



THIS COULD BE YOUR ***
LAST ISSUE!**

In an effort to reduce our paper consumption and to save money, we will be paring back our newsletter list. It costs us about \$10 per person every year to mail this newsletter. **Make sure you don't miss your next copy by becoming a member of Smart Growth Vermont today.**



This year's Smart Growth Awards and the Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership event will be held September 16, 2009 at the Basin Harbor Club in Vergennes. We have many sponsorship levels available for businesses and individuals, and we hope that all of our supporters will join us for an evening of cocktails, dinner and the opportunity to meet the award honorees.

Tickets for the event are \$50.00, which includes appetizers and a full dinner. The Basin Harbor Club is located near Vergennes, on the shores of Lake Champlain. For more information or for sponsorship details, please contact Serena at 802-864-6310 or by email at serena@smartgrowthvermont.org.

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**FROM DENSITY TO DESIGN:

MAKING COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS WORK**



POP QUIZ: When you hear the word "density," what are the first images that come to mind? If visions of concrete block apartment buildings and generic vinyl-clad townhouses are what you see, you are not alone. For many Vermonters, "density" and "Vermont" are like oil and water.

But the surprising truth is, many of Vermont's most beloved neighborhoods are actually just as dense as your average suburban townhouse development. According to data gathered by Smart Growth Vermont in 2008, a typical block in Burlington's South End averages around four to six homes per acre. The older areas in Bristol and

Vergennes – both much smaller communities than Burlington – are nearly as dense, with around three or four homes per acre. Even in Orwell, a small village in Addison County, homes are set close to the street on narrow lots that give the village a remarkably similar feel to neighborhoods in larger communities.

So what is the difference between these great old neighborhoods and the new housing developments that everyone loves to hate? In a word, it is *design*. Vermont communities were once put together according to a set of principles that helped ensure that even close neighbors could be good neighbors. While some present-day developers have rediscovered (or never forgot) these principles, many have abandoned them. The result is development that just doesn't feel like Vermont.

Later this year, Smart Growth Vermont will add a major new section to our website on the relationship between density and design.

> *Continued...*

**AARP: GUEST VIEW

LAND USE IS AN AGING ISSUE**



By Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur,
Associate State Director, AARP Vermont

mismatch between communities designed almost exclusively for the automobile and a growing population that does not drive.

Those living in areas where transportation is better integrated with housing make more trips outside their homes, walk more, and use public transportation more than their counterparts elsewhere. Communities that provide a variety of transportation options enable older individuals to retain their independence and stay engaged.

In 2030, a quarter of the Vermont population will be 65 or older, almost double what it is now. As our state continues to develop we need to be more aware of the impacts of our land use choices, not just on the environment and our landscape, but also on the ability of all of us to fully access our communities as we get older.

110 Main Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:
DANVILLE



Danville Village has been around for at least two hundred years. But as far as the Town of Danville's zoning bylaw is concerned, this friendly little village on Route 2 just west of St. Johnsbury barely even exists. As currently written, Danville's zoning bylaw essentially requires suburban-style development throughout the town – even in the heart of the village.

But village residents want this to change. A survey and a series of focus groups of village residents and business owners conducted in late 2008 revealed strong support for new zoning standards that support compact, pedestrian-friendly development in and around the village. With help from Smart Growth Vermont, the Danville Planning Commission has been hard at work on a series of updates that will help the village become a “full-service” community, with a range of locally oriented shops within easy walking distance of houses and apartments for people in every stage of life.

Smart Growth Vermont's role has been to help the Planning Commission draft and revise new zoning bylaw language for the Town of Danville that:

- Promotes a vibrant mix of uses in the heart of Danville Village within the compact historic village footprint.
- Protects and enhances the character of the village's historic residential areas while allowing for compatible infill.
- Creates a new district around the existing village for neighborhood expansion that follows the traditional pattern of small lots on interconnected streets.
- Ensures that development along Route 2 on either side of the village is compatible with and enhances the viability of existing village businesses.

“Danville is a great place to live,” said Kim Prior, a Planning Commission member and lifelong Danville resident. “What we're trying to do is build on the village's strengths so that it is even better in the future.”

FROM DENSITY TO DESIGN: MAKING COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS WORK

> Continued from front...



Using traditional Vermont neighborhoods as a guide, we will explore the subtle, but fundamentally important, principles that make these neighborhoods such great places to live. Some of these principles include:

Modest homes on smaller lots. Older neighborhoods are defined by relatively small lots that are much deeper than they are wide, a layout that provides a balance of density (many homes per block) and private space (deep back yards).

“...the surprising truth is, many of Vermont's most beloved neighborhoods are actually just as dense as your average suburban townhouse development.”

Houses are oriented to the street. Houses that are set close to the street help make “accidental socializing” happen. People enjoy casual, unplanned interactions with neighbors simply as a function of the limited distance between their front door and the street.

Architecture that fits in. Architecture in older neighborhoods is by no means uniform, but it tends to follow a few basic principles –

such as a prominent front entryway and a steeply pitched roof – that give these neighborhoods a sense of cohesion.

A range of housing options. Older neighborhoods do an exceptionally good job of making multi-family homes blend in with single-family homes. Often the only way to tell if a building has more than one unit in it is to count the electric meters.

People-centered neighborhood design. Older neighborhoods work so well in part because cars take a back seat to people, with narrow streets to keep traffic slow and an integrated sidewalk network to make walking just as easy, or even easier than driving.

Landscaping that ties the neighborhood together. Street trees and other landscaping features turn the street into a public space that people use for socializing.

FROM THE TOOLBOX:

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

Issue: Wildlife and Natural Areas

Wildlife and natural lands are an essential part of what makes Vermont a special place. From town forests to wildlife overlay districts to long-range open space plans, local actions play a major role in ensuring that wild places remain a key part of our economy and way of life.

Tool:

Regional Conservation and Open Space Plans

Planning for open space and natural areas serves several important functions. First, it helps a community set priorities regarding what natural features or resources are most important to protect. Second, it provides a basis for evaluating individual development proposals so as to ensure that projects are consistent with community goals. And third, it guides local conservation efforts, such as purchase of town forest lands or land trust work to protect sensitive areas.



Case Study: Mad River Valley

In the late 1980s, the three towns in the upper portion of the Mad River Valley – Warren, Waitsfield, and Fayston – decided to collaborate in the development of a joint plan for shared natural resource issues. Their work was motivated by the fact that scenic views, wildlife, and other key resources do not respect political boundaries.

In the two decades since, the plan they created has served as a template for a wide range of initiatives in all three towns. For example, Warren and Waitsfield recently worked together to conduct a two-town inventory of natural resources and wildlife habitat. Now the two towns are working to update their town plans to reflect what they learned in the inventory.

“... local actions play a major role in ensuring that wildlife remains an integral part of life for future Vermonters.”

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