A GIFT TO SMART GROWTH IS A GIFT TO VERMONT

People are at the center of well-designed projects. A healthy neighborhood has homes that working Vermonters can afford and allows residents to walk to work, carpool or catch a bus so there is less dependence on cars. When we plan for denser neighborhoods, we keep homes in our villages and downtowns, close to jobs and transportation options. At the same time, we protect our working landscape and ensure land is available to provide food and forest products and for recreational opportunities. Smart land use is at the heart of each of these.

By supporting our work with a year-end gift, you’re also helping your fellow Vermonters. Please consider becoming a member today. We’ve made it even easier by giving you the opportunity to make a sustaining membership pledge. Simply call us or visit our website. You’ll also qualify for a free mug!

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Leave a Legacy

Want to make a lasting gift to Vermont’s communities? You can by putting Smart Growth Vermont in your will. See our website for more details.

Smart Growth and Arthur Gibb Awards Honor Projects, Plans and People Around Vermont

Even with a slight chill in the early fall air, the evening of September 16 at the Basin Harbor Club in Vergennes was full of warmth and celebration. Close to 130 community members, town and state officials, and representatives from our Congressional leadership gathered to honor the 2009 Smart Growth and Arthur Gibb Award winners. “Every award winner is a true contributor to the ongoing work of protecting, restoring, and building upon the best of Vermont,” said Noelle MacKay, Smart Growth Vermont’s Executive Director.

Making Vermont Work

Ask most transplanted Vermonters why they chose to live here, and you’ll often hear the same answer — because of Vermont’s beautiful landscape. Our landscape is what attracts visitors and has even been called our “brand.” We asked a few business people how being in Vermont enhances their company.

Sabra Field, artist

I chose to surround myself with my subject matter instead of living somewhere else. At one point, I could have moved to New York City, but that’s not my idea of truth, beauty or sanity. In addition to our cultural landscape, I hope people see in my work metaphors for universal order. I’m glad Vermont is encouraging development in villages as a means to keeping surrounding land open. As my favorite bumper stickers says “Love the countryside! Live in town.”

Bram Kleppner

VP Sales and Marketing, Danforth Pewter
People come to Vermont for our landscape and want something uniquely Vermont to remember their visit. They come to Danforth for our long-standing family tradition of making unique, high-quality Vermont pewter products. Our reputation has also allowed us to expand and add four highly-skilled jobs in Vermont — it is what brought a Virginia pewter company to us. We feel really good about adding local jobs that support this tradition and Vermont’s economy.

Paul Ralston, Vermont Coffee Company

What we all want is to preserve and protect Vermont, not “brand” it. Vermont is a way of life, it’s a place, but it’s not a fabricated thing that can be bought or sold. It’s not the easiest place to live, but that’s why it attracts people who really care. Since we want to live here, we start businesses like the Vermont Coffee Company. I’ve also made a commitment to reducing my carbon footprint by living within a mile from where I work, so when I moved the company to Middlebury so we could expand, I also bought a house there that we’re upgrading with an intensive energy retrofit. Basically, it all starts with where we want to live and work — our lifestyle and quality of life. We’re fortunate to have Smart Growth Vermont keeping us aware of what we need to do to preserve what we value.

Senator Diane Snelling spoke about her earliest memories of Arthur Gibb and his work putting Vermont at the forefront of environmental and land use law. Gus Seelig of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board reminisced about how award winner Robert E. Woolmington of North Bennington contacted him to lead the then new organization Rob was instrumental in founding and how Rob exemplifies Art Gibb’s unique qualities of leadership, vision, and the ability to bring together diverse opinions. “Rob’s vision that...”
I SUPPORT
SMART GROWTH VERMONT
BECAUSE

Darren Higgins, Waterbury Center

... your work matters. Smart Growth Vermont’s clear-eyed, holistic approach to the land-use challenges that face our state—not to mention its innovative, community-based solutions—gives me hope that the Vermont I love will still be around for my son to enjoy.

Stewart McDermot, Dummerston

... you don’t take a biased closed minded view, “All growth is bad!” Smart Growth Vermont looks at Vermont cities and towns, accepts growth as a part of our culture, and then participates with those towns by helping to create the growth that is agreed on by all, that is best for their individual communities.

Cathy Frank, Burlington

... the principles you endorse help us put into practice a way, in our daily living, to lessen our footprint on the environment, at the same time fostering social connectedness and a sense of community.

WHAT’S NEW IN THE TOOLBOX:

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

Issues: Public Engagement

People sometimes talk about public participation as if it’s a one-shot deal: meeting, PowerPoint, questions, done. But community consensus around a plan or a project isn’t built using a bare bones approach. Smart Growth Vermont promotes putting people at the center of local land use decision-making and giving them a voice. Engaging the public is the best way to ensure the successful implementation of a Town plan, the passing of a new bylaw or the completion of a new project.

Tool: Design Charrettes

One person says density and envisions a traditional Vermont village, while to others it suggests cold, towering buildings. The missing piece? Pictures. One of the best ways to help people see where they agree is to hold a design charrette. Through this process, people come together to describe their vision of a proposed project. A leader draws what they say, and asks if the drawings are on the right track. The result is a series of sketches that illustrate the project so that it can be built with broad community support.

Case Study: The Vermont Neighborhoods Project

One of the most effective uses of a design charrette is to help a community see that the impossible can be doable. Through the Vermont Neighborhoods Project, Smart Growth Vermont worked with community members, planners and landscape architects in Shoreham, Middlebury, and Vergennes to create conceptual designs for a new neighborhood in each town. Shoreham has started to implement a version of the proposal, and all three communities are looking for ways to encourage the construction of new neighborhoods built on a traditional model.