watch - the Governor's budget.
- Updates to the Vermont Neighborhood Program to include an option for developers to apply for designation for a project that meetings the density, design and locational requirements. No bill to watch yet, but stay tuned.
- Monitoring any changes to funding for the Housing and Conservation Board. To watch - the Governor's budget.
- Eliminating strip development along our roadways. No bill yet, but stay tuned.
- Complete Streets legislation to encourage communities to plan for pedestrians and other modes of transportation as well as cars. There will be a new bill for this session.

*Our St. Johnsbury office is a historic building and we would not have been able to move forward without these tax credits .*

– Ken Gibbons, Union Bank

Look for our periodic electronic Legislative Alerts during the session to stay abreast of the issues. And, if you're not already, take a moment to become a member of Smart Growth Vermont. Every membership allows us to continue working on critical State Policy issues.

### Coming Soon: Views to the Mountain Handbook

Now that scenic views have been assessed by local volunteers and evaluated, we have been hard at work developing a "Views to the Mountain Handbook" that uses our work in the Towns of Essex and Jericho as not only an implementation guide for these communities, but also a how-to guide for other communities to follow. The Manual, scheduled for release early next year, provides a step-by-step process for evaluating scenic views as well as land use tools that a community can implement to protect these important economic, cultural and aesthetic resources. For more information on the project and our partners, check out the [Essex and Jericho](#) section on our website.



### New in the Toolbox

Thanks to Addison Barnhardt, a law student working at the Land Use Clinic at the Vermont Law School, [Current Use](#) is the newest tool in our Community Planning Toolbox. The Vermont legislature adopted Use Value Appraisal, or Current Use as it is more commonly known, in 1978 to help relieve the burden of high property taxes on those active in farming and forestry practices.

By reducing the economic burden on farmers and forest owners, the state sustains the working landscape, supports the owners that work the land, and helps maintain the state's traditional settlement pattern. Check out our [Toolbox](#) for more information.



### UPCOMING EVENTS

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is hosting, "The Future of Vermont's Working Landscape" Summit, Friday, December 10, at the State House in Montpelier. The Summit will highlight challenges facing agricultural and forest-based businesses. Participants will review a Working Landscape Action Plan that will serve as the focal point for advancing working landscape enterprise development in Vermont and, at the end of the day, for the founding of the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership. For more information, or to register, visit VCRD's [website](#).

Check out our [calendar of events](#) for more.

### VERMONT NEWS

#### EPA Opposes Circ Highway Redesign

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has come out against the latest redesign for the Circumferential Highway in Chittenden County. In a recent letter, the EPA stated that the plan would cause unacceptable damage to wetlands and streams. The EPA has the authority to stop the highly contentious project, and in the letter recommended that the alternative plan "is too environmentally harmful to receive a permit." The EPA also noted that less environmentally damaging alternatives are feasible. Read the [EPA letter](#) and the associated [comments](#).

#### HomeOwnership Centers Honored by VFHA

Vermont Housing Finance Agency honored the state's nonprofit network of NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Centers with the 2010 Housing Hero Award at the 2010 Vermont Housing Conference held recently in Burlington.

"This award recognizes the HomeOwnership Centers for developing pre-purchase education and delinquency and foreclosure prevention assistance that's been so vital during the mortgage crisis," said Sarah Carpenter, Executive Director of the VFHA. "By working with borrowers before before they buy their home and after they close, they've helped keep Vermont's foreclosure rate low." [Read more.](#)



Credit: Craig Bailey, VFHA. Caption: (From left) VFHA Executive Director Sarah Carpenter; Emily Higgins, Champlain Housing Trust; Chandra Pollard, Central Vermont Community Land Trust; Cathy Semans, Windham Housing Trust; Donna Reay and Darlene Kelly, NeighborWorks of Western Vermont; and George Mathias, Gilman Housing Trust.

### NATIONAL NEWS

#### Virginia Town Transforms to Livable Community

Tyson's Corner, located along the Washington, D.C. Beltway, is currently a great place to get gas, load up on fast food and browse a selection of chain stores. Not for long, though. Residents have envisioned a livable community in Tyson's Corner. A plan has been established and approved to create up to 100,000 residences and 200,000 jobs by 2050. The plan also calls for four new metro stations, which will be installed by 2013, retail and office space combined with housing, and an arts district. Ten percent of the town will also be turned into parks and public spaces. [Read more.](#)

#### Bipartisan Support for Healthy Food Initiative

A bipartisan coalition of Senators and Representatives have introduced the Healthy Food Financing Initiative aimed at reducing the health care financing of low-income Americans living in areas where they have little access to healthy food choices. Under the Initiative, the USDA will administer federal loans and grants to support new supermarkets, corner stores, co-op's and farmer's markets in under served areas. [Read more.](#)

