



**TRAINING PROVIDES GUIDANCE
ON LAND USE CHALLENGES**



Is your community looking for advice to update its Town Plan? Do you want to encourage development of new housing in your downtown or village? We can help. Smart Growth Vermont offers 2 to 2 1/2 -hour trainings for municipal staff and volunteer boards on specific land use planning issues. If you are interested in a training session, please contact our Program Director, Jason Van Driesche, at (802) 864-6310 or jason@smartgrowthvermont.org.

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**LAND USE DECISIONS ★★★★★★
DRIVE CLIMATE CHANGE**


Architect Willam McDonough once said of incremental solutions to climate change, "If you need to go to Montreal and you are driving toward Boston, slowing down to 40 miles per hour won't help." McDonough's metaphor captures both the challenge we face and the need for real solutions.

Indeed, driving in any direction at any speed is Vermont's single largest contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, contributing more than 40% of total emissions. While fuel-efficient



Photo: Dylan Voorhees

cars, including hybrids, are helping reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and resulting emissions, this is only a part of the solution. A recent national report shows that CO2 emissions will



Annual household spending for transportation has reached \$7,118, compared with \$7,114 for housing (U.S. Department of Labor 1999-2000 data).

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**SMART GROWTH VERMONT
★★★★★ WELCOMES NEW STAFF**



Jason Van Driesche ★★★★★★

We are pleased to announce that two new staff members have joined our organization! We have selected Jason Van Driesche as our new Director of Programs. For the last five years, Jason has been Director of the Clean Air and Water Program at Upstate Forever, a non-profit conservation and smart growth advocacy organization in South Carolina.

Michael Miller, AICP CFM joins us as a part-time Senior Planner. For the last seven years, Mike has served as a Senior Land Use Planner for

the Lamoille County Planning Commission. He has used his extensive land use planning experience at all levels in Vermont, including serving on local commissions, preparing bylaws and zoning, developing regional plans and working on state panels and committees.

With Jason and Mike on staff, we enhance our capacity to work for change at the state level, and respond to the increasing number of communities requesting land use planning assistance. Welcome Jason and Mike!



Michael Miller ★★★★★★

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT READING, Vermont

Like many communities across Vermont, Reading's forests are facing significant development pressure. To avoid potential negative impacts of forestland fragmentation, and to ensure Reading carefully and thoughtfully balances diverse interests in the resource, the Town decided to take action.

Partnering with Smart Growth Vermont, the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), the Town initiated a study to examine forest fragmentation in Reading and explore strategies for avoiding or mitigating many of the adverse impacts associated with fragmentation.

"We wanted to hear what Reading residents' value about forest land in town, as well as their thoughts on appropriate strategies for protecting those resources," said Planning Commission Chair Steve Strait.

Forest fragmentation occurs when large tracts of productive forest land are subdivided and developed. Impacts typically include:

- Degradation of wildlife habitat;
- Impacts to water quality;
- Decline in timber production and active forest management;
- Loss of recreation opportunities, including trails and access for hunting, boating, hiking, etc.;
- Impacts on environmentally sensitive areas, and scenic resources (especially related to high elevation development); and
- Increased costs for municipal services (as roads and associated development extend into undeveloped areas).


"Reading recognizes the value of this important resource and is thoughtfully planning how the community can be a steward of their forest lands," says Noelle MacKay, Smart Growth Vermont's Executive Director.

Project partners have conducted public meetings, reviewed Reading's Town Plan and zoning, and developed a matrix of options for keeping the Town's forests intact.

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grow 41% above 2005 levels even with improvements in efficiency – unless we do something to curb the projected 59% increase in the amount we drive. We must slow our growth in driving. Vermonters are rising to this challenge by car pooling, using park and ride lots, riding the bus and soon, establishing a car-sharing service.



According to a study commissioned by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, shifting just 10% of new U.S. housing starts to smart growth would save 4.95 billion gallons of gasoline, 118 million barrels of oil, 59.5 mmt CO₂, and \$220 billion in household expenses over 10 years.

Each year, the Alliance for Climate Action and other organizations organize Way to Go! Week, during which Vermonters can commit to using alternative forms of transportation and driving less. Cumulatively, all these efforts are resulting in significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions – and the size of our "carbon footprint."

These efforts alone, however, are not enough to reverse the emerging patterns of climate change. To get to the root of our energy use, we must examine how we protect and use the land, and create policies that plan for growth in the places where it makes the most sense - in and around our downtowns and village centers.

Compact, mixed-use and walkable neighborhoods close to stores, schools and jobs reduce the need to drive and make it easy for people to connect. It also facilitates development of public

transit, so in twenty years when gas is \$10 a gallon, Vermonters will have other transportation options. This smarter approach to land use will reduce our vehicle miles traveled, lowering our energy consumption and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Reducing Vermont's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and resulting climate change requires fundamental changes in the way we live, work and play. As we explore these changes, most Vermonters can agree on one common goal – we must protect our working landscape and special quality of life that makes Vermont unique.

We can do this in so many ways. In our communities, we can ensure local zoning encourages development of homes in village centers. We can protect farm and forest lands from fragmentation with subdivision regulations and overlay districts. We can support creation of bicycle and recreation paths that connect homes to downtowns and villages. And together, we can make changes that reverse our impacts on the planet and ensure a safe and healthy environment.



“To get to the root of our energy use, we must examine how we protect and use the land...”

FROM THE ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ TOOLBOX:

In each newsletter, we will feature a land use issue, tool and case study from our new online Community Planning Toolbox. To learn more, visit www.smartgrowthvermont.org/toolbox/.

Issue: Community Design

Plans to build new homes, infill an underdeveloped site, or construct a new store can raise concerns about density, building size, and loss of community character. To address these concerns, communities must combine density and building standards with good design.

Tool: Design Review Regulations

Design review regulations have been used to promote compatible architecture and adherence to good urban design principles in downtowns, village centers, established neighborhoods and hamlets. Design review has also been applied to scenic landscapes, including areas defined by the relationship of buildings to farm and forest land, and where scenic vistas have been identified as an important community resource.

Case Study: Manchester

The Town of Manchester has used a design review process since 1987 when a design review district was established. The town has created a useful and readable design manual that provides clear graphic illustrations that convey the Planning Commission's design goals.



Manchester's design guidelines place design considerations at the front end of the project review process. How a project addresses such diverse elements such as sign placement, lighting, parking, ensuring a pedestrian focus, etc., are among the first topics considered by the municipal review board. This process highlights the importance of patterns of symmetry, form, and other important design details.

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RESOURCES



A Residents' Guide to Creating Safe and Walkable Communities from the Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration provides resources to help residents to address pedestrian safety. <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>