

# The Roadscape Guide

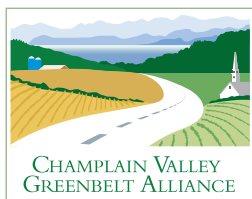
Tools to Preserve Scenic Road Corridors

Produced by the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance for the Vermont Forum on Sprawl

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# The Roadscape Guide

**Tools to Preserve Scenic Road Corridors**





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# Foreword: Leveraging the View

“In every landscape, the point of astonishment is the meeting of the sky and the earth....There is nothing so wonderful in any particular landscape, as the necessity of being beautiful under which every landscape lies. Nature cannot be surprised in undress. Beauty breaks in everywhere.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, from Essay VI, *Nature*

Upon returning to live in Vermont full-time in 1997, my husband Paul and I were shocked to see how much sprawl had permeated the once rural landscape of western Vermont’s Chittenden County that we had come to know since 1980. The main artery from Burlington to Shelburne was clogged with strip development, traffic, and red lights; ancillary roads were lined with housing developments; and the smell of cows and hay was harder and harder to find. This was not the Vermont we had dreamed about raising our sons in.

We saw hope, however, in the beautiful U.S. Route 7 corridor from Shelburne to Middlebury, and others saw it too. In 2000, the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance (CVGA) began with a founding board of like-minded people. With initial help from a local farmer and our executive director, a longtime municipal planner, we established several goals:

- Identify and save priority viewsheds along the Route 7 corridor and foster the working landscape.

- 
- Create bookends around and encourage smart economic development within the corridor's townships.
  - Provide technical assistance to local planning boards.
  - Use our experience as a model for a tool kit.
  - Limit our own tenure and give our tool kit, along with funds for marketing it, to another smart growth organization.

While encouraging development within towns and helping local planning commissions to recognize that maintaining aesthetic integrity is part of sound economic planning, we collaborated with many organizations to purchase priority parcels and provide for their long-term care. *The Roadscape Guide* is our culminating project to provide a tool kit for roads in other parts of the state and country.

Perhaps the most radical of our efforts, planned from the start, was the idea of passing our work on to another nonprofit organization. Yet this was in keeping with our vision to work collaboratively with other organizations and to expand our model elsewhere. Though our original time frame expanded from three to six years, we are completing our term with a sense of satisfaction that the priority views and farmland along this historic corridor will be cared for by an increasing number of organizations and people, and enjoyed for generations to come.

Still, one might ask why, if we are giving our work away, didn't we let these organizations do it from the start? The answer is that several of the priority parcels we identified to conserve along the corridor did not coincide with the conservation interests of other groups. They were neither active farmland nor critical habitat and in many cases were quite small in size. But the conservation of even small parcels of roadside open space and working landscapes has *leveraged the views* equal to as much as ten thousand times the acreage.

In much the same way that we see a shaft of light spread out from clouds to a whole mountain range below, the preservation of a few acres of neatly harrowed earth in the foreground can provide access to hundreds of thousands of long-range views to valleys and mountains that sweep

the heart and mind free of worry. This is perhaps the most profound reason to encourage other such projects on roads around the country. The impact of saving just a few acres here and there along a road can have dramatic, positive effect on improving our mental, physical, and spiritual health.

Saving critical habitat and farmland is still very important and we have helped with that too. But the principal work of CVGA and the tools described in *The Roadscape Guide* speak to saving and leveraging viewsheds. Through CVGA's efforts, local planners, farmers, and travelers have become more aware of the value of views. And by working in collaboration with a number of land conservation organizations along the way, we have broadened the dimensions of their work and the value to all who benefit from it.

On the Route 7 corridor, we might see a hawk circling above a freshly mowed field in search of a mouse, a pink sunset flooding the peaks of the Adirondacks and coloring the waters of Lake Champlain, a herd of cows watching a tractor plowing neat rows of chocolate earth, or the white peak of Camel's Hump rising in winter above the snow-covered fields, a ghostly sentinel of wilderness and agriculture. These are the kinds of images that feed our souls. And it is for their continuing presence and our associated wellbeing that nine board members and one staff member have worked for six years, striving to ensure that these views and working landscapes will remain as they are to be enjoyed forever by all.

The details of lessons we have learned through our accomplishments (and disappointments) is the subject of *The Roadscape Guide*. We hope you will take heart from our process and be sufficiently inspired to improve upon our work in your own community, with your own unique vistas and planning issues.



Eileen R. Growald  
*Chair, Board of Directors*  
*Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance*

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# Acknowledgments

## Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance

### Board of Directors

Eileen Growald, Chair  
John Barstow  
Megan Camp  
Paul Growald  
Liam Murphy  
Marilyn Neagley  
Will Raap  
Del Sheldon  
Skip Sheldon

### Past board members

Meg Berlin  
Clark Hinsdale, III  
Charles Scott

### Executive Director

David Miskell (2000-2001)  
Kate Lampton (2001-2006)

## *The Roadscape Guide*

### Executive Editor

Kate Lampton

### Contributors

Sharon Behar  
Julie Campoli, Terra Firma Urban Design  
Kate Lampton

### Project Manager and Editor

Meg Ashman

### Design

Lisa Cadieux, Liquid Studio

### Photos and Illustrations

JULIE CAMPOLI: Figures 1.4 (“Now”), 1.5-1.8, 2.3, Figure 2.5, 3.1-3.3, 3.5-3.8, 3.10-3.12, 3.14, 4.2, 4.8, 4.9, page 24 (sidebar)

JULIE CAMPOLI & ALEX MACLEAN, LANDSLIDES: Figures 1.9, 3.4, 3.9, 3.13

KATE LAMPTON: Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 4.1, 4.4-4.6, page 34 (sidebar)

ALEX MACLEAN, LANDSLIDES: Cover, Figures 1.3 (oblique aerial), 4.7, pages ii, iv, viii, 2, 16, 21 (sidebar), 26, 40, 50, 62

BURLINGTON PUBLIC WORKS: Figure 1.4 (“Then”)

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# Introduction

**R**oad corridors are much more than vehicular paths. They are the framework around which our communities are formed, shaping the character of those communities. *The Roadscape Guide* is about understanding the character of a road corridor, recognizing the forces that may bring unwelcome change, and using the right tools and techniques to preserve and enhance what is best.

This book is also about expanding our perceptions of what road corridors are and what they mean to our communities. Too often we think of road corridors as only commercial venues or sites for sprawling subdivisions, spreading from our villages and downtowns out into the countryside. The chapters that follow focus on that land between—the areas of still open space that are the greenbelts between our cities, towns, and villages—and the ways that the most special lands can be conserved and the areas appropriate for growth can be developed in a way that preserves a sense of openness.

There is not enough money to conserve all of our open spaces, nor should we. Regulations alone are not the answer, either. *The Roadscape Guide* covers a range of tools communities can use to preserve open spaces and integrate new development into the landscape in ways that fit best. But to understand which tool to use, you first need to understand the landscape. So the book covers the steps to take in recognizing the features that make up a road corridor landscape and the patterns that are created by those features. These features and patterns are what we consider the “roadscape.” Every tool covered relates to and grows from this understanding of the roadscape.

You will find “scenic resources” referred to often in this guide. While those special views and other scenic aspects are what we frequently relate to quickest, they are not only a landscape resource in and of themselves but also represent the agricultural lands, natural areas, forests, and cultural resources that line our road corridors. “Scenic,” then, is the inclusive term for those parts of our landscape as well.

You may think of a scenic road corridor, and the subject of this book, as one with miles of vistas to mountains, lakes, or other stunning settings and perhaps think this book has nothing to offer for your community’s road corridor if it isn’t exceptional. But almost every road corridor has areas of special views or pleasing stretches of open space. *The Roadscape Guide’s* focus is those special areas within any corridor.

It is in the smaller communities—and the incremental changes along the roads that link them—where much of our scenic landscape is eroding. This guide concentrates on those transitional and more rural areas and those incremental changes, as well as the ways that existing areas of development can be redesigned over time to better fit into the surrounding landscape.

*The Roadscape Guide* is meant to be a first step in organizing efforts to preserve the scenic resources of our road corridors. It is intended for anyone facing the many changes occurring along our roads—especially for volunteers on municipal commissions and committees who must often work with minimal support, local land trusts, and other concerned citizens.

While most of the examples in *The Roadscape Guide* are from the experiences of the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance in the U.S. Route 7 corridor of western Vermont, the lessons learned are applicable to many road corridors around the country. Although there are never true “one size fits all” solutions to the goal of preserving road corridor scenic resources, there are ideas that point the way to solutions. It is the intention of this book to provide those ideas for your own solutions.

Because the guide is a starting point, the *Resources* section is an important component and will lead you to the information you need to continue and expand your efforts. The book will also serve as the basis for further outreach and education around the ideas discussed, which the Vermont Forum on Sprawl will develop and carry out. More information is available at their website, [www.vtsprawl.org](http://www.vtsprawl.org).



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# 1 Understanding Your Road Corridor Landscape

The planning commission was reviewing a proposal for a new commercial subdivision along a scenic part of the road corridor and knew that screening the new building and parking lot would be important for this scenic area. But when quizzed by the developer on details of what they wanted, where, and why, they were at a loss. They knew some of the tools for preserving scenic resources, but didn't understand the landscape they were reviewing clearly enough to know how to apply the tools well.

Understanding what you're looking at in the landscape is the basis for any corridor work. Before developing a strategy to preserve scenic resources along the road, take a step back and examine the whole corridor. Consider how it is used, what it connects, and what's around it. Think about what you are protecting and why. What is it about the landscape that makes it special? Where are the great views and why are they compelling? What did the road look like in the past? How did it change over time? This chapter will help you find answers to these key questions.

Examining the corridor involves two steps. First, determine the logical boundaries for your preservation efforts by defining a **study area** and creating a **base map**. Then, study the area intensely, conducting a **visual analysis**. Learn the corridor's physical characteristics, its history, and its current status. Determine where the scenic views are and which ones are vulnerable to change. From this visual analysis, you will learn how the landscape was formed and, specifically, what is needed to sustain it.

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## Define Your Study Area

The size and shape of your study area will depend on the capacity of your organization. If your group is small with limited financial and human resources, you may want to concentrate on a shorter segment of the corridor with modest preservation goals. However, major road corridors such as U.S. highways tend to affect land use issues at a regional scale so it is best to address them by working with others at a regional level. If your organization has more resources to draw on, there are great benefits to working at a bigger scale with several communities. Roughly outline the territory that encompasses your early preservation goals and makes sense for the size of your organization.

## Create a Base Map

You will need to gather data on the corridor and compile them into a serviceable map. This base map will form the graphic basis for your study. Municipal and/or regional planning offices as well as private planning consultants offer map-printing services. They use mapping software (GIS) combined with aerial photographs to create maps customized to specific uses. Most municipalities have data in a GIS format on property ownership and land use regulations, as well as information on physical characteristics. This means that they are mapped and reproducible at any scale. For example, property lines or the location of zoning districts can be overlaid on an aerial photograph (**Figure 1.1**).

Early on in the process, have a map printed that includes your target area. A base map for roadscape preservation along a road corridor should combine digital “layers” of the following information:

- Orthophotograph (an aerial photograph corrected to be measurable, like a map)
- Property lines, including road rights of way and privately owned parcels
- Road and street names
- Municipal boundaries
- Contour lines (topography)

Many regions of the country are covered by aerial photography. Check with your state or regional property evaluation or planning office for more information on GIS-compatible aerial coverage. If aerial photos are not available as a base for your map, make sure to ask that your map include data layers that contain physical features such as forest coverage, streams and water bodies, and buildings.

The previous list contains the basics to create a map for conducting discussions of the corridor. But there is much more information you will need to map to carry out your analysis, including any of the following features or conditions that are present along the road:

- Underground utility lines, such as sewer and water
- Current zoning districts

**Figure 1.1: Base Map.**

This base map consists of a measurable aerial photograph (orthophoto) and superimposed contour and parcel lines (blue and red, respectively).



- Prime agricultural soils
- Wetlands
- Historic sites
- Floodplains
- Wildlife habitat
- Endangered plant species
- Public or conserved land

These data could be added to the base map or obtained in digital form and viewed on a computer screen. How much information to include on a single map, or how many “layers” it contains, will depend on the scale of the map and its legibility. Including too many levels of detail on a smaller map can render it unreadable. If the size is limited, consider creating a second map with additional information.

At what scale should the map be printed? This will be determined by how large your corridor is and what fits on a given size of paper. Your study area may contain miles and miles of terrain. To see details such as individual parcels, the bigger the map, the better. Larger-scale maps allow viewers to see many layers of information without sacrificing graphic clarity. If your study area is large, plan on working with big rolls on large tables in order to see more information. For ease of use, splitting maps into multiple segments may make sense.

The base map will offer a picture of existing conditions and provide you with a tool to begin to understand the issues, opportunities, and constraints presented by the corridor.

## Conduct a Visual Analysis of the Corridor

A visual analysis is central to all that you will do in your roadscape program work. It will be the basis for your projects, your priorities, and even aspects of your organizational structure. The time and effort put into a visual analysis will be amply repaid with a more efficient and effective roadscape program.

Visual analysis simply means using images to understand the visual qualities of an environment. Photographs, maps, and other graphic materials can help you break down complex landscapes

into manageable components. In roadscape preservation, visual analysis will help your organization understand the landscape along the road corridor—what it is now, how it evolved, and how it may be significant.

Start by conducting a **landscape inventory**, taking stock of what exists along the corridor. Then, research the **history of the landscape** and complete a **scenic inventory** and **scenic assessment**, identifying where important views exist and why they are significant. Finally, **create a site analysis** to recognize existing landscape patterns and determine areas in need of protection or other forms of action.

### Landscape Inventory

The purpose of a landscape inventory is to identify the presence and location of physical features and other factors that present development opportunities and constraints. A landscape inventory usually consists of a map containing a range of available data:

- Topography
- Soils
- Transportation infrastructure
- Utilities
- Historic sites
- Floodplains
- Wildlife habitat
- Endangered plant species habitat
- Prime agricultural land
- Public or conserved land
- Land ownership
- Zoning districts

This information is usually available through local, regional, and state planning offices, although often not from the same source. You may need to do some legwork to track down all the information you need.

Some of these features present physical constraints to development. Mapping steep terrain, floodplains, and wetlands will help you identify areas where construction is less likely to occur. Barriers such as railroads and slopes can prevent access to suitable land. Other factors—such as conservation easements, endangered species habitat, or prime agricultural land designation—

may present regulatory limits to development. On the other hand, transportation infrastructure, utilities, and buildable soils all present development opportunities. As you compile layers of information on a landscape inventory map (Figure 1.2), you will begin to see which areas of the corridor are likely to undergo change and which will probably remain undeveloped. Don't just rely on mapped data, however. Wherever possible, walk the land to get a sense of how physical features may limit or encourage development on specific parcels.

Even if you already have orthophotographs, consider having an aerial shoot done of the corridor to obtain additional photographs. Oblique aeriels can show context more effectively than ground-level photographs, illustrating the

relationships between parcels. Unlike orthophotographs and satellite imagery, oblique aeriels are shot from the side, at an angle (Figure 1.3). They provide a three-dimensional view that is more familiar to most people. If you don't have the funds for a professional aerial photographer, hire a pilot at your local airport and bring your camera. Make sure to shoot close-ups of areas you might be focusing on as well as higher-altitude views of the corridor.

Get a more complete understanding of the development capacity of your road corridor by studying current land use policy and recent construction activity:

- Has the road corridor been targeted for growth? Find out by reading municipal and regional development plans. These documents should state goals for growth in specific areas of a town or region.
- What do they say about how the corridor should grow?
- Is it slated for commercial development?
- Inspect local zoning maps to see what uses are designated for land along the road.
- Interview local planning officials to learn about landowners' potential plans.
- Has there been any recent pressure to change existing zoning?

To get an indication of the current pace of growth, check recent zoning and building applications and permits. If the number has increased, how recent is the change and how long has the building boom persisted? Examine the uses that have located along the corridor to determine what types of uses are experiencing more real estate market pressure.

After researching these issues and analyzing the physical features of the land, you will know which areas belong in your study area and which do not. You can narrow the scope of your work by concentrating on the land that is relevant to your organization's mission (discussed in Chapter 5, *Organizing Your Roadscape Preservation Initiative*). Natural boundary lines based on physical features or patterns of use should emerge. Delineate this refined area on your base map.

**Figure 1.2: Landscape Inventory Map.** A landscape inventory map contains the locations of site features that could restrict or encourage development. This one shows the base layer shown in Figure 1, with the locations of steep slopes (light and dark purple), floodplains (green), wetlands (blue), and no-build set-back areas (orange). When these "restricting" features are overlapped, the remaining land (gray) shows the areas most likely to be developed.



### The Group Tour

One of CVGA's first work sessions when creating the visual analysis of its focus area included renting a van to take all the board members for a ride down the corridor. As they traveled the route, they discussed areas of good—and bad—views, especially prominent landscape features, and the changes that were occurring along the road. This gave them an opportunity to share their personal experiences of the scenery and to learn from each other about what the characteristics of the corridor were. This tour became a frequent point of reference and the source of the group's common understanding of the corridor and issues to be addressed.



**Figure 1.3: Comparison of an Oblique Aerial Photograph and an Orthophotograph.** The image on the right is an orthophotograph. The image on the left is an oblique aerial photograph, providing a three-dimensional view that is more familiar to most people.

## Landscape and Land Use History

Landscapes are created by the interaction of culture, economics, and natural environments. How did these forces combine to shape the scenery along your road corridor? What type of development has occurred along the corridor in recent decades? Is it contributing to the road's special character? If not, how is it different from the historic development that made the corridor scenic? Studying the trends that shaped it in the past will yield clues about how it may evolve in the future.

You may have to do some digging to assemble a complete picture of the road's history, but you can find good material in a broad array of sources. Investigate written documents and oral histories as well as visual information. Potential sources of information include historic photographs and historic records.

## Historic Ground-level Photographs

If your time or money is limited and you can do no other research, take the time to obtain copies of historic ground-level photographs. They provide the most useful clues about former land uses and landscape views. They illustrate a former life of the land along the road that would otherwise be hard to imagine. Look for historic photographs in these locations:

- Local historical societies: Most communities have a group or even an individual who collects and stores historic material relevant to the town or region's history.
- Archives: Photo collections are often maintained by local or regional museums, state historical societies, or colleges and universities.
- Published works such as local histories.



- **Community outreach:** People often have old photographs in their possession, handed down by family members. Use a local listserv, classified ad, or word of mouth to track these down. One very useful technique for understanding landscape change is to re-photograph the views shown in the historic photos. Determine the exact viewpoint and re-shoot the scene capturing today's landscape. Sometimes the landscape

has changed so drastically that it's difficult to determine where a shot was taken. Perhaps trees have obscured views. This is also useful information, indicating the magnitude of change. Side-by-side displays of scenery "then and now" effectively highlight landscape change (as shown in **Figure 1.4**). Viewers comprehend instantly the cumulative effects of years of incremental change.

**Figure 1.4: Ground-level Photos of Scenery "Then" and "Now."**

The photo at top shows a rural highway in the 1920s. The photo at bottom is a view of the same location in 2000. Over the course of 70 years, the road was widened several times to accommodate the increasing traffic generated by commercial strip development along the corridor. The intimate size—combined with a tree canopy—lends the older roadscape a more human scale than the existing one.



### Historic Aerial Photographs

Historic aerial photographs can also prove invaluable. Beginning as early as the 1930s in some regions, aerial photographs—similar to today’s orthophotographs—were taken by the federal government. Most of these photographs are stored in central locations, but sometimes you can find copies locally. Check with your regional planning office to get leads on where you might find these in your area. U.S. Soil Conservation and U.S. Department of Agriculture field offices as well as state universities sometime archive older aerials. If you cannot obtain them locally, you can order historic aerials through two federal agencies—the Farm Service Agency and the National Archives and Records Administration. (See the *Resources* section for more information.)

Like ground-level photography, side-by-side aerials reveal landscape change by showing the contrast between then and now. But because they are similar to maps in their two-dimensional quality, they show a more comprehensive view of landscape, road, and building patterns than ground-level photos. The extent of changes to agricultural land can be more apparent viewed from this perspective. **Figure 1.5** shows how juxtaposed aerials reveal landscape change along a highway corridor in Stowe, Vermont. The difference between the agrarian pattern of 1963 and the residential and commercial pattern of 1994 is striking.

### Historic Records

Other kinds of research will give you additional insights into why your corridor looks the way it does and how it may change in the future. Talk to older residents about their experiences of traveling the road and what they remember about earlier times. To get a sense of the changing uses along a stretch of road, check local business directories from the 20th century. They list, year by year, the names and locations of businesses. The patterns of ownership and arrays of uses will show how the character of the road may have altered from one generation to the next. Read any published material that may contain information



**Figure 1.5: Aerial Photos Comparing Landscape Changes.** In 1963, despite an emerging tourist economy, this highway in Stowe, Vermont, still retained its agricultural character. Development occurred incrementally over the next 30 years and the 1994 photo shows how it all added up to become a very different place. Newer buildings (orange) are larger, set back from the highway, and oriented to distant views, not to the geometry of the road, as are the older structures (red). New roads consist of private driveways rather than public streets. Trees are planted in informal clusters—not in formal hedgerows—for screening and framing views.

on the corridor: planning studies, local histories, or newspaper accounts. Becoming acquainted with the history of the road corridor will give you a larger perspective on your work. It can help you think long term, take setbacks in stride, and have a clearer sense of direction.

Once you have created a base map, inventoried the landscape, learned the road’s history, and become familiar with development issues along the corridor, you can begin to decide where within the study area to focus your efforts. By analyzing all the data you’ve compiled, you can decide which lands need special attention and which do not. A scenic inventory and scenic assessment will help you define scenic views and decide which are the highest priorities.



**Figure 1.6:**  
**Documenting Open, Sweeping Views.** As we travel along a road, our eye takes in a much broader view than what can be framed by a camera. Try to represent this more realistic view of the landscape by creating panoramas of important viewsheds. You can do this easily with an ordinary camera. Take several shots from the same viewpoint, standing still and turning your head slightly before each shot. After the photographs are printed, align them in the correct order and fasten them together. This technique is valuable for depicting open, sweeping views.

### Scenic Inventory

Before you can conduct a scenic assessment, inventory on a map the scenic resources along the corridor—in other words, locate the better views. In pairs or a small group, travel the road corridor with a digital camera, stopping to photograph every view that has scenic qualities. (See **Figure 1.6** for a technique to photograph open, sweeping views.) Record the location of each viewpoint on a map. Take an outbound trip, then repeat the process on an inbound trip. As you ride along, note on the map points of visual interest—places where the landscape changes, edges of settled areas, historic landmarks—anything that seems particularly distinctive or memorable. Record the bad as well as the good. If there are problem areas, note them on the map.

### Scenic Assessment

As everyone knows, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. So it can be difficult to define exactly what is and what is not scenic. Using the images you gathered during the scenic inventory, assess the value of scenery along the corridor. You have two basic alternatives: You can conduct a formal, quantitative process or opt for a looser, more qualitative approach.

The first approach defines a set of criteria, and evaluates views to determine whether they possess certain valued attributes. These are characteristics widely recognized as creating scenic value, such as contrast, layering, focal point, uniqueness, etc. (See the *Resources* section

for a publication that describes a methodology for identifying and evaluating scenic landscapes.) Images are scored in each category and assigned a numeric score to determine their overall scenic value. For example, a view with clearly discernible landscape elements (such as a wooded edge along a field), a point to which the eye is drawn (a distant mountain), and features that are unique to the region (vernacular architecture) would receive a higher score. To the untrained eye, applying the criteria may seem daunting. If you would like to be systematic in your scenic assessment and have the resources to hire a consultant, this would be a good task for a professional. The benefit to this quantitative approach is that it is more rational and, therefore, more defensible than a qualitative approach. It uses agreed-upon criteria so the results reflect a consensus. Views can be ranked according to their score, helping the group prioritize its protection efforts.

The other approach is more qualitative and participatory. Rather than rely on a prescribed set of scenic characteristics, a group develops its own criteria based on what it particularly likes. There are different methods for determining the group's preferences, but to be effective the process should involve looking at a number of views and discussing them. An example of this approach would be a mapping and discussion exercise: After reviewing the site photographs and drawing on personal experience, group members individually locate their favorite views

INTERCHANGE NO.	1N	1S	2S	3N	3S	4N	4S	5N	5S	6N
<b>PHOTO NUMBER</b>	91.1.1n	91.1.1s	91.2.1s	91.3.3n	91.3.2s	91.4.6n	91.4.3s	91.5.1nq	91.5.2s	91.6.2n
<b>CONTRAST</b>	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	2
Clearly discernible and differing landscape elements existing side by side 1 High Degree 2 Moderate Degree 3 Homogenous										
<b>ORDER</b>	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	1
Natural and cultural features form patterns that make sense in the landscape 1 Strong 2 Moderate 3 Weak										
<b>LAYERING</b>	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Succession of landscape elements receding into the distance that provide a sense of depth to the landscape 1 Many elements creating the appearance of layers 2 Few elements 3 No elements or major obstructions in foreground										
<b>FOCAL POINT</b>	2	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	2	1
Point to which the eye is inevitably drawn which enlivens the landscape by its dominance 1 Distinct and visually pleasing focal points 2 No distinct focal points 3 Displeasing focal points										
<b>UNIQUENESS</b>	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2
Distinctive features that are unique to or symbolic of the region 1 Unique or exemplary 2 Interesting but not unique 3 Common landscape										
<b>INTACTNESS</b>	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Distinctive natural or cultural attributes have remained largely unaltered over the past century 1 Unique landscape 2 Moderately intact 3 Dominated by incongruous development										
<b>SCORE</b>	12	14	13	12	16	12	16	14	13	10

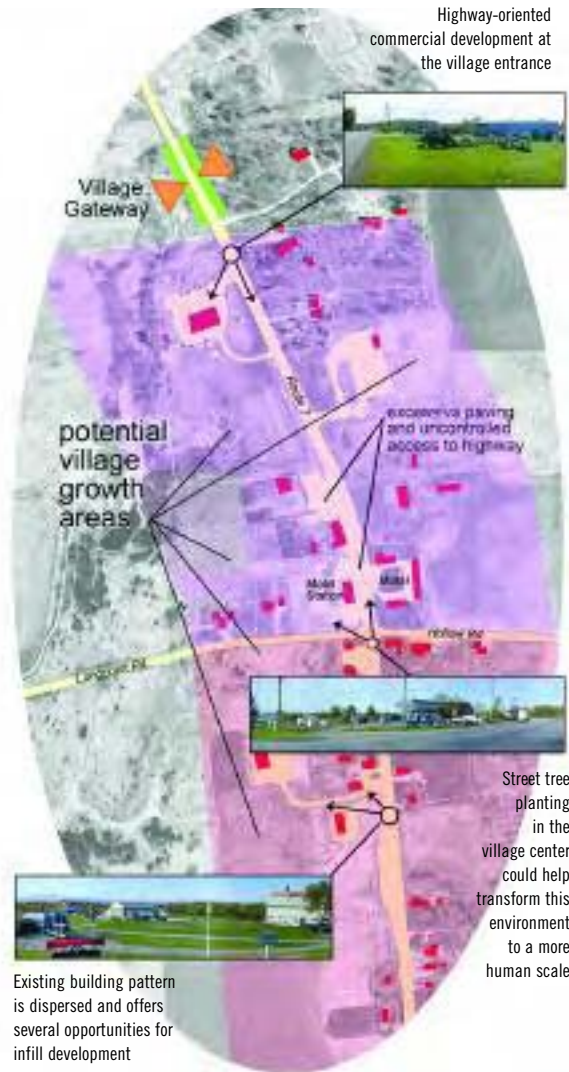
### Example of Scenic Inventory/Scenic Assessment System

Scenic value can be measured using a system that identifies specific criteria. This matrix was used by the State of Vermont to assess scenic value around its interstate interchanges. Aesthetic characteristics associated with scenic beauty are listed in the left column. Landscape photographs taken along the corridor were scored according to whether they possessed those attributes.

This view scored high in the assessment and thus was identified as an important scenic resource. It possesses contrast, order, layering, a focal point, uniqueness, and intactness—all positive attributes listed by State policies as contributing to scenic value.



**Figure 1.7: Site Analysis.** This site analysis of a village shows infill opportunities (areas available for potential growth) within the village zoning districts (pink and purple shading). It also illustrates the existing building pattern (red) and marks gateway locations.



determine which of those scenic resource areas are threatened by development or susceptible to change. A site analysis will help you do this. It will also help you understand and articulate the landscape patterns that contribute to those views.

### Site Analysis

A site analysis is a visual tool consisting of a map or site diagram that conveys landscape information. It marks the location of specific features and illustrates the relationships between those features. Creating a site analysis will help you see existing landscape patterns as well as development and conservation opportunities. (See **Figure 1.7** for an example of a site analysis of a village district along a rural highway.)

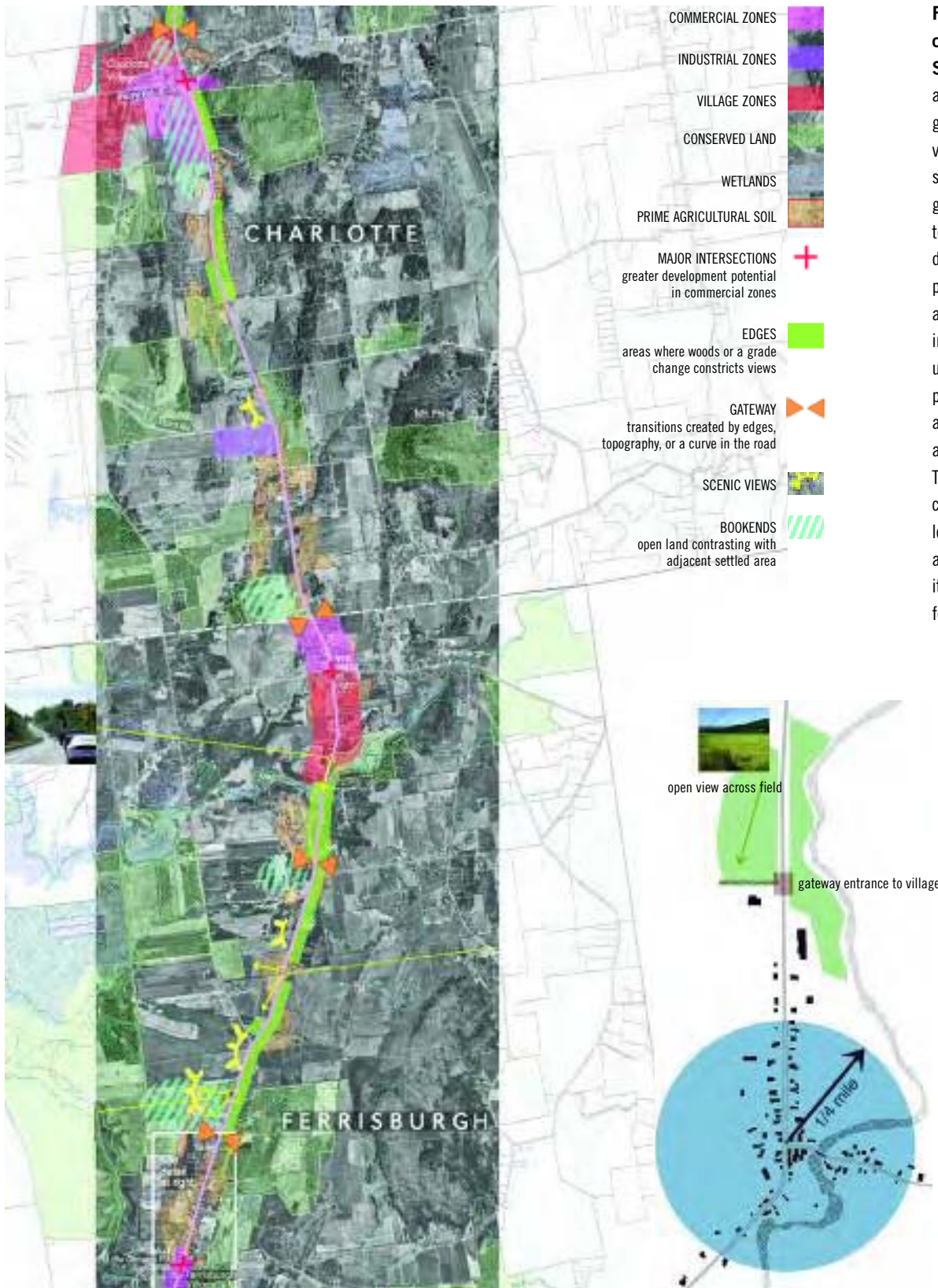
After you have mapped scenic resources along the corridor and determined which are most valuable, analyze the physical and development potential of that land. As you conduct your site analysis, here are some key questions to answer for each high-value parcel in your study area:

- Who owns the land? Does the owner have a plan for it?
- What zoning district does the parcel occupy?
- What uses are currently allowed for development in that district?
- Are there any conditions that preclude development (wetlands, steep slopes, etc.)?
- Are there features that recommend conservation (prime agricultural soil, rare species, etc.)?
- Do the existing landscape features offer opportunities to develop without diminishing its scenic value (hedgerows, slopes, wooded areas, etc.)?

Keep in mind that site analyses can be complex and layered with information or quite simple (**Figure 1.8**).

on a single map. Views with the highest value will become apparent as several members mark the spots where the best-loved views are located. (See the *Resources* section for a website with visual preference techniques described by a scenic preservation organization.) After discussing what, specifically, makes those landscapes special or unique, the group makes a list of characteristics it finds compelling. The objective is to identify the land that needs attention, but also to define what the group considers scenic.

Scenic assessment enables you to pinpoint key scenic resources within your corridor. After you have defined and located them, you should



**Figure 1.8: Comparison of Complex and Simple Site Analyses.** The site analysis on the left shows a graphic representation of the visual qualities of a corridor segment. It combines photographs, shading, and symbols to interpret many levels of data. Gateways, scenic view-points, ownership patterns, and conservation and zoning information help viewers understand the overall patterns of the corridor. The analysis makes many points and takes some time to digest. The site analysis below communicates one idea—the location of a visual gateway at the edge of a village and its potential as a natural edge for development.

**Figure 1.9: Underlying Patterns of the Landscape.**

Several underlying patterns contribute to this scenic landscape in New Haven, Vermont. The building pattern reinforces the contrast between a dense village and open countryside. Buildings are sited close together within the village and in tight clusters at intervals along the road, always set close to the street. A pair of buildings marks the edge, or gateway, between dense and open areas that is characteristic of New England villages. Structures form this particular gateway, but trees, topography, or bends in the road can also create a sense of entry and exit.



Your site analysis will help you determine if a property is susceptible to change and whether that change represents a threat to its scenic value. Some high-value lands may already be conserved or may be unlikely to be altered, while others are ripe for development. As a group, you should set priorities, deciding which parcels to concentrate on given your size and resources.

### Consider Options for Preserving Scenic Resources

Once you have determined which segments of the road need your attention, what should you do to protect their visual integrity? Conservation and regulation, both discussed in detail in the next two chapters, are strategies that restrict or limit development. But in many cases, other forms of action are necessary and desirable. Protecting valued landscapes requires supporting their underlying structure and replicating their patterns. If it follows traditional patterns, new

development can enhance rather than detract from a scenic landscape. (See **Figure 1.9** for an example of underlying patterns contributing to a scenic landscape.)

As you learn about the forces and activities that shaped the scenic resources along the road corridor, look for ways to strengthen and preserve them. For example, if your most scenic land is farmland, develop a strategy to support the agricultural economy of your region. Develop partnerships with agricultural advocacy groups and look for creative ways to keep farmers in business. Their livelihood keeps the land looking the way it does. Buying up farmland can prevent it from being developed but won't keep the scenery maintained.

Sometimes, adding features to an existing landscape can enhance its scenic value. Screening parking lots is one example; planting a double row of shade trees along the road is another. In village areas, inserting new buildings can re-establish a dense fabric as well as provide needed commercial space.

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The following chapters will give you many ideas and options to consider, but those are by no means the only ones available. As you consider the range of options, remember that a key point is to restore or maintain the traditional development patterns that create scenic value.

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# 2 Conservation: A Powerful Tool

The farm field was a favorite spot for tourists' pictures and always got a look from the locals as they drove by. It was the view across the field to the mountains beyond that drew their attention. When the real estate sign appeared on the edge of the field, that *really* got everyone's attention.

**T**he first solution many of us think of when confronted with situations similar to this one is conservation of those open spaces and scenic areas to protect them. But is this always the best solution, and how does conservation *really* work, anyway?

Conservation is the most powerful tool available in the tool kit of ideas to save open spaces and scenic areas along road corridors (**Figure 2.1**). It can also be the most expensive and most complex option. Yet conservation may be the only truly viable solution for certain lands and situations. Learning how to craft an efficient and effective conservation program to protect scenic resources along road corridors is essential. Learning how to assess when conservation is the best tool—and for which properties—is equally critical.

## Set Your Conservation Objectives

Conservation is a means to protect a corridor's most special lands, so your organization will need to have a clear idea of what lands are most important. The answer to this is in the landscape around

**Figure 2.1: An All Too Familiar Sight in Rural Areas.**

This subdivision is named after the historic land use that it is replacing. Conservation helps avoid this familiar scenario by retaining the farm fields and scenic views.



you. Your visual analysis of the road corridor is a good tool for setting conservation objectives because it explains the features of the landscape and assists you in understanding how those

defining features create the dominant landscape patterns. These patterns then become the basis for your conservation objectives.

The major features that stand out as key pieces of the road corridor are, in essence, the “bones” that the landscape pattern is based on. To preserve that pattern, it is necessary to preserve those major features. So begin by basing your conservation objectives on landscape features and patterns—not specific properties.

**Moving from Visual Analysis to Objectives**

Your visual analysis may identify that a clear transition point between open space and village setting is visually important. This pattern is a prominent attribute of many landscapes in New England and defines many of the historic road corridors that are considered so scenic. A road corridor along a water course or lake may have as its most important pattern the spaces where views to the water open up. These views may be broad and expansive or quick tantalizing

**Figure 2.2: Conserving Scenic Parcels at Risk of Development.**

This scenic meadow was part of a subdivision plan for houses across the entire frontage, blocking views to the mountains. The property was a conservation priority because there were no viable alternatives for house placements that would save the view.



glances, but they create an interest that is central to the experience of a place.

In each of these examples, the importance of a particular pattern creates a potential conservation objective. Your group's task is to review the visual analysis and answer two questions:

- Which patterns most define your corridor?
- Which landscape features and the resulting patterns, if changed, would alter your perception of the corridor?

The answers to these questions become the basis for your conservation objectives.

#### Conservation Objectives for a Road Corridor

CVGA's visual analysis of the Route 7 corridor led to these objectives for the organization's conservation program:

- To create contiguous stretches of conserved open land of at least a mile in length
- To retain distant views to prominent landscape features such as the mountains and lake
- To conserve priority parcels at risk of development that would impact scenic qualities (Figure 2.2)

## Conduct Conservation Parcel Inventories

Your visual analysis of the corridor will have identified features that make up the landscape pattern. Now you need to conduct a parcel inventory to consider specific properties that contain those important landscape features. The parcel inventory will lead to an in-depth knowledge of the land within your focus area and this, in turn, will help you be more proactive in pursuing opportunities for conservation.

The sources of information for your parcel inventory will be similar to those you used to create your visual analysis. You may also use your visual analysis base map as the base map for your parcel inventory. The parcel inventory will list not only basic property identifying information but also more detailed information to provide a fuller picture of the parcels and their relationship to the road corridor as a whole.

Include on your parcel inventory those properties that fall within the major landscape patterns

identified in your visual analysis. At this stage, do not be concerned with a hierarchy of importance.

Concentrate instead on as full a picture of the corridor as your time and resources allow.

### Parcel Inventory Information

Include at least the following basic information for each parcel in the inventory:

- Parcel identifier (this may be an owner name, but for larger inventories consider something that doesn't change with ownership—such as the town's tax map or parcel number)
- Acreage
- Address
- Land/cover type (open, forest, water, etc.)
- Zoning district
- Buildings and other structures
- Landscape feature and pattern, based on the visual analysis

Other information that will be useful for a more complete parcel inventory—and, later, for your project criteria list—includes:

- Agricultural and natural resources (high-ranked soils, wetlands, water bodies and water courses, forests, areas of notable wildlife habitat, rare or endangered species)
- Sites of particular community interest or value (trails, recreational sites, gathering places)
- Historic structures or sites
- Adjacent land uses
- Previously conserved properties or open space set aside as part of a subdivision
- Property status (based on clues such as real estate signs, conditions of farm fields, construction, condition of buildings)
- Potential changes, landowner information, and other local knowledge concerning the property

#### A Parcel Inventory Road Trip

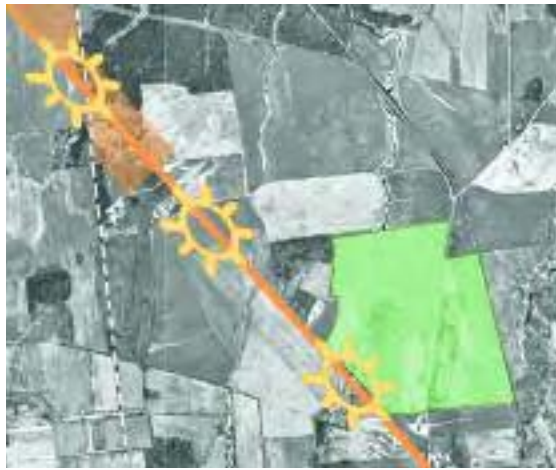
CVGA found that one of the best ways to create a parcel inventory is to conduct a “windshield survey”: A driver and note taker travel the corridor, pulling over at frequent intervals to note properties within the landscape pattern areas identified in the visual analysis. This is also the time to note property features and the larger landscape context around the property. Photos help illustrate any noteworthy features and are useful in discussions with other members of the organization who are less familiar with the area. The photos can also be useful as a baseline record when tracking changes within the corridor.

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## Establish Project Criteria to Set Your Conservation Priorities

You won't have enough money or time to conserve every property worthy of this ultimate land-protection step, so you must set priorities. A list of project criteria is a valuable tool in setting priorities for your conservation program and has the added benefit of providing a framework for much greater understanding of the properties within your organization's focus area.

**Figure 2.3: Targeting Key Landscape Patterns for Conservation.** This area of rolling meadows and views to the mountains (depicted as orange ovals) is an important pattern in the scenic road corridor. The farm (shown in green) delineated on the visual analysis map was identified as a priority parcel to retain this pattern and was conserved.



### Project Criteria and Donors

Many land conservation programs are entirely reactive—chasing real estate signs as land comes on the market. Organizations scramble to fundraise for purchases to complete deals before the land is lost to development. While this will always be part of the conservation process, the more strategic approach supported by a project criteria list has appeal to donors who appreciate the thought and planning that setting priorities requires.

CVGA used its project criteria list as a fundraising tool—particularly with major donors—to solicit funding for their conservation program as a whole, in addition to the project-by-project fundraising that was needed.

A word of caution: Quite often landowners justifiably don't like the idea of being targeted, so be very careful about how or to what extent you identify specific parcels. Focus on the patterns you are trying to conserve.

Develop your project criteria from the information created during the visual analysis. These criteria will provide a means for you to compare properties with your conservation objectives and a way for you to rank the list of properties. In addition to identifying the best properties for conservation, your project criteria will provide the crucial information on *why* a property is important. When there are the times you need to say *no* to a potential conservation project, the project criteria will provide the basis and backup for your decision.

### Creating the Project Criteria List

Use the key landscape patterns identified in your visual analysis as the main elements in your project criteria list. The goal is to target these key patterns for conservation and to identify the parcels within pattern areas that are most important (**Figure 2.3**).

A second essential criterion is consistency with your organization's mission statement, or similar statement of purpose and goals. Criteria should also be included that measure a project's feasibility, both financially and for the capacity of your organization to carry through with it. These factors, together with the important landscape patterns, create the basic list for any project criteria.

### Using the Project Criteria List

Once you have created the list of project criteria, review properties on your organization's parcel inventory on at least a preliminary basis to identify the ones of highest interest. You can then review the properties in more depth as potential projects come to the attention of your group.

Generally, the more criteria that a property matches, the more important it will be for conservation. However, not all criteria will be of equal importance and a certain amount of weighting may be necessary—although this doesn't necessarily have to be on a formal numeric system.

A word of caution when using any set of criteria: Properties may not always rise to the top of the list when viewed in isolation. Consider all

properties in the context of the larger surroundings and the contribution they make to the overall landscape pattern. This is a particularly important consideration for smaller properties.

Your project criteria list can create a hierarchy of potential conservation project lands, but real estate doesn't become available on a set schedule. So reaction to those real estate signs will always be part of any conservation program. Although your list of criteria will not determine the timing and sequence of your conservation projects, it will ensure that conservation projects fit into the larger framework of your organization's goals. Over time, a cohesive block of conserved lands preserving scenic open space along roadways will be the reward for careful planning and a well-considered set of project criteria.

## Know Your Conservation Basics

There are as many ways to structure a conservation project as there are properties to conserve, but a few basics are common to all. For many people, conservation is a case of "I think I know what it is, but don't ask me to explain it." Having a concise summary of how the process

**Project Criteria List**

CVGA's project criteria list is an example for a road corridor with a mixture of rural and village landscapes:

- The property should contain resource value, with multiple values as preferable. Among resources, preservation and enhancement of visual and scenic resources is of highest priority.
- The property should complete, or significantly add to, an existing greenbelt.
- If not, the property should be significant enough to become the basis for a new greenbelt.
- The property could be a "gateway" parcel. If conserved, it should help clearly delineate a boundary between a core developed area and a rural area.
- The property should be at risk for inappropriate development, based on its location within an existing or potential greenbelt and based on its agricultural, natural, or scenic resources. The property should not be within a suitable growth area.
- The purchase price should be at or below appraised value.
- There should be a viable owner for the property, if conservation is achieved through outright purchase. If development rights are acquired, there should be an appropriate holder of those rights available.
- There should be an organization available to oversee monitoring and stewardship of the property.


works will be very useful in building support with landowners, donors, and others interested in your program. It never hurts to make sure that your board and volunteers are also familiar with the basics!

At the heart of all conservation projects is the concept that the *right* to develop land can be

**Small Property, Big Scenic Value**

A 10-acre parcel was on the market with a high price tag. It was an open field, sometimes hayed, but with no particular agricultural value. There were no wetlands, watercourses, unusual plant species, or valuable wildlife habitat. Yet it became a high priority for conservation by CVGA. Why? The CVGA project criteria list identified these as essential considerations:

- The parcel was a visual link between the sweeping views to the Green Mountains on the east and Adirondacks and Lake Champlain on the west.
- A house anywhere on the property would have disrupted those scenic vistas and would have dominated the viewshed, out of proportion to the apparent size and importance of the lot in the larger landscape.
- The property was surrounded by other conserved lands and development of the smaller parcel would have impacted the feeling of openness created by the conserved land. Conservation of the 10-acre parcel filled a hole in the larger conserved landscape.
- The property could be used by the Town as a trailhead to paths in the area and as a scenic overlook, with a small parking lot placed unobtrusively out of the views from adjacent properties and roads.



transferred, separate from the land itself. Just as a landowner can transfer other rights—such as a right of way—and still retain ownership of the land, landowners can also give up the right to develop a property but still retain the property. When a landowner conserves land, the right to develop the land is transferred to a nonprofit organization whose mission is accepting those development rights so that the land remains undeveloped in perpetuity (Figure 2.4). The landowner can then retain ownership of the land or transfer it. But in either case, the right to develop it is no longer part of the property.

### Putting Together a Project

The work you have done so far on setting conservation objectives, inventorying parcels in your focus area, and establishing project criteria to set conservation priorities is a strong foundation. Now it's time to put that effort into use and conserve some property. Almost all projects proceed along a basic path, which is summarized below. It's beyond the scope of this book to provide an in-depth discussion of the conservation process; however, there is a wealth of good information available. See the *Resources* section for a list of some of the best sources for assistance and information.

**Figure 2.4: Transferring the Right to Develop Land to a Conservation Organization.** The Charlotte Land Trust in Vermont builds awareness of conservation by placing signs on conserved properties for a week each year. Conservation is one of the strongest tools for preserving scenic corridors because it is one of the most lasting.



### Working with Landowners

Projects most frequently begin with a call to a conservation organization from a landowner who is interested in learning more about the options available for his or her property. It is also possible for you to initiate contacts with landowners you've identified as priority prospects. Even though the owner may have no interest in the short term, having information about conservation options may eventually lead to a project.

Communication with landowners is your chance to build strong working relationships with your most essential project partners. The most successful conservation projects are built on a basis of trust and mutual commitment to protecting the special features of a property (Figure 2.5). Whether the landowner has initiated the contact or you have, take the time to learn everything you can:

- The owner's history with the land, goals for the property, constraints (financial, timing, and others), strong interests, dislikes, and level of knowledge about conservation
- Exactly who owns the land, in what form, and any rights, liens, easements, mortgages, or encumbrances to others
- Family status, history, and expectations relative to the land

### Purchase or Donation?

The development rights to their property represent a significant financial asset for landowners, so it is likely that you will work with them to establish a price to be paid for the land or the development rights. Land also has an emotional aspect for most landowners, and the legacy of protecting it forever will have strong appeal for many. The tax benefits of an easement donation or "bargain sale" may make those options financially feasible. Always ask landowners to consider a donation of the development rights or to consider a bargain sale at less than full appraised value.

Whether dealing with landowners for a purchase or a donation, always encourage them to talk with family members and trusted advisors to ensure that they choose a path that is appropriate for their and their family's situation. It is a

legitimate role for your organization to provide information on the options available, but always be clear about what your role is and the limits of your advice.

### Site Control

Once you have learned as much as you can about a potential conservation property and the landowner's needs, you will want to gain site control—a legally binding agreement on the terms by which you will acquire the land or rights in the land. Two of the most common forms of site control are the “purchase and sales contract” and the “option.” Other variations are possible and should be considered if they best meet the needs of your organization.

A purchase and sales contract obligates the purchaser and seller to carry out the transfer upon meeting conditions spelled out in the contract, such as timing, price, and other conditions specific to the property. It will also set forth means for either party to back out of the contract for agreed-upon conditions. If either party backs out for reasons other than those specified in the contract, penalties can be incurred, which for the purchaser is usually the forfeit of the deposit money.

An option is similar to a purchase and sales agreement but gives the purchaser the right—not the obligation—to purchase within an agreed-upon time frame. If the purchaser does not acquire the property within the schedule established, the amount paid for the option consideration is forfeited.

### Appraisals

Appraisals are used to obtain an independent opinion of the value of property and may be commissioned by either the landowner or the conservation organization. The details of the project—such as donation, sale of the property or the easements for full value, or sale at less than full value (a bargain sale)—will determine who commissions the appraisal. Frequently the cost of the appraisal is shared by the conservation organization and the landowner, but this is determined on a case-by-case basis, as is the timing of conducting the appraisal.



**Figure 2.5: Incorporating a Landowner's Desires into a Conservation Plan.**

As part of creating this conservation project, the farmer's desire for a future housesite was incorporated into the overall property plan. The housesite and existing farm structures (shown in blue) were excluded from the land covered by the conservation easement.

### Questions for Landowner Consideration

Many landowners find it very helpful to have a list of questions to help frame their thoughts about conservation and the range of options. Here's the list CVGA used, which can be further tailored to particular situations:

- Do you wish to conserve your entire property or a portion of it?
- Are there areas of your property with special features (such as wetlands, water bodies, streams, good agricultural land, views, etc.) that you want to protect from future development? If so, what types of features and approximately how many acres?
- Ownership: Do you wish to transfer title to your land (to a conservation organization or another owner with conservation easements on the land), or retain ownership of your land and grant conservation easements which restrict future development?
- Do you wish to retain the option for future housesites, septic areas, or right of ways on a portion of your land? If so, which, how many sites, and of what approximate size and location?
- Would you consider allowing some type of public access to your property, or a portion of it? If so, what type of access (equestrian, walking, skiing, biking, etc.) and approximately in which area?
- Financial considerations: Whether you grant title to your property, or only a conservation easement, do you wish to make this a sale or a donation? If you want to sell, would you consider a sale at less than the appraised value if it resulted in a tax savings (called a “bargain sale”)?

Appraising property is not an exact science, so be sure to use a qualified appraiser—one who has the experience and training to produce a report that is thorough and defensible. If there has not been much conservation experience in your area, be particularly careful to find an appraiser with enough experience and knowledge of the local market to find valid properties for comparison purposes. Give thorough instructions to the



appraiser concerning conditions or details of the project and the anticipated conservation easement. In limited instances, less than a full appraisal may be sufficient—such as an opinion letter—but these and similar variations will only be valid for uncomplicated projects, properties, or funding plans.

### The Conservation Easement

In many instances, conservation organizations do not gain title to property but to the development rights. The legal mechanism that completes that transfer of development rights away from a property is the conservation easement. The conserva-

tion easement specifies the uses and restrictions for the property—such as allowing agriculture, forestry, or recreational use, but prohibiting certain uses, usually future development or subdivision. It is essential that the uses and restrictions be carefully tailored to achieve the conservation objectives specific to the property. The work you did earlier on the visual analysis, parcel inventory, and conservation project criteria will provide the basis for drafting the uses and restrictions and details related to those. In some instances, areas may be reserved for future uses and changes to the property, such as the addition of agricultural or recreational structures. You can also use the visual analysis to establish siting and design guidelines that ensure the resources to be protected are not impacted.

#### Locating Future Uses on Conserved Land

The farmer was pleased to conserve his land (shown in green) but wanted to retain the option of constructing a farmstand to sell the produce grown on his property. The Town was pleased that he was willing to work with them on relocation of a road with a very dangerous intersection onto a busy section of Vermont's Route 7. CVGA's project partner, the Vermont Land Trust, drafted a conservation easement that anticipated both needs and a process for meeting them.

CVGA's visual analysis had shown where the most scenic views and focal points were on the property and had identified how the property fit into the open space pattern of this section of the road corridor. Using this information, a building envelope (area within which all structures must be located, shown in blue) was designated for the future farmstand and the road realignment (shown in red). Topography and other site features would be used to screen the road and ensure the farmstand fit into a pattern of other nearby farm buildings. Limitations on height and size were also specified to keep the farmstand compatible with the surroundings and with the goal of maintaining views to farmfields and mountains in the distance.



#### Management and Stewardship

After the easement is drafted, you have obtained funding, and all of the other pre-closing steps are followed, a closing can occur and you can celebrate your accomplishment of protecting a special property. But an important part of the conservation process remains—the long-term management and stewardship of the conservation easement. This essential phase of the conservation process ensures that the terms and conditions of the conservation easement are followed so that the features worth preserving are indeed protected.

A baseline documentation report (BDR) is usually prepared around the time of closing to establish the conditions present on the property. This serves as the benchmark against which changes can be tracked and as a thorough summary of property features, any legal agreements, and site resources. In addition to providing the baseline information on a property, it puts essential property information in one place—a particularly useful feature as organization personnel change over time.

Monitoring conserved properties is another important step in the stewardship phase and ideally you should do this on a yearly basis. Using the BDR as a checkpoint, conduct a site visit to visually check for any changes that may be inconsistent with the conservation easement

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conditions. Just as importantly, the monitoring visit is a good opportunity for you to maintain contact with the landowner, to discuss any questions he or she may have, and to build and maintain a working relationship. Good landowner relations go a long way toward avoiding problems and misunderstandings that may result in conservation easement violations.

A word of caution: The time and effort needed for good stewardship is a factor to consider when evaluating smaller properties for conservation, especially those with development envelopes or other types of easements (such as utility or access easements) that may potentially conflict with the conservation easement. Using the visual analysis and conservation project criteria processes will help you determine whether smaller properties—generally those under 50 acres—have resources of high enough importance, either on site or in the landscape context, to justify conservation.

### Choosing Partners

Conservation is a costly and complicated process and projects can usually benefit from a partnership between organizations. Consider these questions when choosing a project partner:

- Do your organizations have compatible goals?
- Do the organizations fill the gaps for each other? For example, does one have skills that the other organization lacks?
- Does a partner organization help you accomplish a project that you might not be able to do because of policies or limitations your organization has? For example, if your organization

does not take ownership of land or easements, can a partner organization fulfill that role?

- Can you reach agreement on project issues, including timing, financial obligation, and publicity/credit?

### Is Conservation the Best Option?

Conservation is a powerful tool and sometimes is the only one that will really do the job. But conservation may not be the only means to achieve the desired result of saving special properties. As part of any assessment of potential conservation projects, consider whether other tools can accomplish your goals just as well:

- Which types of resources are worthy of preservation? Are they highly sensitive, such as the site of a rare or endangered plant species, or are they part of a working landscape, such as farmland? The greater the sensitivity, the greater the need for more protection such as conservation.
- How strong are the alternate forms of protection? For example, certain types of subdivisions may include open space to be set aside, but does the governmental entity overseeing the process have the technical capacity and commitment to a strong oversight and enforcement process for long-term protection?
- Is the land appropriate for some development? Based on the size, location, or type of resource to be protected, would the open space land be impacted by adjacent development?

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Your roadscape preservation program will be strengthened by an array of tools, with conservation available for the most special properties. Understanding the landscape components of a property and a well thought-out prioritization process will enable you to choose conservation most appropriately. Other tools are available for protection, as well, and the next two chapters will take you through the steps for those.

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# 3 Regulatory Tools

A few scattered housesites, some farm buildings, and a small crossroads store were the common sights along the rural road corridor. But the barn became a storage facility and then expanded to become a commercial warehouse, the houses spread further along the road frontage, and the small store evolved into a strip of stores—with the curb cuts, signs, lights, and parking lots that come with them.

In many communities, development spreads slowly but surely along the main road corridor until the once open and scenic roadscape is gone. This common trend is directly related to the regulations in place that govern land subdivision and development. Regulatory standards that maintain the most prominent landscape patterns are some of the most important tools you can use in protecting scenic resources along road corridors.

## Know the Planning and Zoning Basics

The regulatory process varies according to state enabling legislation, but the basic issues and techniques are similar regardless of location. Comprehensive plans (also called city, town, or regional plans) set a vision and framework for regulations and bylaws that govern local land use and development. Subdivision regulations guide the way in which lots are created and associated infrastructure is extended. Zoning establishes different land use districts and designates the type of uses, lot sizes, and dimensions allowed within

those districts. Zoning may also establish site-planning standards for parking, landscaping, lighting, access, and similar elements. These may be in separate documents or combined into a unified ordinance.

## Clarify Your Regulatory Objectives

Before you can create or apply rules and regulations to protect the scenic resources along the road corridor, you should have a clear idea of the objectives you want to achieve. Your visual analysis of the road corridor will provide a base of information on current and historic landscape conditions. How has the landscape evolved? What are the underlying natural features? What are the patterns that define the character of the area? What are the changes that would most impact that character? The answers to these questions will guide you in creating or implementing the most effective rules and regulations.

Your visual analysis will have provided the details needed for your focus area. Regardless of the specific features, however, some basic goals will be common to any corridor. Generally, the regulatory objectives for a roadscape initiative are to encourage the following:

- Compact development patterns that concentrate development instead of allowing it to spread along the length of road corridors
- Uses that are compatible with rural and scenic landscapes and do not impact the important site features and resources of those areas
- Lot layout and building design that retain scenic and other resources and fit development into the landscape with as little impact as possible

## Start with the Comprehensive Plan

Proposing language in a comprehensive plan that will support your mission will give you a firm foothold in advancing your ideas. There are probably several sections in a plan that will apply to preserving scenic resources along road corridors. Start by looking into these key topics to learn

more about how your corridor is considered:

- **Transportation:** Sections that deal with plans for transportation corridors can include statements on access limitations, capacity (will expansion plans impact important resources?), alignment (bypasses and rerouting), and alternative travel modes (bike paths, trails, etc.).
- **Land Use:** These sections will deal with historic, current, and future land uses. All are pertinent for a roadscape program. Types of uses, scale and size, and general patterns of development may be covered.
- **Resources:** These sections will consider agricultural, natural, cultural, and historic resources. Scenic resources are also frequently covered and may include specific inventories of special views, vistas, or overlooks.

### Vision Statement in a Comprehensive Plan

The Town Plan of Charlotte, Vermont, makes a strong and concise statement of the Town's vision for the busy Route 7 corridor:

The function of the Route 7 corridor as the main north-south corridor in the Town and a regional arterial highway should be protected through the limitation of access points and the control of land use along the highway. The Route 7 corridor shall be protected as a scenic travel corridor. —*Adopted 2002*

## Getting Involved with the Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive plans are revised periodically by municipalities and regional commissions and may be required to meet a revision schedule set by state law. Become familiar with the revision requirement, the revision schedule status, and the proposed revision process, which will usually include—and indeed encourage—public input. This will be your chance to raise awareness of roadscape issues and propose language that will further those ideas.

If a plan does not already include an inventory of scenic and other important resources, propose including information you've created as part of your organization's visual analysis. Data on corridor characteristics that you've collected as part of the landscape inventory is useful in support of

goals and strategies set forth in the plan.

One of the most important contributions you can make to a plan revision is to encourage consideration of all of the attributes and possibilities for a road corridor. Plans are not regulations; they don't impose specific rules or requirements. But they are a statement of what a community or region wants to see in the future, and they serve as the guide to the tools that will implement that vision. This is the time to make a statement that roads are something more than never-ending strips of commercial development.

## Guidelines for Residential Development

A common sight along road corridors is the scattered pattern of houselots, frequently in former farm fields, each served by a separate driveway (Figure 3.1). This pattern has done much to erode the scenic landscape in many rural corridors. The unfortunate irony is that many of the regulations on which these subdivisions were based were probably enacted with the intent of having the opposite effect—to retain the rural landscape.

What has happened? Regulations for residential subdivisions frequently don't match the community's goals and objectives for a district. Minimum lot sizes for residential uses may be too large, with the resulting pattern of individual houses each isolated on a meadow too big to mow and too small to farm. In an agricultural or forestry district, however, lot and density requirements sized for residential uses will lead to a fragmentation of the landscape in units too small for those agricultural or forestry uses.

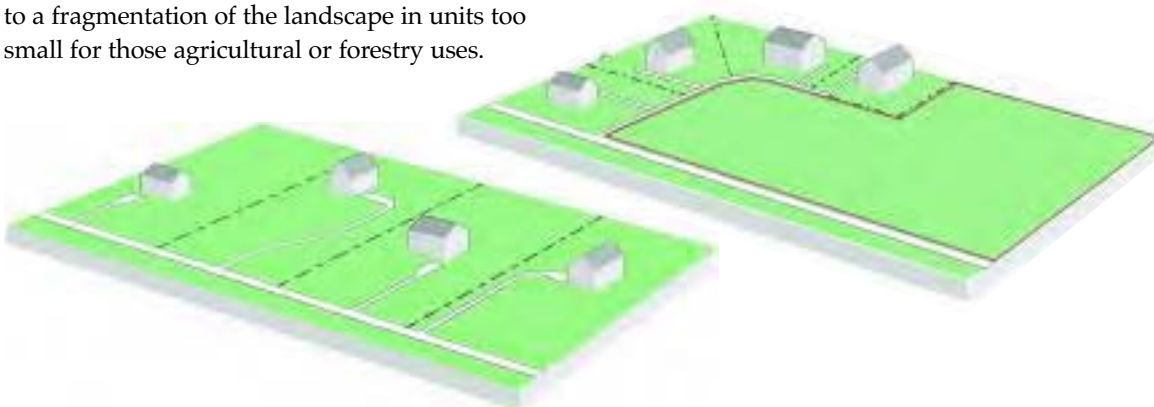


**Figure 3.1: Scattered Pattern of Houselots.**

Houselots spread along a road corridor—each with its own curb cut and driveway—have done much to change scenic rural road corridors. Alternatives to this pattern place development in such a way that open lands, scenic views, and rural character are retained.

Carefully consider the landscape patterns and productive uses of the land in a district when setting density and minimum lot sizes.

Regulations for open space subdivisions (also called planned residential developments, conservation subdivisions, or cluster subdivisions) are attractive and effective tools for fitting residential lots into an open and rural landscape. Open space subdivisions allow lot size and setback standards to be flexible, while maintaining the same number of lots that conventional regulations would allow. Land that is not within a lot becomes open space and remains undeveloped (Figure 3.2). In addition to retaining open space, this technique allows flexibility for roads, infrastructure, and house placement so that desirable site features can be preserved.

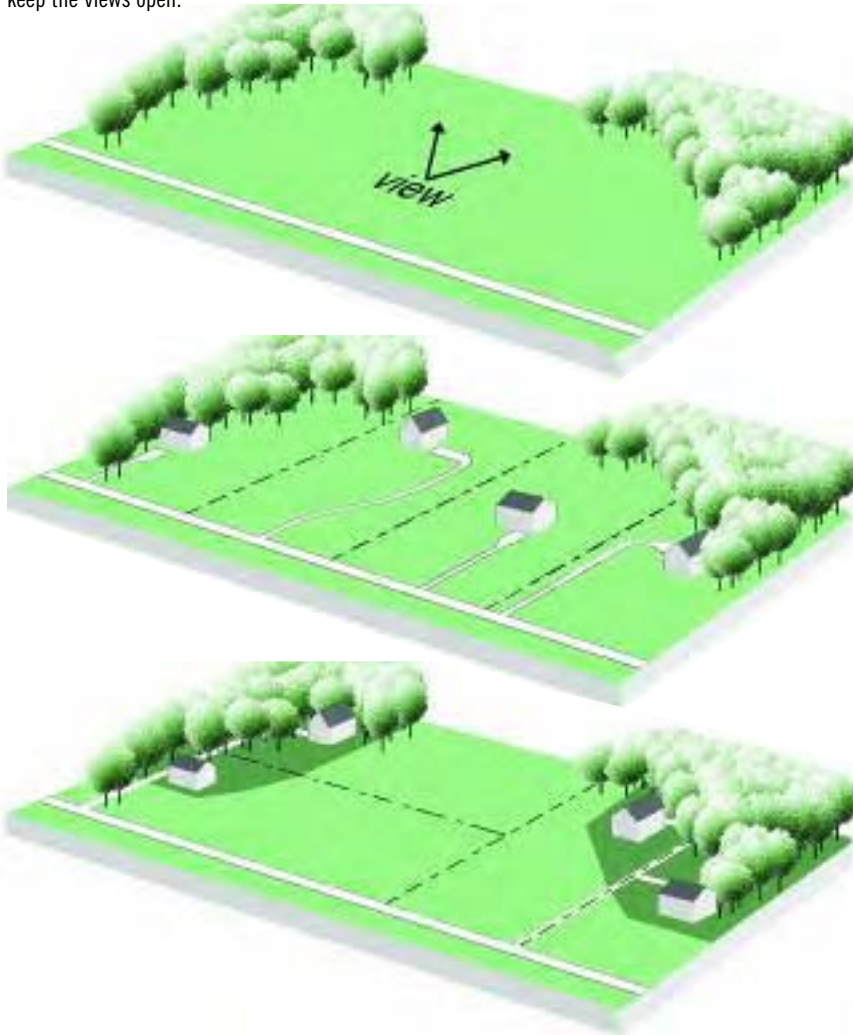


**Figure 3.2: Comparison of Conventional Method of Subdivision and Open Space Subdivision.**

The conventional method of subdivision (left) results in the pattern seen in Figure 3.1. An open space subdivision (right) allows minimum lot sizes to be varied and open space to be set aside, while still keeping the same overall density specified under the conventional subdivision and zoning regulations.

**Figure 3.3: Designing Conventional Subdivisions to Preserve Views and Open Space.**

The open field shown at top provides views framed by the surrounding woodlands. A subdivision that creates lots all along the road frontage (middle) disrupts those views with houses and driveways in open areas. Although the subdivision shown at bottom is still a large lot subdivision, better design, shared driveways, and building envelopes (the darker shaded areas) help keep the views open.



In open space subdivisions, it's essential that the open space be delineated with as much care as the houselots. Significant and highly visible features should be delineated as open space first, with housesites and infrastructure located in areas of least visual impact. Regulations for open space subdivisions should contain open space and development design guidelines:

- Link open spaces whenever possible to create a greater mass.
- Consider the purpose and use of the open space—such as farmland, natural area protection, recreation, or as a buffer to development—to ensure that the land included is a size and configuration that meets the purpose.

- Have open space comprise a minimum of 35% (for smaller parcels) to 50% (for larger ones) of the property.
- Keep buildings below the height of land and ridgelines.
- Locate buildings in wooded areas or at field edges and avoid sensitive areas such as steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains.
- Cluster sites to minimize the length and intrusiveness of roads and utilities.
- Have roads and utilities follow contours to reduce the impact of clearing, cut, and fill.

Good subdivision design to preserve scenic areas along a corridor is essential for conventional subdivisions where larger district lot minimums and setback standards must be used (Figure 3.3). Because conventional subdivisions usually happen incrementally without an overall plan for a property, it is particularly important that you consider the following points when planning or reviewing subdivision plans—in addition to the open space and development design guidelines noted immediately above:

- Where are the prominent features and site resources? Do lot lines break up or impact those, such as a lot line through the middle of a farm field?
- Will the proposed subdivision make it difficult to preserve important site features when future subdivisions are proposed?
- Can rights of way be established that can serve future subdivision of the land, so that roads and access points can be minimized?
- Building envelopes—areas designated on the subdivision plan within which structures must be placed—are a good design tool to ensure that houses and outbuildings are in areas of least impact.

### Guidelines for Nonresidential Development

Nonresidential development can quickly dominate a road corridor and define its character. Because the range of uses is so broad—from small offices to strip malls and everything between—this type

of development can be a particular challenge in preserving the open space and scenic qualities of a road corridor. The range of regulatory options for addressing non-residential development impacts is broad, as well, and includes all aspects of subdivision and zoning regulations.

### Nonresidential Subdivision Options

Nonresidential subdivision patterns in their conventional form have many of the drawbacks associated with residences and have caused the same disrupting pattern of individual lots and curb cuts splintering the open spaces along road corridors. A technique similar to open space subdivisions is also available for nonresidential or mixed uses. This technique, frequently referred to as the planned unit development (PUD), works on a similar theory—that overall density remains the same, but lot sizes can vary and can also take the form of multiple buildings or uses on a single lot. Most of the siting and design guidelines for residential open space subdivisions are applicable for PUDs as well.

The key advantage to PUDs is that the site can be planned and developed with flexibility to preserve significant site features. PUDs have the added advantage of minimizing the disruption of multiple curb cuts, drives, parking lots, and buildings because the development is planned as a whole, rather than on a lot-by-lot basis (Figure 3.4).

### Districts and Uses

Far too often road corridors are viewed as primarily commercial venues resulting in the familiar American pattern of strip development creeping out from villages and towns until no open lands remain. Limiting the areas for non-residential development is a significant step toward maintaining the scenic and open qualities of your corridor (Figure 3.5).

Commercial, office, and community facilities should be focused within towns, villages, and other existing areas of development. If there is limited capacity for growth in those areas, increasing the allowed density is a good first option to accommodate more development within



**Figure 3.4: The Planned Unit Development (PUD) Alternative to Nonresidential Development.** The commercial and industrial subdivision shown at top spreads buildings, roads, and parking lots throughout the entire site. The planned unit development (PUD) alternative to non-residential development shown at bottom allows greater flexibility in design and a more cohesive and compact pattern of development.

an already defined area, rather than allowing it to spread into surrounding open lands.

### Rezoning to Preserve Scenic Qualities along the Road Corridor

Frequently there are pre-existing pockets of nonresidential development along roads. The tendency over time is to expand those areas further along the road, without regard for the



**Figure 3.5: Impact of Commercial Development on Scenic Roadscapes.** This scenic corridor has been slowly impacted as commercial development creeps out along the road into once open fields. The assumption that road corridors are always destined to be commercial sites must be changed if scenic roadscapes are to be preserved.



**Figure 3.6: Creating Blocks or Nodes for Areas of Growth.** Linear development along a road (top) will result in a loss of the open land, as well as adverse impacts to safety and the road’s capacity to handle the increased traffic. Designating areas for future growth in blocks or nodes around existing villages or developed sections of a corridor (bottom) encourages a more compact pattern. Scenic and other resources can be preserved in the land between the growth areas.



appropriateness of the zoning district in the first place. If your visual analysis of the corridor shows that there are significant scenic resources in this type of area, consider rezoning all or the most sensitive portion of the district to a category that fits into the landscape better. Admittedly, this can be a difficult political task. But with a thorough analysis of the area as a basis, it will be a defensible move.

If areas of pre-existing nonresidential or mixed uses do fit the landscape and are appropriate for expansion, consider creating blocks or nodes with greater depth back from the principal road, rather than along it (Figure 3.6). As properties develop over time, it will be possible to create connecting streets that have limited access onto the main corridor, rather than the more sprawling pattern of curb cuts along the road.

### Using Natural Features for Zoning District Boundaries

Use your visual analysis whenever zoning boundaries are set to get a fuller understanding of the natural and built landscape along a road corridor. Natural features and properties that delineate a transition between development and open space

should be considered in establishing logical boundaries for zoning districts. Scenic lands and views should also be noted to ensure that the expanded commercial district does not impact those. By using these key elements, you can create areas that are more appropriate for nonresidential uses, which will in turn preserve the open areas that contain the significant scenic, agricultural, and natural resources of the rural lands between.

### Zoning Options for a Scenic Road Corridor

The Mountain Road in Stowe, Vermont, is the main route to the ski resort for which the community is famous. The corridor still contains significant scenic meadows along a small river, with striking views to Mount Mansfield—Vermont’s highest peak. As with many road corridors, the Mountain Road was zoned for commercial strip development and growth was spreading into those open and scenic sections. In recognition of the importance of the scenic road corridor to the character of the community, the Town rezoned the commercial corridor by designating compact, mixed-use growth nodes in appropriate locations, with the connecting corridors zoned for lower-density residential uses. Important meadows were designated as a “Meadowland Overlay District” subject to special design standards. A transfer of development rights program was also established that allows for development density to be transferred from the Meadowland Overlay District to the mixed-use growth nodes.

### Zoning District Boundaries that Fit the Landscape

The villages of Ferrisburgh and North Ferrisburgh, Vermont, are traditional patterns of mixed commercial, civic, and residential uses lining a section of the Route 7 corridor in western Vermont. The two villages are separated by farm fields and two small rivers flow through the area. A new municipal fire station was constructed a few years ago at the northern edge of the Ferrisburgh village. CVGA’s visual analysis for this corridor clearly showed a distinct natural boundary for both villages. A cluster of farm fields with sweeping views to the Adirondacks separated the villages. The fire station was a visual statement of “entry” into the southerly of the two villages and the small rivers reinforced the distinction and boundary by creating an intersecting natural greenbelt of open space and buffer to mark the delineation between village and open lands.

## Determining Appropriate Uses

Carefully consider allowed uses in the open space areas between villages, towns, and other developed areas in order to retain the very character that makes these lands so visually important (Figure 3.7). In addition to considering which uses should be allowed, you may designate whether they are uses allowed by right (frequently referred to as “permitted uses”) or whether they are allowed only upon approval by a municipal review body. This second level of use is frequently referred to as “conditional use” or “special permit.”

### Matching Level of Review to Impacts

The Town of Charlotte, Vermont, is a small community along the busy Route 7 corridor of northwestern Vermont. The Town wants to encourage mixed-use development in the west village, but at a scale that is consistent with surrounding uses and patterns. The zoning for this district allows retail, office, and health care facilities as permitted uses if they are less than 3500 square feet. The same uses are conditional—requiring review by the zoning board for impacts and compatibility with surrounding areas—if they are greater than 3500 square feet and up to 10,000 square feet. This limit ensures that these uses, which fit in well at a more modest scale, will not alter the character of this rural and scenic section of the corridor.

If a use seems to be compatible with the open space character of an area but has the potential to cause an impact, a conditional use review or special permit will consider the specific characteristics of the proposed use and determine whether it fits the character and capacity of the surrounding area. This is a particularly helpful designation for uses that in their smaller state may be perfectly acceptable, but have the potential for significant impact as they grow and expand.

When considering district designations and allowed uses, consider the following questions:

- Does the use impact scenic views and other resources that are important components of the area’s aesthetics?
  - Does the use require structures and associated development that are inconsistent with the surroundings? Are there potential accessory uses and facilities commonly associated with the main use (such as drive-throughs with restaurants or large parking lots with vehicle sales) that will be incompatible with the more rural pattern?
  - Can the use be designed to blend with the area’s buildings and land patterns?
  - Does the use meet and support the town’s vision for land use patterns in the area?
- Consider allowing uses with higher impacts—



**Figure 3.7: Compatible Uses in Open Space between Developed Areas.** A market garden and farmstand are compatible uses with the rural landscape between villages and other developed areas. To ensure that these uses remain at a scale that fits their surrounding, review as conditional uses or special permits can be included in the municipality’s development regulations.

### Slow Changes and Big Impacts

The farmstand had been a seasonal business for years on a busy stretch of the local highway and was entirely compatible with the surrounding rural lands. Eventually the landowner wanted more financial return from the property and decided to capitalize on the increased traffic along the road. An ice cream stand was added and then, in a switch to year-round use, a deli and pizza outlet. The next step was to add a miniature golf course in back and with that came increased lighting and a larger parking area. Now that there was more traffic to the site, the barn next to the original farmstand became a retail store.

What had happened here? Without a clear and well-defined list of uses for this rural area, a seasonal farmstand had evolved into a year-round, full-blown retail complex. Of even greater impact was the erosion of the rural character of this section of scenic roadway and the increased pressure for commercial development on surrounding properties.



particularly higher traffic generators—only in planned unit developments, if they are allowed at all.

### Lot Details—Size, Setbacks, and Coverage

Regulations that establish lot sizes, setbacks, and coverage limits create the pattern for development along a road corridor. The modern trend of larger lots and setbacks creates a scattered pattern that pushes development further from villages and town centers. When setting regulatory standards for these elements, consider the following guidelines:

- Lot sizes should be appropriate to accommodate the needs of the use. It's important to avoid overly large minimum lot sizes that consume more land needlessly.
- Lot sizes, frontage requirements, and setbacks should be compatible with the surrounding area or should be set to establish a pattern for future development that creates a desired pattern.
- Coverage limits should be established for both structures and total lot coverage (structures and all other improvements, including parking and drives). Make sample illustrations of the

coverage limits and lot minimums and assess whether that pattern fits well in a more rural landscape.

### Site Plan and Design—Ideas for Better Roadscapes

Site plan design—and even the rules that regulate it—frequently seem either to overlook the impact of new or expanded structures on their surroundings or to acknowledge the impact, but then deal with it by trying to hide the offender from sight. Neither is good practice! Whether you are designing a new or expanded use or reviewing an application for one, an essential first step is to consider the lot and use within the larger context of the surroundings. What are the components of that landscape—the land forms, vegetation, and views? What is the pattern of existing structures—the placement, style, size, and materials?

### Building Placement and Design

If buildings are compatible with their surroundings, there is less need to hide them. Consider the following tips in designing or reviewing new or expanded developments:

- Look at the style and placement pattern of



surrounding buildings. Use the best features of these as the basis for new projects so that the new development is compatible with the area. In rural areas, the traditional clustered pattern of farmhouses, barns, and outbuildings placed closer together can serve as a model for new structures that would fit well into the landscape. Watch out for building features—such as flat or shallow pitched roofs or large expanses of glass storefronts—that are generally out of character with rural settings, and avoid using them (Figure 3.8).

- Whenever possible, adapt and re-use existing structures. If these need to be expanded, additions or new structures should be compatible in style and size with the existing structure. There’s nothing wrong with an addition that is clearly a newer style from the existing structure as long as it is compatible.
- Use building envelopes—areas within the lot where structures must be located—to site structures in ways that increase open space, avoid obstructing scenic views, and allow for coordination of parking, access, and drives. Building envelopes can provide some of the benefits of clustering allowed in PUDs, even if that technique is not used (Figure 3.9).

### Landscaping and Screening

Landscaping is useful not only to screen structures from sight, but also to help them fit into the surroundings better. Be cautious of any plan that relies heavily on landscaping to correct a problem with the development. This may indicate an incompatible development layout and design, or a use that is inappropriate for the setting. Follow these guidelines to help ensure landscaping that is effective and appropriate:



- Consider the types and patterns of landscaping in the area and use those as a template for new landscaping. Landscaping that matches the general character of the area blends much better and creates an overall cohesiveness.
- Design structures and other site development to use vegetation already in place. In rural areas, hedgerows and clusters of indigenous trees and shrubs are common patterns that can be used as effective screening for parking lots and buildings.
- Place buildings with a backdrop of forests or hedgerows (Figure 3.10); they will be less visually intrusive than ones isolated in an open area. Place buildings below the height of land so that they are not viewed with the sky as background. Use topography and land forms to provide screening or as a background.



**Figure 3.8: Designing Structures with Features that Fit into the Landscape.**

Storage units can be a low-impact use if designed to fit into the landscape. However, their design is often incompatible with most rural landscapes. The storage facility shown at left has used the farm building architecture of surrounding properties as the basis for its design and fits more comfortably in its rural setting than the facility shown at right.

**Figure 3.9: Using Building Envelopes to Avoid Obstructing Scenic Views.**

A building envelope—within which structures are to be placed—ensures that the most scenic area of this lot remains open.



**Figure 3.10. Preserving Views by Placing Buildings against Wooded Backdrop.**

Views across this meadow are preserved by placing the house at the field edge, against a backdrop of the wooded hillside.

**Figure 3.11: Landscaping to Reduce Visual Impact of a Structure.** Dark siding and screening with a mixture of landscaping help to reduce the visual impact of this large industrial building.



- If a building is large or otherwise looks out of place, use landscaping to visually break up the mass or expanse of long walls or to draw the eye toward more compatible features (Figure 3.11).
- Remember that landscaping is not the only alternative for screening. Look for other rural forms as ideas. Fences, stone walls, and similar features can be effective. If these exist on the site, design the layout to use them rather than creating new features.

### Dealing with Vehicles

In a road corridor, cars and trucks are understandably a major component of the scene and many site features revolve around them. Make it a goal to fit vehicles and their associated infrastructure into the surroundings, rather than having them dominate the landscape and

**Figure 3.12: Breaking Parking Lots into Smaller Units through Landscaped Berms.** Berms divide this parking lot into smaller units, reducing the visual impact of large expanses of paved or gravel surfaces. Plantings along the berms offer visual interest and have the added benefit of providing shade and reducing storm runoff.



become the defining feature. These are some of the basic guidelines to follow:

- Although adequate parking is important, look at published parking standards for the use proposed and what works at similar existing sites as guidelines for parking lots that are adequate, but not excessive. Large parking lots have substantial visual impacts in road corridors.
- Use shared parking whenever possible. Consider the peak times of activities for uses or lots in close proximity. Is there an opportunity to reduce the overall number of parking spaces because of staggered peak-use periods?
- Consider breaking parking lots into smaller units through design and landscaped islands (Figure 3.12). Placing parking lots on the side or in the rear of buildings will also do much to lessen their visual impact. If this is not possible, at least reduce the amount of parking on the street side of the lot.
- Because surface material for parking lots can be a big factor in visual impact, choose darker colors. This is more of an issue for unpaved lots: Darker colored stone or gravel is much less visually intrusive than other materials such as crushed limestone.

### Lighting

Outdoor lighting is another common feature in road corridors, which—if not planned carefully—can dominate the landscape. Good lighting is necessary for safety and security and also is a component of roadside advertising, but this should not be an excuse to flood a lot with light that spills onto adjacent properties and roads. This list of guidelines will apply to most outdoor lighting situations:

- Match light levels to the purpose. Often the trend is to over-illuminate a site, which can have a very detrimental impact—not only on the site, but also on the surrounding area. Consider low bollard-style lights specifically designed for paths or walkways. These have a lower mounting height and shielded down-directed lamps. Use lower pole heights for general lighting, and avoid sitewide flood-style fixtures.



**Figure 3.13. Overlay Districts Tailored to Specific Landscape Features.** The Charlotte, Vermont, Scenic Overlay District (highlighted on the photo) provides additional development review guidelines for building placement within this very scenic section of the Route 7 corridor. District boundaries were based on topography and views to the mountains on both sides of the road.

- Choose natural-color lighting and avoid sodium bulb types. Incandescent and metal halide are two types with more natural color rendering.
- Because fixture styles determine the pattern of light distributed over a site, consider down-directed cut-off fixtures to produce a more controlled light pattern and reduce glare and light thrown onto adjacent properties.
- Give careful consideration to building-mounted lighting, including security lighting. Fixtures should be shielded and down-directed. For overhead fixtures, such as those in canopies, conceal the bulbs within the plane of the ceiling or canopy. Avoid internally lit canopies.

more complex; however, in specific situations, it may be exactly what’s needed. The *Resources* section will guide you toward sources for other tools that may fit the needs of your corridor.

### Overlay Districts

Your visual analysis will probably identify stretches of road corridor with a desirable pattern—perhaps an intact agricultural area, an area of sweeping views and vistas, or a scenic ridgeline (**Figure 3.13**). Overlay districts are a zoning technique well suited to dealing with those special features and can provide an extra measure of review specific to the qualities you want to protect.

Overlay districts add a set of regulations to the underlying regulations for a district. These overlay rules can allow or prohibit uses, establish more flexible or restrictive setbacks, or require an extra level of review and establish those review criteria. Politically, overlay district regulations may be much easier to enact because the underlying zoning for an area doesn’t change. The key is that overlay regulations are tailored to the particular circumstances of an area and its specific site features.

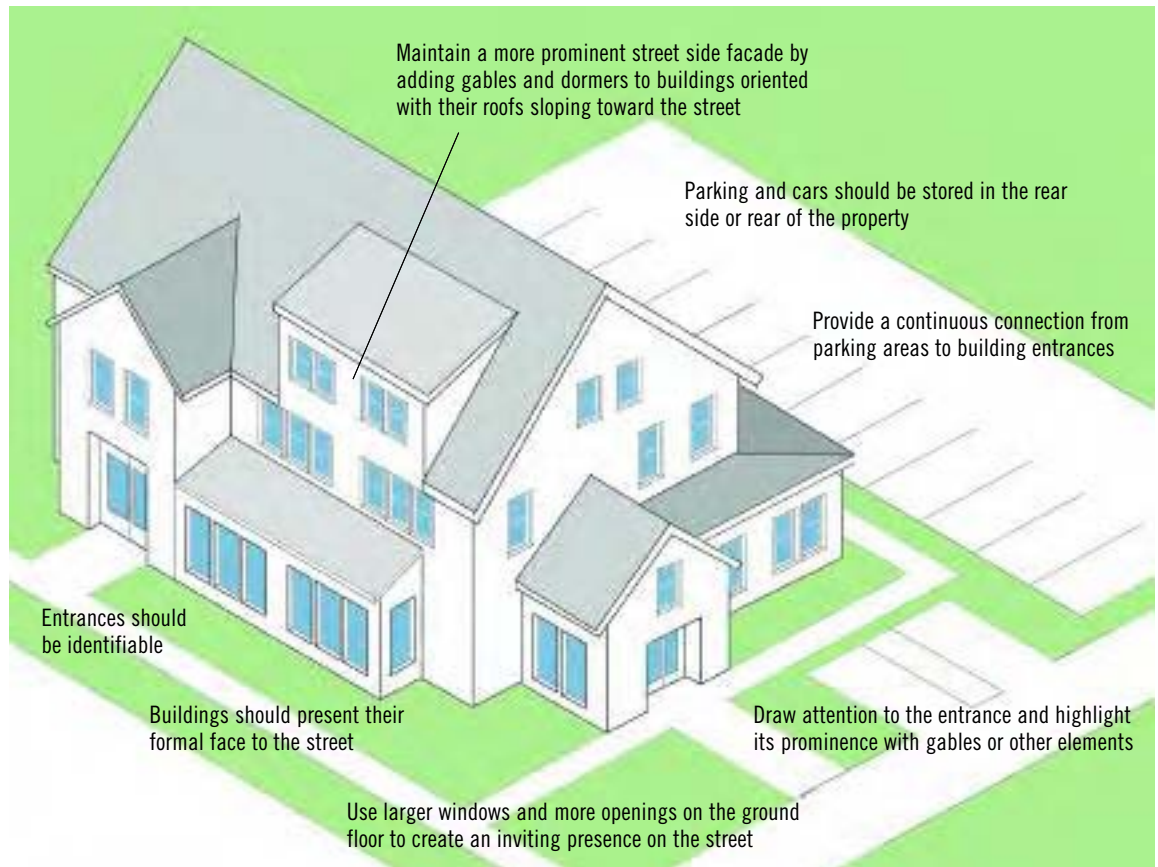
When establishing the boundaries for an over-

## Other Regulatory Tools

Many variations are possible in regulatory tools to address the issues for preserving scenic resources along road corridors. The following three examples can be particularly helpful. The first two—overlay districts and design review districts—are widely used and are meant to be tailored to the specific landscape features of an area. The third—transfer of development rights—is less common and far

**Figure 3.14: Using Design Review to Set Construction Standards.**

Design review districts set standards for new construction and for renovations to ensure compatibility with the historic or scenic qualities around which the districts are based. Clearly stated and illustrated standards help both applicants and reviewers do a good job of meeting the intent of the regulations.



lay district, it is important to have a well defined and defensible rationale for that choice. Once again, your visual analysis of the corridor will be a valuable resource in identifying that special landscape feature and illustrating its importance within the larger surroundings. Overlay districts focused on ridgelines are also effective for corridors where hillside or mountain views are an important part of the scenic landscape.

**Design Review Districts**

Design review is another zoning tool suited to protecting scenic views and the rural landscape of road corridors. As with overlay districts, this designation can be pinpointed to an area of particular concern or scenic value. Design review does not affect district boundaries or allowed uses—a point which may make it less worrisome to landowners—and instead deals with the way development looks.

Before any construction can take place in design review districts, new structures and any changes to existing ones are reviewed by a planning commission (or other appropriate review body) for compatibility with guidelines based on the particular feature around which the district is established. Guidelines can deal with siting, building features, materials, size, and other aspects that can affect the look of structures within the focus area (**Figure 3.14**).

Design review can be cumbersome and seen as another layer that slows down a project unless landowners and developers have a clear understanding about what is expected. A visual analysis that points out important landscape features is an essential basis for developing design review guidelines. Check your state’s planning and zoning enabling legislation for more detail on what is allowed relative to design review districts in your state.

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## Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of development rights (TDRs) work on a theory similar to that for land conservation—that the right to develop land can be separated from the land itself. TDR regulations allow development density to be shifted away from areas where greater open space is desirable (called the “sending zones”) into areas where growth is to be encouraged (called the “receiving zones”).

Landowners in a sending zone are usually allowed to only develop land at a much reduced density within the zone; however, they may transfer development rights to property in a receiving zone. Developers within a receiving zone are allowed to develop at a higher rate of density if they use development rights from the sending zone. The following scenario is a typical example for a TDR program:

- Landowner A owns 50 acres in a rural area that has been designated a sending zone. The regulations allow a density of 1 unit per 5 acres; therefore, he has development rights for 10 units. If he chooses to develop on that land, he is allowed 1 unit per 25 acres (or 2 units) on his parcel. He may transfer the remaining 8 units of development to land in a receiving zone. Or he may choose to not develop at all on his land and to transfer all of the rights.
- Landowner B owns 5 acres in a village that has been designated a receiving zone. The regula-

tions allow 1 unit per acre; therefore, she has development rights for 5 units. If she acquires development rights from a sending zone, she is allowed to develop at a higher density of 1 unit per half acre (or an additional 5 units) for her parcel. She decides to use this provision and purchases rights to those 5 units from Landowner A.

TDR programs can be complex and may be considered risky propositions by landowners. Despite this, a TDR program may be worth considering as a way to protect significant open space lands while still allowing the landowners to recoup the value of their land’s development potential. Consider the following when exploring TDRs as a land use tool:

- Are there appropriate areas for increased density and areas that warrant the preservation potential of a TDR program? Your visual analysis of the road corridor will contain information to help make this determination.
- Is there a robust real estate market in the potential TDR area? TDR programs work best where development pressure makes the increased density provision for receiving zones desirable and worth paying for.
- Can the TDR program be enacted on a regional or multi-town basis? In more rural towns, there may not be suitable areas for increased density or enough of a market for the sending zone development rights. TDR programs have been more successful when implemented on a regional scale.

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While conservation and regulation are the two most powerful and widely used measures to protect scenic resources, there are additional tools for you to consider in your roadscape preservation program—as described in the next chapter.

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# 4 Additional Tools to Preserve Scenic Resources

The houses proposed for a scenic meadow brought out a crowd concerned with what would happen to the community's favorite view. But discussion about the sewer line extension and about the project's multiple curb cuts was left to the engineers.

**P**ower lines and billboards can become so much a part of our daily views that they seem an inevitable part of modern life. All of these things—whether buried underground or hanging overhead—are key considerations for our scenic roadscapes (**Figure 4.1**).

Conservation within your focus area and working within your local or regional regulatory structure are two of the most direct ways to preserve open space and scenic qualities along the road corridor. While these tools have been the focus of much of this book, you may want to consider several others. Even if your organization is not directly involved with any of these, the following sections will be useful to learn about potential project partners and sources of assistance. Your roadscape preservation program will be strongest if it tackles the issues from several perspectives.

## Reducing Impact of Infrastructure and Utilities

While the impact of overhead utility lines on scenic qualities in road corridors may be obvious, the even

**Figure 4.1: Scenic Views Marred by Utility Infrastructure.** This scenic road corridor is marred by the jumble of power lines and poles along the road. Although utility infrastructure is a necessity, there are alternatives for design and placement that can fit well into the landscape.



**Figure 4.2: Co-locating Transmitters.** Co-locating several transmitters on this water tower reduces the visual impact of multiple antenna, guy wires, and other equipment.



greater impact of sewer lines may be a surprise. Utilities and infrastructure—such as power, sewer and water lines, and bridges—can have a profound impact on road corridors and their scenic qualities. Understanding what the issues are and factoring those into your roadscape preservation program will give you a more complete picture of your focus area and prepare you to work for changes when opportunities arise.

### Towers and Lines

Telecommunications towers and power, phone, and cable lines are a glaring presence along most of our roads and a fact of modern life. Although there is no way to return to the uncluttered look of a century ago, much can be done to reduce the impacts of these overhead utilities and facilities:

- Locate cellular phone transmitters on existing structures and design them into building elements such as clock towers and church steeples. Referred to as “stealth towers,” these are far less visually intrusive than freestanding towers.
- Co-locate transmitters on one tower or facility (Figure 4.2), such as a water tower, rather than have each service on a separate tower.

- Put utility lines underground whenever possible. Many jurisdictions across the country require all new utility lines in residential and commercial developments to be placed underground.
- If undergrounding all lines is not possible, consider undergrounding those with higher impact, such as road crossings and feeds to buildings.
- Consolidate lines on one side of the street to reduce visual clutter, and raise lines above the line of sight (**Figure 4.3**).
- Site transformers and substations so that natural features and the landscape topography make them less visible, with landscaping added to provide additional screening.
- Pay attention to the timing for other road and utility work so that changes to power, phone, and cable lines can be made at the same time in a more cost-effective way.

### Sewer- and Water-service Areas

Sewer-service lines, and to a lesser extent water lines, are unseen but create a pattern of growth and development that can bring about vast changes along a road corridor. Careful consideration of sewer- and water-service areas will help

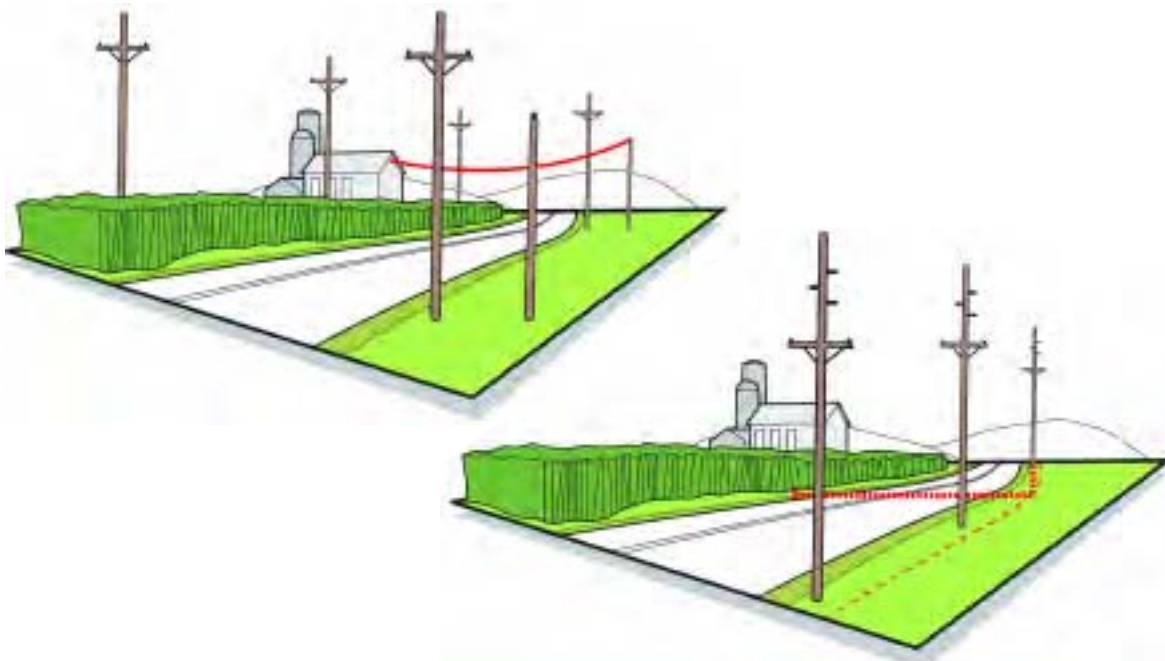
reduce sprawling patterns of development into rural and open space lands.

Use your visual analysis to identify the boundaries of developed and open space lands. Use these as the basis for setting limits to sewer- and water-service areas. Plan expansions of the service districts only into areas suitable for development with the least impact on important resources.

If sewer lines are extended from one concentration of development to another across rural and scenic stretches of the corridor, consider prohibiting hook-ups on the line in those sensitive areas. If hook-ups are appropriate for environmental reasons, such as to serve an area of failed on-site septic systems, then develop specific criteria and guidelines for approval of those connections.

### Roadway Infrastructure

Bridges, guardrails, and light poles along roads are other examples of infrastructure that are usually designed with cost as a major factor and very little thought to aesthetic impacts. When road projects are planned, be prepared to participate with information on the scenic qualities of your area and to ask for those to be considered when styles, materials, and placement are chosen:



**Figure 4.3: Consolidating Utility Lines.** Utility poles along both sides of a road with multiple crossings (left) cause visual clutter that detracts from scenic road-scapes. Poles along one side of the road and consolidated crossings, particularly underground, make a significant improvement (right).

**Figure 4.4: Compatibility of Bridge Design with Surroundings.** Both of these recently constructed bridges are entries to historic villages. The dark railings, more decorative streetlights, and smaller scale of the bridge in the lower picture are sensitive to the historic village and create a more compatible gateway.



- Encourage bridge design that is compatible with the surrounding landscape and historic buildings (Figure 4.4). Check with your state transportation department to see if there is a program to re-use historic bridge structures in appropriate locations.
- Consider guard-rail styles and materials that blend in and are compatible with the landscape, particularly along scenic stretches of roadway. Weathered steel, box beam, and wooden supports may be appropriate alternatives to the usual steel W-beam style.
- Opt for dark-colored light poles or decorative fixtures at sensitive areas, such as village entrances, to help preserve visual qualities. Span arms, rather than wire supports for signage and traffic lights, may also be preferable.
- Consider how much light is really needed along roadways. Would street lighting at intersections provide sufficient light for safety, rather than poles at regular spacings along the length of the road corridor?

## Billboards and Sign Controls

Billboards and signs are another constant along road corridors, frequently detracting from scenic views across open landscapes. On-site sign controls are generally covered by local zoning regulations. Control of billboards is a highly charged and complex issue, with legislation controlling them at state, regional, and local levels.

Four states—Vermont, Maine, Hawaii, and Alaska—have banned billboards altogether (Figure 4.5). It is no coincidence that these states are known for their scenic landscapes and are leading tourist destinations in this country. Local communities across the country are also enacting ordinances to ban billboards. An outright ban, while the most desirable approach for reclaiming scenic roadside views, may not be possible in your focus area, at least initially. But you can consider other steps:

- Prohibit construction of new billboards.
- Establish an ordinance requiring removal of existing billboards within a certain time period (usually 5 to 7 years).
- Require removal of existing billboards, either one for one or a greater ratio, in exchange for construction of new ones.
- Establish zones or districts where billboards may not be constructed, such as scenic or historic areas.

On-premise signs can also impact the scenic qualities of road corridors and create a visual clutter that is not only aesthetically distracting but also unsafe for those traveling the road. Sign regulations can provide parameters for size, number, location, and style of signage. There is a great variety of regulations and ordinances, and they should be tailored to the character of each area. But the following guidelines will be widely applicable:

- Limit the number of signs for each business to no more than one building-mounted and one freestanding. Roof-mounted signs should not project above the ridgeline of the building.
- Where several businesses are located on a lot, consolidate signs into a common freestanding sign with each business listed (Figure 4.6).



**Figure 4.5: Roads without Billboards.** Vermont uses travel information signs along road corridors in place of billboards. These smaller signs in a consistent format are clustered together where possible to further reduce their visual impact.



**Figure 4.6: Consolidating Business Names into a Common Freestanding Sign.** This attractive alternative to multiple signs of different sizes and styles establishes a recognizable identity for this commercial area and the businesses within it, while retaining the open green space along the corridor frontage.

**Figure 4.7: Scenic Byways Designation.**

This section of Route 7 is part of the Lake Champlain Scenic Byway, Chittenden County, Vermont Corridor. The outstanding historic, natural, and scenic resources along the corridor make it eligible for Scenic Byways designation.



- Limit sign sizes to be compatible and in scale with the built and natural landscape.
- Consider sign regulations with more detailed criteria for design, lettering, color, and material in sensitive scenic and historic areas.
- Because internally lit signs can be very intrusive, consider prohibiting them or strictly limiting their size and brightness. Any lighting for signs should be shielded and focused to ensure that glare doesn't impact surrounding roads and properties.

### Scenic Byways Program

The Scenic Byways Program—part of the United States Department of Transportation's Federal

Highway Administration—is administered through state departments of transportation and is in place in 48 states and the District of Columbia. The program is entirely voluntary, and designation is community driven and initiated.

The program recognizes and promotes outstanding roads, with a focus toward tourism and enhancing the experience of travelers (Figure 4.7). To be designated a Scenic Byway, the road must have characteristics of regional significance in at least one of the following categories:

- Archeological
- Cultural
- Historic
- Natural
- Recreational
- Scenic

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A road that has characteristics of national significance in two or more of these categories may be designated an All American Road.

As part of the designation process, a corridor management plan is developed outlining the qualities and characteristics of the road corridor and a plan to protect and enhance those qualities. Corridor management plans vary with each area and the local or regional group that is promoting the program. Although corridor management plans may identify issues and propose protection tools, this program does not have regulatory powers. But it could provide background and momentum to lead to conservation and regulatory tools discussed elsewhere in this book.

One of the advantages of Scenic Byway designation is the eligibility for grants distributed yearly through the Federal Highway Administration. Grants are for projects that improve the experience of travelers on the road and help interpret the story of the byway to visitors. Grants may be used in a number of ways:

- Improvements to visitors' facilities
- Safety improvements
- Corridor management plans
- Resource protection
- Interpretive information
- Marketing

The Scenic Byway designation is most often a regionally focused undertaking and, as such, will take more organization and coordination than a solely local effort. However, this effort will be rewarded with a more comprehensive and cohesive approach to a scenic road corridor. Although there are no regulatory "teeth" in the designation, there is a definite advantage to recognizing the special qualities of a corridor and outlining ideas for preserving its best qualities and minimizing impacts to those. The additional access to funding is always an added incentive! Even if your group doesn't have the capacity or program goal of promoting Scenic Byway designation for your corridor, those who are involved with this program could be logical and supportive partners for your corridor work.

## Context Sensitive Solutions

One of the contributing factors to the erosion of scenic character in so many road corridors is the design of the roads themselves. Faster, straighter, flatter, and able to carry more cars and trucks have seemed to be the overriding goals, usually at the expense of any sensitivity to the landscape through which the roads are carved. Since the late 1990s, however, a trend in road design called Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) has been gaining favor and has the potential to create road improvements compatible with the goals of a roadscape program.

The Federal Highway Administration describes context sensitive solutions as follows: *a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.*

CSS encourages design for roads and transportation facilities that respects and fits into the landscape, rather than dominates it. More flexible guidelines for road width, alignment, shoulders, medians, barriers, and clear zones (the unobstructed level area at the edge of roadways) mean that road designers can consider the overall context of a road within the landscape, with a design objective to have as little impact as possible. CSS also works with the community context and with community input to create roads that respect local character.

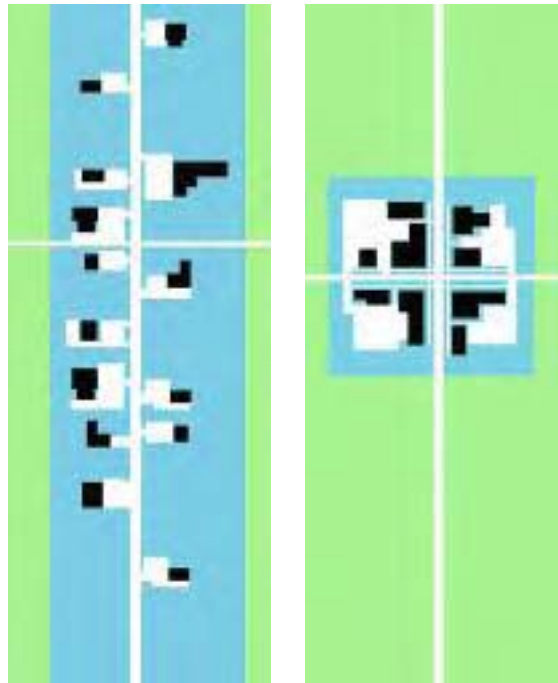
Road design has historically been the domain of the transportation engineer and has focused almost exclusively on the needs of motor vehicles. In CSS design, participation is broadened to include other disciplines such as landscape architecture and to encourage community input. CSS also stresses the importance of the range of transportation options to include pedestrian, bicycle, and transit as part of a comprehensive transportation strategy.

CSS is a welcome alternative to traditional road planning and design. Although a lot of the



**Figure 4.8: Access Management Comparison.**

In areas without an effective access management plan, curb cuts spread along the road corridor (left)—increasing the scenic impact and also creating unsafe traffic patterns. An alternative (right) clusters development and access in a more concentrated area.



design discussion will be very technical and beyond the scope of your organization, the emphasis on public input and sensitivity to landscape context makes this a trend to be aware of and to encourage when road projects are proposed in your corridor. As with other tools and techniques discussed in this chapter, CSS is an opportunity to ally with others who can help further your goals of preserving open spaces and scenic qualities along the road corridor.

## Access Management

Access management is a means to control the number, design, and location of curb cuts onto a road. In addition to the more obvious connection to safety, function, and capacity of a road to handle traffic, access management has a strong influence on corridor land uses and the character of the area. Access rules will be set and administered at state, regional, and local levels, depending on the type of corridor. Although the opportunity to influence access-management decisions is usually greatest at the local level, understanding the connection between access

and land use is important in understanding the dynamics of a road corridor.

There is a strong connection between access rules and land use patterns. In areas where frequent curb cuts are allowed with little access planning, road frontages become a clutter of driveways and the development that accompanies them (Figure 4.8). As access points multiply and development increases, once open and scenic areas can erode into strip development and sprawling patterns of growth. Access management involves more than just limiting those curb cuts, although that is a key provision. It also includes planning for more cohesive and efficient access so that safety and road capacity—as well as scenic road character—are preserved.

Whether you are in a position to create or administer road access or to advocate for management plans that preserve scenic resources and open areas along road corridors, consider several points:

- Compare goals in comprehensive plans for the region or town with the access-management plans and rules in effect to see if they are compatible. Without an access-management plan that limits curb cuts, a stated goal such as “maintaining rural character” is out of synch. Access-management plans and rules should implement stated regional and community land use goals.
- Consider access-management plans that limit curb cuts to one per lot, particularly in areas at risk of strip development. For lots with frontage on more than one road, limit access to the road best suited to handle the traffic generated by the proposed use (Figure 4.9).
- Require master planning for larger properties, with plans for future access and internal roads as part of the plan. A master plan should ensure that earlier stages of development will not impact the ability to connect later stages in an integrated road and access pattern.
- Encourage access-management plans to also cover ideas for connector roads and street networks that will reduce the number of access points onto main roads.



**Figure 4.9: Limiting a Curb Cut to a Single Point.** The wide, paved parking area and undefined access detracts from the scene at left and makes it a less attractive and less safe focal point for this intersection. An alternative shown at right provides landscaping for visual interest and to tie the site to the streetscape beyond.

Your success in using conservation, regulation, and other tools to preserve scenic resources along the road corridor may depend to a great extent on how effective you are in organizing your roadscape preservation initiative. The next chapter will cover structuring your group, developing strategies to achieve your goals, designing your outreach program, and funding your work.



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# 5 Organizing Your Roadscape Preservation Initiative

A group of neighbors, concerned about the spread of development down the Route 7 corridor in Vermont's Champlain Valley, decided to promote ideas for better land use decisions. For a year they tackled a number of issues but became concerned that their efforts weren't really focused effectively. Then they stepped back, took a hard look at what their concerns were, regrouped around a very specific mission and goals, and developed strategies to accomplish them. The group was the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance (CVGA), and that exercise served them well through the next several years—leading to this book.

**P**revious chapters have discussed the lessons learned in CVGA's conservation and land use planning work. This chapter will guide you through the considerations in developing your own organization or initiative.

## Create Your Initiative

### **Determine Your Focus**

The springboard for all successful groups is a sharp focus. First, articulate your mission by clearly stating the purpose of your group—the vision of what you are working towards. It should be broad enough to accommodate different approaches but specific enough to distinguish your group from others and motivate those who hear about it. Next, identify your goals—the ways you plan to accomplish your mission. Then, define your objectives—the measurable steps that you will engage in to achieve your goals. Finally, develop the strategies you will use to meet your objectives.

For roadscape preservation, focus on the corridor in a specific geographic locale or around distinct landscape units (such as a scenic valley). Identify the features that make your corridor special and create a program to preserve and strengthen these as development occurs. Be sure to consider the range of what a road corridor can be and what it represents, not just the commercial aspects. Your visual analysis of the corridor (described in the first chapter, *Understanding Your Corridor*) is a great place to start.

Being clear about your focus will make it easier to attract volunteers and funding. It will also help you decide what projects to work on, allowing you to use your people power most effectively. And it will foster a clearer understanding in your community of who you are.

#### **Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

CVGA was able to focus its work by following a progression from a broad-scope mission statement to very specific strategies to define its work. Here are some excerpts from each step:

**Mission:** To create greenbelts of open space along major road corridors

**Goal:** To create highway greenbelts along Route 7 from Shelburne to Middlebury as a model for viewshed preservation and clustered development and growth

**Objective:** To conserve a greenbelt of properties in the focus area of at least a mile in length, of which at least 50% have been identified as priority

**Strategy:** Work with landowners and other conservation organizations in the corridor to acquire development rights on scenic lands through donation or purchase

#### **Structure Your Organization to Best Achieve Your Goals**

As you think about forming your organization, consider the following questions. The answers will help point you toward a structure that is most effective for you.

- Are you responding to a specific issue or crisis that demands immediate attention? Or do you have a more general interest or concern for the character and potential changes in your corridor?
- What is the capacity of your group, both for financial support and people to do the work?
- What is the timeframe of interest for members of your group?
- What other organizations in your area, either government or nonprofit, have similar interests or focus?

Many organizations are formed around a crisis or issue requiring immediate attention. This situation provides tangible actions with clear deadlines that volunteers can coalesce around. Because there is little time to spare, you must define the objective you are working towards and the best strategies for accomplishing that objective, and then organize around these. This sense of urgency forces a focus that can be very effective.

Groups that form around an initial crisis or issue may face a challenge once that initial focus is past and they have to decide whether to continue to work or dissolve as a group. If you are in this situation, it's important to take a step back and re-examine your mission, goals, objectives, and strategies to avoid the risk of drifting and using your resources ineffectively. Ask yourselves: What have we learned from the recent crisis or issue that helps determine the need for ongoing work and the ways that it can be accomplished?

Organizations can also form around ideas, such as the concept that the scenic quality of a road corridor is an essential aspect of community character. Although this gives you the luxury of time to fully consider a mission, goals, objectives, and strategies, it is especially important that these lead to tangible results and progress and give your group a sense of accomplishment and direction. Continue to assess new project ideas against your mission, goals, and objectives as a way to stay focused, and evaluate your progress periodically.

Whether your group is forming quickly in

#### **501(c)(3) Status**

A key consideration for your group is funding, which may drive many of your decisions about your organization's structure. To receive grants or charitable contributions from people or corporations that want to receive tax benefits, your organization must be designated as tax-exempt under IRS code Section 501(c)(3). To get such a designation, your group must be incorporated and meet the criteria of the code. The application process can be time consuming and require professional assistance, and receiving IRS nonprofit status can take several months. But once all the paper work is filled out, the IRS can issue an advance ruling that will allow you to operate as a nonprofit until the official ruling is made.

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response to an issue or crisis, or is forming around an idea or concept, you have several options for organizational structure. If you are forming quickly, the lack of time may dictate a narrower list of options initially. But you can reconsider these once the initial crisis is past and you step back to look at long-term possibilities.

### **Forming Your Own Organization**

For many groups, the first response to an idea or issue is to think of forming a nonprofit organization. Although there are advantages to this approach, forming a separate nonprofit requires a lot of administrative work both initially and ongoing. To form a nonprofit organization you must incorporate with your state through the Secretary of State and apply to the IRS for nonprofit status. You will need to form a board of directors and have articles of incorporation and bylaws.

The disadvantage of forming a nonprofit organization is the amount of time and resources needed to create your infrastructure. There are also ongoing administrative expenses and tasks associated with running a nonprofit—including financial and legal recordkeeping and reporting, governance (boards, bylaws, staff, etc.), and maintaining and promoting an identity—which may compete with resources that could go directly to your program work.

The foremost advantage to creating a separate organization is the freedom to create your own identity, mission, and programs. You can choose a tone and approach and tackle projects as you see fit. You also have more flexibility in funding options and will receive the full benefit of grants and contributions.

Address these questions when considering whether to form a separate organization:

- Does the scope of this work lend itself to a sustainable organization, or is the scope too narrow to receive funding from diverse sources?
- Is there enough momentum to build a new organization?
- Will having a separate identity increase your impact?

If forming your own organization isn't

appropriate when you first start, it may become so later. These questions and considerations will also be valid when you examine that transition.

### **Adding a Roadscape Program to an Existing Organization**

For many existing organizations such as land trusts or land use groups dealing with issues of growth and development, a roadscape program is very complementary and may enhance existing program work. Consider these key questions as you consider whether to include a focus on road corridors in your existing organization:

- Does this new program fit with your organization's mission and values?
- Can you serve your constituency better by including this work?
- Are the strategies to be used compatible with existing ones?
- Will the new roadscape program enhance and expand your existing fundraising sources or will it compete?
- Will this help to create a greater visibility and an expanded group of stakeholders for your organization?

If you are not in an existing organization and are interested in a roadscape program, consider becoming part of a compatible nonprofit. The advantages are that a majority of your efforts—once the relationship is built—can go directly to program work, rather than to maintaining an organization. There will be a ready-made database of constituents to build from, synergy with other programs, an existing board, and administrative systems in place.

One disadvantage may be that your organization is constrained by the values and approach of the existing organization. While it is a bonus to have systems that are already set up, you are also inheriting all of the internal challenges that exist in that organization. All organizations have their challenges, so it is important to explore these ahead of time in candid discussions to make sure that they are not fatal to your program. Use the questions listed immediately above as a guide for your conversation.

Be sure to have the following in place before

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proceeding with becoming part of another organization:

- A firm commitment from the parent organization for a certain number of years to the program
- Support of the organization's board
- A few people on the board who are passionate about the program

Government organizations, particularly at the regional or local level, may be a good home for a roadscape program. If your geographic area is within one municipality, consider becoming a program of the conservation or natural resource commission or of the zoning or planning board, for example. Or become a free-standing roadscape committee. If your project scope is larger than one municipality, you can work with several communities to become a program or special committee in a similar way. The advantage of a multi-jurisdictional committee is that it creates a greater opportunity to solve regional issues. The downside is that it is more complex to set up and manage.

With these government organization options, you are still eligible for many grant opportunities and may have additional funding sources unique to municipalities. These options also set up a good working relationship with some of the key decision-makers at the start, having a potentially positive impact on your outcomes.

Most of the questions and considerations in both lists immediately above apply when considering a municipal or regional home for a roadscape program. An additional and very key consideration for this option is the political nature of government and the changes that can occur beyond your organization's control.

### **Organizing as an "Ad Hoc" Group**

Working as an "ad hoc" group is the loosest form of organization and allows the ability to act quickly and be very entrepreneurial. In many instances where you are responding to a crisis or immediate issue, this may be your only initial organization option. This option may also work best if your scope is confined to a specific locale or project. It is possible to start as an ad hoc group and evolve later into one of the options discussed above.

Although the flexibility of an ad hoc organiza-

tion is a big advantage, there are downsides. Without nonprofit status, it can be harder to get direct funding and it may also be harder to be seen as credible and effective. Using an existing organization as a "pass-through" for funding and as a host organization may be an effective way to counter these problems.

Many small groups find an established organization that will host them as they grow. The established organization will lend its nonprofit status for the emerging group to be able to apply for grants, will receive those funds, and then will transfer them to the ad hoc group. The host organization is responsible for assuring the accountability for the funds received. Your group may use different organizations as its pass-through for different funding sources. In this fashion, you can creatively piece together an interesting array of options and partnerships.

The ad hoc group is not publicly considered an official program of the host, but is separate. Although your host can be local, this is not necessary. If you are considering a host organization for your ad hoc group, find out what the host's administration fee will be (rates vary from 5 to 20%) and if there is an inherent conflict of interest in being associated with this group.

Remember: As an ad hoc organization, your program will need to stand on its own merits and rely on the skills of your group to get the word out. Don't expect to get help from the host organization in these respects nor to use the name of the host organization (except for funders and the name on the check) to further your work or improve your public credibility. This option only continues to be viable as long as the board of the host organization approves the arrangement. If there is little or no conflict in the relationship, the host organization also has the potential to play a role in introducing your ad hoc group to other key stakeholders, funders, and partners.

## **Strategies to Achieve Your Goals**

You have many different strategies to choose among to accomplish your mission. Select strategies and a

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tone that fit your goals, the dynamics in your focus area, and your organization's capacity. You might use different strategies for different projects, or for the same project as it unfolds. Be aware of how a choice in tone and strategy on one project may impact your effectiveness on other projects, and choose approaches that build on each other.

A great way to access a broader range of strategies without doing it all yourself is to find partners who use different strategies. Movements tend to be most effective when they involve groups using a wide spectrum of strategies and tone. Another critical element for achieving success is to carefully identify your target audiences and then design an outreach program that speaks to their interests and concerns. Don't overlook the benefits that come from planning publicity efforts and getting media coverage.

### Choose Your Tone Carefully

When deciding on strategies to use, also consider tone. Your tone can range from confrontational to cooperative, and you will most likely use a range of tones in your work. Strategy and tone are closely connected and are also closely tied to the character of the territory in which you do your work. Choose your tone carefully—it will have a lasting impact on how you are viewed.

A word of caution if you are working in a setting where a more confrontational approach is needed: Steer clear of unfounded dogmatic statements. You can gain more credibility with a well-prepared, logical, and defensible argument.

### Consider Two Primary Strategies

#### Focusing on Policy

Developing public policy and enacting the laws and regulations to carry it out is always a public process. The regulatory review process for new or expanding development—when policies, laws, and regulations are put “on the ground”—is also an opportunity for public participation.

**Policy Development** A focus on policy development means that your organization will participate in framing the discussion and the ideas from which laws and regulations will be enacted. This work

can happen at different levels—federal, state, regional, and local. Before embarking on policy development work, assess whether writing or revising the law or regulation is the best way to achieve your main goals and objectives, or if there is a more direct way.

Your participation will involve highlighting ideas, proposing means to bring those ideas into reality, and providing the information to support and validate your proposals. The basic concept behind a roadscape program—that road corridors are more than commercial strips and that the scenic qualities of a corridor are important elements to be preserved—is central to the development of policy, laws, and regulations. Be sure to check all of your proposals against this central concept to ensure that your efforts are likely to accomplish your mission.

The process and schedule for developing policies or the laws and regulations that implement them vary according to the jurisdiction. Familiarize yourself with these points so that you can participate at the earliest step. And be sure to familiarize yourself with who the policy and rule makers are and to build contacts with them.

As you choose which level of government to focus on, remember that the higher the level (federal or state), the wider the potential impact—but the more difficult it is to achieve results. A regional or local focus will affect a narrower area and constituency, but your organization—particularly a small one—will have a greater voice. Never underestimate how a well-developed and drafted local

#### Better Results from Collaboration

When the State chose not to site a new public safety facility in an existing developed crossroads area, and instead chose an open field in an area of sprawling development, CVGA partnered with other organizations to try to get the State to reconsider its decision. Although CVGA had stronger local contacts, the other organizations had more expertise, contacts, and experience with state legislators and officials and were able to help bring the discussion to state legislative committees and agency heads. Eventually these efforts were unsuccessful and the facility was built in the original, less desirable location. But CVGA had the expertise to provide design and site planning assistance and—based on contacts with state officials developed during the earlier discussions—was able to participate in site design and make improvements that helped mitigate the facility's impact by fitting it into the surrounding landscape better. The collaboration brought a range of strengths and expertise to the project and enabled a much better result than would have been possible with the organizations working separately.



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policy or regulation can become successful enough to catch the attention and interest of policymakers at a higher level of government!

Focusing on policy development has both pros and cons:

**Pros:**

- Has potential to make longer-term and broader impact
- Creates visibility for your efforts (this work tends to be of interest to the press)
- Provides an opportunity to build interesting alliances and a broader movement
- Educates your board and members about the legislative process, creating an opportunity to place your own people in these positions

**Cons:**

- Can be time consuming and expensive
- Requires persistence and patience
- Often results in a product that is not what you aimed for at the beginning
- Often pits you against some powerful forces
- Can become a distraction, taking attention from other important projects
- Can be transitory; policies can change with different administrations, and laws can be changed in future legislative sessions

Any sort of policy development has potential to fit into a larger scheme. For roadscape work, consider this focus in conjunction with a larger array of tools. And remember that having an adopted policy on an issue does not ensure implementation of that policy! Be prepared with other strategies to accomplish your mission.

**Policy implementation: Regulatory review process for new or expanding development** The regulatory review process for new or expanding development is the time that policies, laws, and regulations are put “on the ground.” This is also a valid time for your organization to participate by assessing whether the development is consistent with the rules and regulations. To be effective, follow this advice:

- Understand the process, the schedule, and the participants.
- Get involved early in the process.
- Be prepared with solid factual feedback.

- Be constructive in your suggestions.

The regulatory review process is always constructed with a system for appeals of decisions. If you think that a regulation has been improperly applied (such as approving a development proposal that seems counter to the regulations), then filing an appeal of that decision is an option. Although this can be a confrontational process—as well as technically complex, expensive, and lengthy—it may be a step that is necessary at certain times.

### Providing Technical Assistance and Education Technical Assistance

Offering technical assistance to regulators, developers, land and business owners, and the general public is a collaborative approach that can yield positive results for your organization. Technical assistance on issues related to particular projects or properties may include information about the conservation process for a farmer interested in conserving his land, techniques for better subdivision layout for a developer or planning commission, draft language for a zoning bylaw, or any of hundreds of other details that go into the conservation or land use planning process.

In most small communities, there is little or no professional assistance for land and business owners who need help planning for their property or for the local officials who will be reviewing their plans. Your organization can fill an important niche by providing technical information and innovative ideas. In addition to raising the level of expertise for all involved and making projects better, you will be introducing the larger principles and ideas behind your roadscape program.

#### Providing Technical Assistance

An outdoor recreation facility was proposed for New Haven, Vermont. CVGA had extensive information on site plan and design for commercial facilities in road corridors. Using their landscape analysis, they also had indepth information on the specific area being developed. With these tools, they were able to bring a range of ideas to the development review hearing for the proposed outdoor recreation facility. They made a number of suggestions for improving the proposal and were later invited back by the planning commission for an educational work session on site plan review and ideas.

Appearing at public meetings and hearings on specific issues or projects and having solid ideas are great ways to get your group known as a source for technical assistance. Approaching land and business owners directly with assistance—particularly if it can be done through a mutual acquaintance or the owner’s advisor (such as an accountant, banker, or lawyer)—is effective as well.

## Education

A broad-based education approach focuses on changing ways of thinking and behaving of the general public (all of whom are probably road corridor users), landowners, and businesses along the corridor—rather than focusing on a specific parcel or project. Your focus in an education program is to build awareness of the multiple values of a road corridor and its importance to a community’s character.

Consider the points under “Identify Partners and Design Your Outreach Program” (immediately below) when designing your education approach for different audiences. And remember to include a way to evaluate the impact of every education initiative when developing it—this will make a stronger case to funders in your future work. What awareness has been raised? What impact and behavior change is the result? Focus your evaluation on the answers to these questions, rather than simply making assumptions.

## Identify Partners and Design Your Outreach Program

### Considering Potential Partners

Work in partnership with like-minded groups to create a stronger, more effective outcome for your roadscape program. Identify partners to do work and employ strategies that are beyond the scope of your group. But remember: Taking time to fully get to know possible partners before jumping into a project can save a lot of time and avoid frustration in the future.

Consider *all* types of community partners—not just land groups or environmental groups:

- **Government:** Working with a road corridor as a focus means that there will be multiple jurisdictions because the road crosses many bound-

### Partnering to Build Awareness

CVGA used several techniques to reach a target audience of Route 7 corridor users and build awareness through local businesses:

- A local gas distributor that had several convenience stores/gas stations in the Route 7 corridor placed cards on each of its gas pumps during leaf season—a prime tourist time—with CVGA’s logo, a brief message, and the website address to build awareness of their work.
- A large employer located on the road featured an article about CVGA and its work in the company’s employee newsletter.
- A store featuring Vermont products with a high level of tourist traffic placed small flyers with information about CVGA in each customer’s bag for a month.

aries. You can help bring a consistency of approach where there may be none. Consider planning commissions, zoning boards, and staff (for instance, municipal planners, code officers, zoning administrators) as potential partners. Check with the local and regional planning offices to identify the committees and subcommittees under the municipal umbrella. Are there groups that have been set up to address a specific road corridor issue or a related issue such as bike paths or an improvement project? Find out what each committee and staff is really doing. Make introductions to each of these groups or people to learn about ways their work could intersect with yours.

- **Land owners:** Working with landowners can often be a long-term process. Ideas that are discussed or suggested may not come to fruition for years. Know and understand as much as you can about the landowners, to be a better partner and better able to apply the right tools. After carefully listening, present a range of options in initial meetings with landowners—it strengthens your position. It is not effective to advocate an approach that may be counter to the fundamental needs of the landowner.
- **Businesses:** All types of businesses along the corridor could be partners. Their employees use the corridor to get to work and many businesses—particularly those focused on tourist traffic—rely on the quality of the corridor.
- **Organizations and community groups:** Consider a broad spectrum of organizations—not only environmental groups—as partners. Chambers of commerce, garden clubs, sportsman organi-

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zations, historic preservation and historical societies, and schools can be great sources of information and may be natural allies.

- **Environmental groups:** Land trusts, watershed associations, conservation commissions, municipal subcommittees or task forces around specific issues (road study, bike path, trails)—as well as environmental policy groups—can all be strong partners.

### Getting Your Message Out

Before you design any outreach program, pinpoint your target audiences. Consider the following questions:

- Who are the decision-makers on key matters affecting your road corridor?
- Who are the influencers—the people who have some persuasive power with the decision-makers?
- Who are potential partners in your efforts that are not yet engaged?

Think about the message that will move each audience you've identified and deliver that message repeatedly in everything you do. It's natural to think that others will get turned on to what is important to you, but this may not be the case. First find out what is important to *them*, and then develop your message accordingly. By communicating a message that addresses what is important to each audience, you are improving the connection you make with them.

When designing your outreach program and developing your message, consider these points:

- **Listen!** The most effective place to start with any possible audience or partners is listening. Many groups make the mistake of starting a relationship by trying to “sell” the others on their work and their approach, proving that they “have the answer.” To establish a vital connection, listen and ask questions as the first step. Find out what attitudes and opinions there are about your issue, what language and messages inform and motivate your target audience, where they get their information, and what sources they trust. If your organization is not new, it can also be useful to find out how you are perceived. Activities for listening

could include focus groups, meetings and roundtable discussions (less objective than focus groups), one-on-one interviews, talking with people informally, attending meetings and events that are happening in your region, and surveys. (Graduate students are great candidates for implementing surveys.)

- **Go to your audience.** Go directly to the audience you are trying to reach, rather than expecting them to come to you. Simply calling a meeting and expecting people to come draws a smaller, less diverse pool of people. Identify the places and events where they are, and use those opportunities to get your message out.
- **Pay attention to timing, locale, format, and other ways to make participation convenient and of interest.** Organizing a meeting on the first day of deer hunting season may attract a very small number of attendees, whereas a time of year when people want to get out of the house (mud season up north!) can have great results.

People enjoy learning about where they are. Much of what you gather as you establish your conservation and land use programs—such as historic photos and information about your corridor—will be of interest to others if presented in a fun, easy, and engaging way.

- **Highlight solutions and positive strategies.** Many environmental groups solicit participation by highlighting the problems—making the assumption that “if we can get people concerned enough, they will show up.” But only presenting problems and saying “No” can heighten despair and decrease a broad range of involvement. To increase the likelihood of involving more people, make an effort to communicate a positive message.

Publicity keeps your group in the public eye, helps you recruit new members, and can be free if you use the media well. If the community is paying attention, the key decision-makers will also pay attention—their critical decisions will be in the public spotlight. Your goal should be for regular publicity (at least once per month). A publicity plan and schedule is essential and all events and fundraising efforts should be tied to and flow from that plan. Develop a diverse strat-

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egy—involving group members and using their skills in different ways. Remember that every event you conduct and service you provide is an opportunity for publicity and media coverage.

Knowing the key media personnel and how to work with them can often do more than just about any other activity. Make a list of media contacts and develop relationships with them. In addition to sending out press releases and holding press conferences, you can use op-ed pieces and letters to the editor very effectively. The media will often cover an event that involves community members, giving you the chance to communicate your message at the same time.

Keep in mind two kinds of publicity—current and general. Current publicity is time-specific and used to promote something happening, such as a brief item in the newspaper about an upcoming meeting or an op-ed piece with a response to a specific development proposal. General publicity contains information that is not time-dependent, such as a newspaper story on your goals and past successes and an overview of issues related to road corridors. Use all your activities and events in your community to generate publicity throughout the year.

Think about statewide and national exposure as well. The *Resources* section includes the names of several national organizations that might be interested in your roadscape program. Check with your local news outlets for contacts that might lead to national publicity. Publicity beyond your locale can help build credibility, is particularly useful when seeking larger individual or foundation donors, and might lead to some exciting opportunities for your organization.

## Fund Your Work

Fundraising is about connecting to people and inviting them to contribute to the important work of your organization. It starts with an assessment of all the ways your work connects with individuals and the public. Meetings to evaluate the road corridor will bring people who are interested in it, so keep track of all the people who attend.

### Corridor tour

The corridor tour was used effectively to boost awareness of and support for CVGA's work on a broader scale. A bus tour and post-tour reception, held at a restaurant on the corridor with stunning views across a CVGA-conserved property, was well attended and received. A small group of local supporters was asked to serve as a "host committee" and helped gather names for an invitation list. Their names on the invitation helped attract participants. The event began with a motor coach tour, including a narration by the executive director and comments from CVGA board members. The return trip to the restaurant provided ample time for questions and comments by participants. At the restaurant, the board chair made brief remarks about CVGA's work, and then the participants and board members mingled. Invitations were sent to press as well, and the tours were publicized further by articles in local papers. Although the primary purpose of the tours was to build awareness, the tours also usually resulted in donations.

Identifying all the businesses in your corridor that may benefit from your work will lead to a list of potential sponsors, funders, and supporters. A corridor tour is an effective activity to engage and connect with people.

### Understand the Basic Tenets of Fundraising

Be sure you understand some fundamentals of fundraising before you develop your strategies to seek funding from potential sources:

- Healthy organizations have a diversified funding base (see categories beginning on page 60). In the short term, it may be easier to raise most of your funds from one source, such as a foundation or major donor. But in the long run, this is not a sustainable solution.
- Preparing an annual fundraising plan with concrete goals and strategies fosters proactive thinking before a funding crisis hits. Have a well-thought out blueprint complete with a timeline and assignment of responsibilities.
- Fundraising has to cover general operating costs in addition to specific project costs. Consider these costs and include them whenever possible in your funding proposals and fees.
- All program activities can create opportunities for raising money. Any activity that reaches people is an opportunity to collect names that will then become the most likely to target for an appeal.
- Many aspects of fundraising are about building relationships. A strong relationship with your contributors can foster long-term funding opportunities and referrals, as well as publicity.

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- People contribute because it is an opportunity to be involved in something larger than themselves. Remember that you are providing a wonderful opportunity for them!

### Seek Funding from Diverse Sources

When starting out, groups often rely on one funding source. But for your group to be sustainable, you should seek a range of sources. Diverse funding sources increase the number of people who have a stake in what you do—building a community of supporters. Consider these different funding categories:

- **Individuals.** Individual contributions make up almost 90% of all charitable contributions in the United States. Many members of a community may be happy to contribute \$5 to \$20 for a roadscape project. Smaller donations such as these help to build community support that makes it easier to generate larger donations. Contributions from major donors can range from hundreds to thousand of dollars and require a personal solicitation. Take the time to do some research, talk to community leaders, and look at the IRS 990 forms of other nonprofits to prepare a list of potential supporters. Let your supporters have the opportunity to give at least two times each year. Some different ways to receive a donation are cash, bequests, stock and property, and workplace giving.
- **Businesses.** The most likely businesses to start with are those in your corridor or whose employees use the corridor to get to work. You can receive money directly from the business through donations, memberships, or sponsorships. Depending on the size of the business, these different funds may be accessed through different departments. (Sponsorship funds are most likely solicited through the marketing department.) Many businesses have a matching gift/employee giving program where they will match an amount given by an employee or will allow solicitation of their employees. Another option is to work with businesses to leverage greater public funding by asking companies to make a small donation for each sale for a period of time and by publicizing your organization to their customers in other ways. Remember that public recognition of a business for its assistance is a critical element for making this relationship work. Some larger corporations also have a foundation, which is a separate giving process.
- **Foundations.** Numerous foundations provide funding for roadscape work. *Before* you submit a proposal to a foundation, carefully research their guidelines and focus areas. Do not submit a proposal if you do not meet the focus area or guidelines—it is a waste of your time and theirs. Often, a foundation has staff that will speak with you on the phone and offer assistance in focusing your proposal. Many foundations offer assistance to grassroots groups just starting up—usually this is a small amount (\$2,000, for example) of seed money to help get a group started on an issue. The Foundation Center maintains collections at more than 200 public libraries and nonprofit research centers across the U.S. A number of good regional and national directories are available for sale.
- **Government.** Various local, state, federal, and intergovernmental agencies administer funds that can be accessed. These generally require very strict tracking processes and may include grants, technical fees for services provided, or funding from fines levied. Funds from fines are often earmarked for nonprofit initiatives in the issue area of their violation. Check with your municipality or state to learn about the availability of these funds. Your municipality may have access to applying for funds from the state or federal government that you could apply for jointly; the municipality applies for the funds and then pays them to your group to implement the project.
- **Earned Income.** Groups can raise money directly through the sale of services and goods including workshops, publications, and special events such as corridor tours (with food stops at local businesses). While events take time, they are one of the best ways to showcase your organization in the community and build engagement. They also provide you with a great list of people to then solicit for donations!
- **In-kind donations.** Many local businesses and corporations will donate used equipment such as

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computers and furniture, or the time of their staff for activities such as database development and marketing assistance. Your local United Way may have a program that connects executives with volunteer efforts.

### Plan Your Fundraising

Carefully plan your fundraising strategies so that various sources are called upon for the right reasons at the right time.

### Your Visual Analysis of the Corridor

Your fundraising starts in the same way that your program work starts—your visual analysis of the corridor. Use the analysis as a way to identify constituents, supporters, and funding options. Look at businesses in the corridor to assess who might have a stake in what you are doing. When conducting the analysis, you can create specific opportunities for people to share what is important to them. This kind of listening is an essential foundation to fundraising (donor fundraising is mostly listening to what is important to people). It also builds a host of people who believe in what you do. And that gives you greater leverage for program impact.

Having a comprehensive assessment and understanding of your landscape will enhance your fundraising efforts in many ways:

- Donors will appreciate that you have done your homework and are operating from a clear mission. Showing a broader vision is especially appealing to large donors, helping you raise funds for the overall program rather than project by project.
- Within the overall mission, you can identify discrete and concrete funding opportunities.
- Knowing the vulnerable places in the corridor will help you to target potential supporters as well as build their awareness and galvanize their interest.
- Many people are interested in learning about their “place.” A roadscape overview (including history and current uses) can build a sense of place that can be used to draw people into the process.
- You’ll generate opportunities for special events. A corridor tour—a progressive event promoting the special places of the corridor—builds more awareness, interest, and ownership.

### Creating Your Fundraising Plan

Here is a brief outline of the components of a fundraising plan. (See the *Resources* section for a few of the many sources of information available about fundraising planning.)

- Set overall dollar goals for your fundraising. You could consider having two categories, your core budget (what you *must* do that year) and an enhanced budget (what you will do if the funds are raised). Once you have laid out your strategies, go back and assess these overall goals. If they are too high, you may have to adjust your expenses to be more in line with what you think you can raise.
- Consider any special assets or talents that your board, staff, or volunteers have to offer. Use these in your plan. For example, you could have a fundraising party at the home of a board member who lives on the corridor.
- Identify your prospects. If you are planning to recruit new members, make a note of the mailing lists you will use and the number of individuals on each list. Jot down the businesses and foundations and the amount you plan to request from each.
- Integrate fundraising with other activities. Your fundraising plan should fit hand in hand with your annual action plan. For instance, if you are going to have a corridor tour, solicit donors from that tour a month later. Business solicitations could be targeted four to six months before the tour. Try to design a fundraising event in conjunction with almost any activity you plan.
- List specific strategies. Break down your overall goal into bite-sized objectives that are attainable and realistic. Detail the funding source, the amount from that source, the action steps, and responsible person.
- Develop a calendar that spreads fundraising activities over the entire year.

Don’t forget to train all your volunteers and staff in how to ask for a donation. Remember: You are providing others with a wonderful opportunity to contribute to something that makes a difference!



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# Afterword: Taking the next steps

**T**he *Roadscape Guide* has presented an array of tools for conservation and development in road corridors, with a focus on preserving the scenic qualities that do much to establish the character of the road and the communities through which it travels. Our hope is that you will be able to use these tools in your own corridor to work toward conservation of the most special and vulnerable lands and to help guide decisions on future development so that it fits better into the landscape.

Of equal importance has been the discussion of road corridors as more than commercial strips and the need to understand the underlying features and patterns that make up the landscape in the corridor—what we have called the “roadscape.” A fuller understanding of your corridor—

its historic uses, current patterns, and potential future form—is an essential step toward applying the right tools, successfully, to the issues at hand.

This book closes with an assignment for you. Take a drive along the main road corridor in your community. Looking closely at the landscape you’re traveling through, consider the pieces of the puzzle that form the whole picture. Now pull safely off the road and think about what you’ve seen. Have you noticed a view, a bit of scenery, or a transition between different landscape patterns that you’ve never been conscious of before? Have you seen some changes, perhaps subtle, that are of concern because they erode the pleasing patterns along the road? Have you seen possibilities to preserve something special? If so, you’re ready to take the next steps to a better roadscape for your community.



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# Glossary

**501(c)(3) Status:** Designation as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS.

**Access management:** A means to plan for and control vehicular access onto properties, including consideration of frontages, intersections, and the number, design, and location of curb cuts onto a road.

**All American Road:** Designation for a road that has characteristics of national significance in two or more of the Scenic Byways Program categories.

**Bargain sale:** Sale of a property or development rights at less than full value.

**Base map:** Serviceable map containing compiled data on the corridor; graphic basis for your study.

**Baseline documentation report (BDR):** Usually prepared around the time of a conservation property or easement closing to establish the conditions present on the property.

**BDR:** Baseline documentation report.

**Bollard-style lights:** Lights that have a lower mounting height and shielded down-directed lamps, typically used to illuminate paths and walkways.

**Building envelopes:** Areas designated on a development plan within which structures must be placed.

**Clear zone:** The unobstructed level area at the edge of roadways.

**Cluster subdivisions:** See “Open-space subdivisions.”

**Comprehensive plans:** Also called city, town, or regional plans, these set a vision and framework for regulations and bylaws that govern local land use and development.

**Conditional use:** Use allowed only upon approval by a municipal review body (also called “special permit”).

**Conservation:** A means to protect a corridor’s most important lands through a property easement that restricts future development.

**Conservation easement:** A legally binding agreement that specifies the uses and restrictions for the property—such as allowing agriculture, forestry, or recreational use, but prohibiting certain uses, usually future development or subdivision.

**Conservation subdivisions:** See “Open-space subdivisions.”

**Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS):** According to the Federal Highway Administration, CSS is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.

**Corridor management plan:** Outlines the qualities and characteristics of the road corridor and a plan to protect and enhance those qualities (part of the Scenic Byways Program).

**CSS:** Context Sensitive Solutions.

**Design review:** A regulatory technique that requires review of any new construction or changes to existing structures within a specified district for compatibility with guidelines based on the particular feature around which the district is established.

**Development rights:** A right in land that allows subdivision and/or construction of improvements such as structures and infrastructure.

**Gateway:** Transition point (entry or exit) between places with different development or landscape patterns.

**Geographic Information System:** Mapping software used to display, store, and manage spatial information.

**GIS:** Geographic Information System

**Goals:** The ways you plan to accomplish your mission.

**Greenbelt:** An area of open space along a road corridor.

**Infill opportunities:** Areas available for potential growth.

**Landscape inventory:** Identifying the presence and location of physical features and other factors that present development opportunities and constraints; usually consists of a map containing a range of available data.

**Mission:** Clearly states the purpose of your group and the vision of what you are working towards.

**Nodes:** Blocks of development concentrated around intersections or areas of existing development.

**Objectives:** Measurable steps that you engage in to meet your goals.

**Oblique aerial:** Aerial photograph shot from the side, at an angle; provides a three-dimensional view.

**Open-space subdivisions:** A regulatory technique that allows lot size and setback standards to be flexible, while maintaining the same number of lots that conventional regulations would allow. Land that is not within a lot becomes open space and remains undeveloped. Also called cluster or conservation subdivisions or planned residential developments.

**Option:** Gives the purchaser the right—not the obligation—to purchase property within an agreed-upon time frame.

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**Orthophotograph:** Aerial photograph corrected to be measurable, like a map.

**Overlay districts:** A zoning technique—well suited to dealing with special features, such as intact agricultural area, an area of sweeping views and vistas, or a scenic ridgeline—which can provide an extra measure of review specific to the qualities you want to protect.

**Parcel inventory:** Considers specific properties that contain important landscape components identified in the visual analysis. Leads to an indepth knowledge of the land within your focus area.

**Permitted uses:** Uses allowed by right under development regulations.

**Pass-through:** A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that receives deductible contributions on behalf of another organization without such status.

**Planned residential developments:** See “Open-space subdivisions.”

**Planned unit development (PUD):** A regulatory technique applicable to nonresidential or mixed use subdivisions that is similar to open-space subdivisions. PUDs allow flexibility in lot size, layout, and dimensional standards, such as setbacks, but do not alter the number of lots or units allowed by the regulations.

**Prime agricultural soil:** Soil types designated by the United States Department of Agriculture as having the best characteristics for the production of food, feed, forage, and fiber crops.

**PUD:** Planned unit development.

**Purchase and sales contract:** Obligates the purchaser and seller to carry out the transfer upon meeting conditions spelled out in the contract, such as timing, price, and other conditions specific to the property.

**Receiving zone:** Under transfer of development rights, regulations an area where growth is to be encouraged.

**Right of way:** A legal right of access across a property.

**Roadscape:** The views and vistas from a roadway, including elements of both the built and natural environment.

**Scenic assessment:** Assessing the value of scenery along the corridor.

**Scenic Byways Program:** A program that recognizes and promotes outstanding roads, with a focus toward tourism and enhancing the experience of travelers. To be designated a Scenic Byway, the road must have characteristics of regional significance in at least one of several categories. Part of the United States Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration and administered through state departments of transportation, this program is entirely voluntary and designation is community driven and initiated.

**Scenic inventory:** Mapping the scenic resources (locating the better views).

**Scenic resources:** Special views and other scenic attributes that hold aesthetic value. They can be composed of landscape features such as agricultural lands, natural areas, forests, and cultural artifacts.

**Sending zone:** Under transfer of development rights, regulations an area where greater open space is desirable.

**Site analysis:** Visual tool consisting of a map or site diagram that conveys landscape information; it marks the location of specific features and illustrates the relationships between those features.

**Site control:** A legally binding agreement on the terms by which you will acquire the land or rights in the land.

**Smart growth:** A principle of development that promotes concentrating new residential and nonresidential growth around existing towns and villages so that the clear delineation between developed and open spaces is retained.

**Special permit:** Use allowed only upon approval by a municipal review body (also called “conditional use”).

**Stealth towers:** Locating cellular phone transmitters on existing structures and designing them into building elements such as clock towers and church steeples; far less visually intrusive than freestanding towers.

**TDR:** Transfer of development rights.

**Transfer of development rights (TDR):** TDR regulations allow development density to be shifted away from areas where greater open space is desirable (called the “sending zone”) into areas where growth is to be encouraged (called the “receiving zone”).

**Visual analysis:** Using images to understand and convey the visual qualities of an environment.

**Viewshed:** An area of land that is visible from a fixed point.

**Windshield survey:** A drive down the corridor noting properties and property features.

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# Resources

## 1 Understanding the Landscape of Your Corridor

### Landscape Change in Rural Areas

Campoli, Julie, Elizabeth Humstone, and Alex Maclean. *Above and Beyond*. American Planning Association, 2001.

Daniels, Tom. *When City and Country Collide*. Island Press, 1999.

### Manuals and Methods for Scenic Evaluation

Copps, David H. *Views from the Road: A Community Guide for Assessing Rural Historic Landscapes*. Island Press, 1995.

Scenic America. *Evaluating Scenic Resources*. 1996. [www.scenic.org/bookstore](http://www.scenic.org/bookstore)

Scenic America. *O, Say, Can You See: A Visual Awareness Toolkit for Communities*. 1999. [www.scenic.org/bookstore](http://www.scenic.org/bookstore)

University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies. *Visual Impact Assessment*.

[www.cts.umn.edu/education/csd/video/index.html](http://www.cts.umn.edu/education/csd/video/index.html)

The Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration have created a video presentation on the six-step Visual Impact Assessment process. This presentation is available for online viewing or download in MPEG format. Please note that due to the large size of these files, viewing or download may not be practical unless you are using a high-speed or broadband Internet connection.

### The following organizations are sources of aerial photos or provide information for determining public visual preferences:

Aerial Photography Field Office, Farm Service Agency of the US Department of Agriculture. [www.apfo.usda.gov](http://www.apfo.usda.gov)  
Historic aerial photographs are held here. They archive photos dating from 1955. Order through the web site.

National Archives & Records Administration. [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)  
Has aerials taken prior to 1955.

Scenic Maryland

[www.scenicmaryland.org/toolkit.html#assessmethods](http://www.scenicmaryland.org/toolkit.html#assessmethods)

There are many sources of information for determining public visual preferences. One group mapping exercise as well as other visual preference techniques are described by this scenic preservation organization.

## 2 Conservation: A Powerful Tool

Benedict, Mark and Edward McMahon. *Green Infrastructure: Linking Landscapes and Communities*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006.

Byers, E. and K. Marchetti Ponte. *The Conservation Easement Handbook*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Land Trust Alliance and the Trust for Public Land, 2005.

Scenic America. *Scenic Easements: A Tool to Conserve America the Beautiful*. Washington, DC, 2005.

Schiller, Preston L. *Taking the High Road: Protecting Open Space along America's Highways*. Washington, DC: The Trust for Public Land, 2002.

This publication is downloadable from the Trust for Public Land's website.

Stokes, Samuel, A. Elizabeth Watson, and Shelley Mastran. *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997.

Trust for Public Land. *Doing Deals: A Guide to Buying Land for Conservation*. Washington, DC: Land Trust Alliance and the Trust for Public Land, 1995.

### The following organizations are excellent sources for conservation information, education, and additional resources:

American Farmland Trust  
[www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org)

The Conservation Fund  
[www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)

Land Trust Alliance  
[www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)

Trust for Public Land  
[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

Vermont Land Trust  
[www.vlt.org](http://www.vlt.org)

This statewide conservation organization provides fact sheets with information on many aspects of the conservation process.

## 3 Regulatory Tools

Arendt, Randall G. *Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks*. Island Press, 1996.

Arendt, Randall and Elizabeth A. Brabec. *Rural by Design: Maintaining Small Town Character*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 1994.

Beyard, Michael D. and Michael Pawlukiewicz. *Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute, 2001.

Downloadable at:  
[accessmanagement.gov/pdf/ULI\\_Ten\\_Principles](http://accessmanagement.gov/pdf/ULI_Ten_Principles).

Daniels, Tom. *When City and Country Collide*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999.

Duerkson, Christopher J. and R. Matthew Goebel. *Aesthetics, Community Character and the Law*. Scenic America, 2000. [www.scenic.org/bookstore](http://www.scenic.org/bookstore)

Fleming, Ronald L. *Saving Face: How Corporate Franchise Design Can Respect Community Identity*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 2002.

Heart, Bennet, Elizabeth Humstone, Thomas F. Irwin, Sandy Levine, and Dano Weisbord. *Community Rules: A New England Guide to Smart Growth Strategies*. Conservation Law Foundation, 2002. [www.clf.org/general/index.asp?id=347](http://www.clf.org/general/index.asp?id=347)

Heyer, Fred. *Preserving Rural Character*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 1990.

Humstone, Elizabeth, and Julie Campoli. *Access Management Guidebook*. St. Albans, VT: Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1996.

Kindschi, Thomas K., and Charles W. Causier. *Preserving Endangered Rural Character. Approaching the Millenium*, 1999, American Planning Association. [www.asu.edu/caed/proceedings99/KINDSCHI/KINDSCHI.HTM](http://www.asu.edu/caed/proceedings99/KINDSCHI/KINDSCHI.HTM)

Stokes, Samuel, A. Elizabeth Watson, and Shelley Mastran. *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997.

Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs. *Vermont Interstate Interchange Planning and Development Design Guidelines*. 2004.  
[www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GuidelinesFinal.pdf#page=3](http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GuidelinesFinal.pdf#page=3)

Vermont Forum on Sprawl. *Growing Smarter—Best Site Planning for Residential, Commercial & Industrial Development*. 2001.  
[www.vtsprawl.org/Pdfs/SPRAWLbestpractices.pdf](http://www.vtsprawl.org/Pdfs/SPRAWLbestpractices.pdf)

Vermont Forum on Sprawl. *Growing Smarter—Making Smart Growth Work*. 2001.  
[www.vtsprawl.org/Pdfs/bestresource.pdf](http://www.vtsprawl.org/Pdfs/bestresource.pdf)

**Other sources for information on regulatory tools:**  
American Planning Association  
[www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

*Planning Commissioner's Journal*  
[www.plannersweb.com](http://www.plannersweb.com)

Scenic America  
[www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)

Smart Growth America  
[www.smartgrowthamerica.com](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.com)

## 4 Additional Tools to Preserve Scenic Resources

### Infrastructure and Utilities

Lampton, Kate. "Developing a Sewer Ordinance: One Town's Experience." *Planning Commissioner's Journal*, #44. Fall, 2001.

Scenic America. *Power to the People: Strategies for Reducing the Visual Impact of Overhead Utilities*. Washington, DC, 2001.

Scenic America. *Taming Wireless Telecommunications Towers*. Washington, DC, 2001.

### Context Sensitive Solutions

Federal Highway Administration. *Context Sensitive Solutions*. Feb. 7, 2006. U.S. Department of Transportation.  
[www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd)

Project for Public Spaces. *Context Creative Solutions*. 2005.  
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Scenic America. *Getting It Right in the Right of Way*. Washington, DC, 2000.

### Billboards and Sign Control

Mandelker, Daniel R. *Street Graphics and the Law*. Chicago: American Planning Association, 2004.

Scenic America. *Fighting Billboard Blight: An Action Guide for Citizens and Public Officials*. Washington, DC, 1999.

### Scenic Byways Programs

Utah State University and Multimedia Data Services, Corp. *National Scenic Byways Online*. 2006.  
[www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

### Access Management

Humstone, Elizabeth and Julie Campoli. *Access Management Guidebook*. St. Albans, VT: Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1996.

Vermont Agency of Transportation. *Vermont Access Management*.  
[www.vtaccessmanagement.info](http://www.vtaccessmanagement.info)

## 5 Organizing Your Roadscape Preservation Initiative

### Fundraising Resources

Klein, K. *Fundraising for Social Change*. 2nd ed., Inverness: Chardon Press, 1988.

Robinson, A. *Big Gifts for Small Groups: A Board Member's 1-Hour Guide to Securing Gifts of \$500 to \$5,000*. Emerson & Church, 2004.

Robinson, A. *Grassroots Grants, Second Edition: An Activist's Guide to Proposal Writing*. Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Robinson, A. *Selling Social Change (Without Selling Out): Earned Income Strategies for Nonprofits*. Jossey-Bass, 2002.

### Fundraising Websites

*Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance*  
[gsa.gov/fdac](http://gsa.gov/fdac)

*Environmental Grantmaking Foundations—Resources for Global Sustainability*  
[www.environmentalgrants.com](http://www.environmentalgrants.com)

The Foundation Center  
[www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)

*Foundations and Grantmakers Directory*  
[www.foundations.org/grantmakers.html](http://www.foundations.org/grantmakers.html)

*Grassroots Fundraising*  
[www.grassrootsfundraising.org](http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org)  
Excellent resource—has an online journal, offers training, and more.

### Building Your Organization

River Network. *Starting Up: A Handbook for New River and Watershed Organizations*. [www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org).

### Media and Marketing

Safe Energy Communications Council  
[www.safeenergy.org](http://www.safeenergy.org)

River Network. *River Talk! Communicating a Watershed Message*. [www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org).  
This publication is applicable to roadscapes as well.

### Organizations that Offer Assistance and Resources to Environmental Groups

The Alliance for Nonprofit Management  
[www.allianceonline.org](http://www.allianceonline.org)

The Amherst Wilder Foundation  
[www.wilder.org](http://www.wilder.org)  
Good resources and publications, not a grant-maker.

Board Source  
[www.boardsource.org](http://www.boardsource.org)  
Good information and an e-newsletter for board members.

Environmental Support Center  
[www.envsc.org](http://www.envsc.org)

The Institute for Conservation Leadership  
[www.icl.org](http://www.icl.org)

Land Trust Alliance  
[www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)

New England Grassroots Environment Fund  
[www.grassrootsfund.org](http://www.grassrootsfund.org)

### Nonprofit management support organizations

Most states have a nonprofit management support center that provides training and assistance.

River Network  
[www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org)

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