

Empowering Communities to Build Vibrant Places



Richard Amore, PLA/AICP

Manager of Placemaking and Community Partnerships
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

September 26, 2023

Plan NH Fall Conference
Unlocking Possibilities

Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

Provide tools, training, grants,
and incentives for local
leaders to plan and build
projects that support thriving,
inclusive, walkable
communities.

Presentation Themes

1

Overview

Vermont and place-based, people-focused economic development

2

Building Blocks of Community

Importance of streets, public spaces, and missing middle housing in building vibrant communities

3

Vermont Examples and Initiatives

An overview of Vermont communities and state programs that help build walkable, vibrant, socially-connected, and loveable places

4

Strategies to Create Better Places

Sharing ways to expand housing options, create vibrant communities, and advance local placemaking efforts



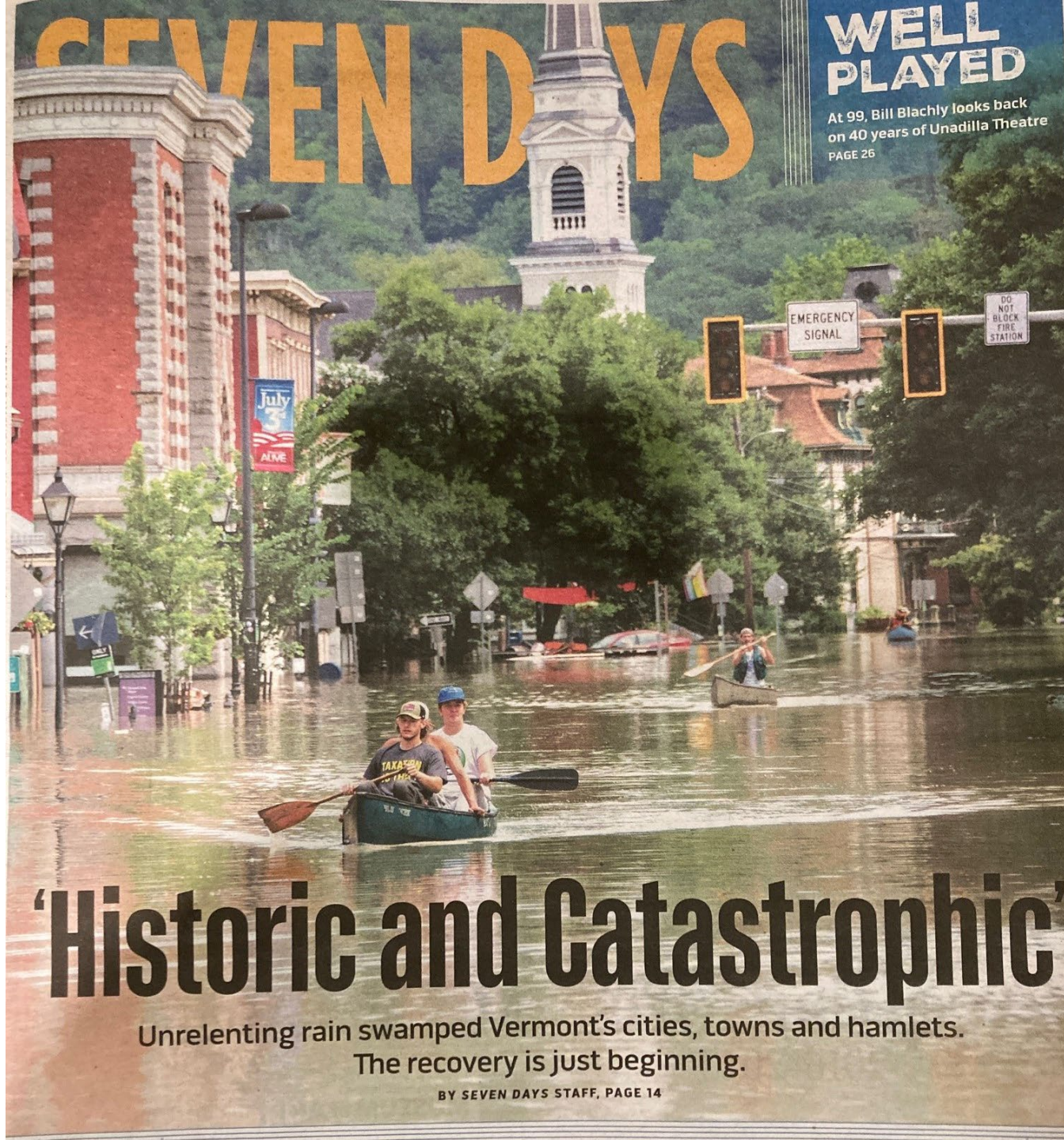
Montpelier, Vermont
population: 8,074

A small, vibrant, capital city that has endured for over 200 years and remains vibrant and walkable.

SEVEN DAYS

WELL PLAYED

At 99, Bill Blachly looks back
on 40 years of Unadilla Theatre
PAGE 26



'Historic and Catastrophic'

Unrelenting rain swamped Vermont's cities, towns and hamlets.
The recovery is just beginning.

BY SEVEN DAYS STAFF, PAGE 14



Terry J. Allen



photo credit: Storyworkz





Bristol, VT



National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places

Preservationists Call Vermont Endangered, by Wal-Mart

By Pam Belluck

May 25, 2004



The Wal-Mart here, like thousands of others across the country, sells everything at a steal: jeans for \$10.77, gold earrings for \$9.97, a three-piece set of luggage for \$29.64.

But to some Vermonters, the cavernous store in this Burlington suburb symbolizes something else: the big-box-ification of a largely unspoiled part of the country.

With that in mind, a national historic preservation group said Monday that it was placing on its annual list of endangered sites an unusual entry: the state of Vermont.



Statewide Planning Goal #1

To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.



rutlanddowntown.com

Investing in Place



Bristol, VT

photo credit: NPS National Register of Historic Places Nomination

Place-based, People-focused Economic Development



Bristol, VT





BRISTOL  CORE

Town Green Playground - Bristol, VT



Bristol, Vermont
population: 3,782

**There's no better
marketing, tourism draw, or
talent recruitment strategy
than investing in vibrant
places where people want
to live, work, and visit**



Bristol, VT



Place-based
People-Focused

SEE
TESS
FOR
CE & FULL MENU
N LANGDON
KS AND TREATS
ITCHEN WHISKEY

Streets as Places



“I truly believe
that if you can
**change the
street,** you can
change the
world.”

.....
Janette Sadik-Khan, Commissioner of the New York City



01

Streets as Places for Commerce

• • • • •
Burlington, VT



02

Streets as Places for Commerce



St. Johnsbury, VT



03

Streets are Places for Commerce



St. Albans, VT



04

Streets as Places for Community



Brattleboro, VT



05

Streets are Places for Community



Brandon, VT



06

Streets are Places for Community



St. Albans, VT



07

Streets as Places for Community



Brandon, VT



08

Streets as Places for Community

• • • • •
Montpelier, VT



09

Streets as Places for Celebration

• • • • •
Montpelier, VT



10

Streets as Places for Celebration



Waterbury, VT



If you design streets and places
for cars, **what do you get?**

A wide-angle photograph of a busy multi-lane street in Rutland, Vermont. The street is filled with cars in both directions. On the right side, there are commercial buildings, including one with a sign that says "Parts Plus". On the left, there are utility poles with many power lines crisscrossing the sky. The sky is blue with some white clouds. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text.

you get cars and traffic.

Rutland, VT



Higher Speeds are Encouraged!

Montpelier, VT

If you design streets and places
for people, **what do you get?**



you get **people** and **places.**

Winooski, VT

*A great street should be the **most desirable place to be**, to spend time, to live, to play, to work, at the same time that it markedly contributes to what a city should be. Streets are settings for activities that **bring people together**.*

Allan Jacobs
Great Streets





Rutland, VT



Photo Credit: Bill Truex

Church Street in Burlington, Vermont in 1979. . .

Church Street – 1970s





K
KEN'S
PIZZA
AND
PUB

KEN'S
PIZZA
AND
PUB

• Famous Since 1973 •

PIZZA BY
THE SLICE

Soup - Salad - Sandwiches
Pub Fare - Appetizers
Italian Dinners
Full Bar & Craft Beers

Vermont
ICE CREAM

Try something new for **one day...**



Try something new for **one week...**



Try something new for **four blocks...**





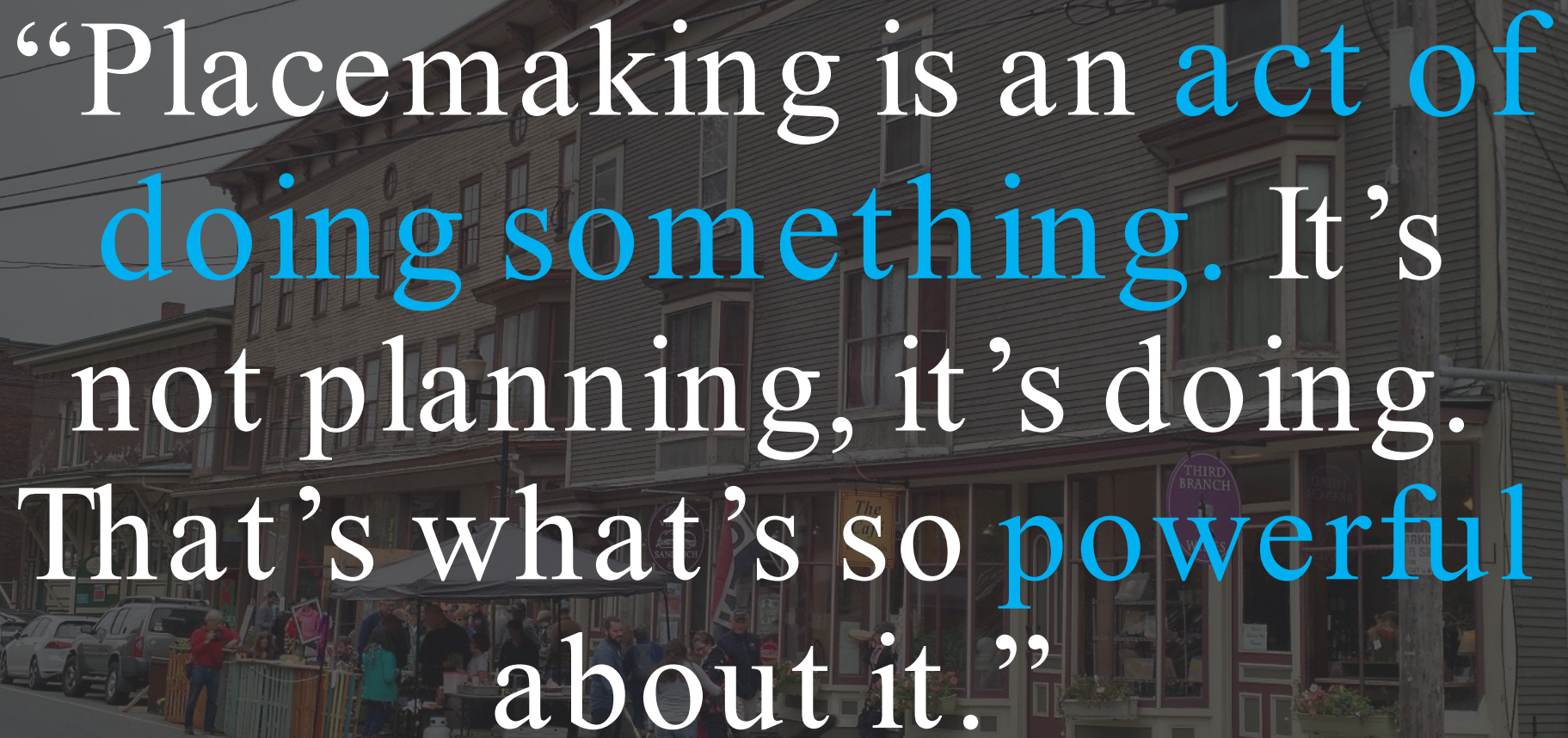


ORING®

SALE

THE
NORTH
FACE

Saratoga
OLIVE OIL
JUNE SPECIALS
PERSIAN LIME
OLIVE OIL
and
COCONUT BALSAMIC
Spice: KONA Coffee Rub
Salt: Spicy GARLIC Pepper

A photograph of a street scene with historic, multi-story buildings. In the foreground, there is a market stall with various items on display, and several people are walking around. The text is overlaid on the image, with some words in white and others in blue.

“Placemaking is an **act of doing something**. It’s not planning, it’s doing. That’s what’s so **powerful** about it.”

.....
Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces

Better Connections

Better Connections is a joint program Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) working to create thriving, livable places with diverse transportation choices in Vermont.

Chester Village Revitalization Plan

Exploring a Vision | Streetscape Improvements



Island Pond Revitalization Master Plan



Create and Activate Community Gathering Areas



OUR TOWNS

Green Mountain Meetups: Vermonters Break Bread, Dance and Forge Communities in ‘Third Spaces’

By RACHEL HELLMAN



Published June 28, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. | Updated July 5, 2023 at 11:33 a.m.





*“Communities make revitalization possible by
creating quality public spaces,
prioritizing local entrepreneurship, emphasizing
production, and supporting downtown housing.”*

The Reality of Main Street, the Brookings Institution, April 20, 2017

.....



connections

photo credit: Downtown Brattleboro Alliance



Why invest in Placemaking?

Placemaking is...



credit: Downtown Brattleboro Alliance

Builds Social Capital



credit: Downtown Brattleboro Alliance

Empowers Residents



Supports Active Lifestyles



Celebrates the Arts



credit: Downtown Rutland Partnership

Increases Food Access



Test Ideas



Creates Connections



credit: Ward Joyce

Enables Engagement



Greens

Our Communities



Supports Democracy



Endure Winter



Embraces Vermonters




photo credit: Strolling of the Heifers



*Community-led placemaking
is a growing movement of **do-
it-ourselves village-making**
where citizens, business
owners and the municipality
**come together to breathe
new life into villages.***



Place-based, People-focused Investment

A group of people are gathered outdoors in a snowy environment, likely a community event or festival. They are sitting around a fire pit and tables, engaged in conversation and activities. The scene is set in front of a building with large windows. The text is overlaid on the image, with the first part in white and the second part in blue.

*Placemaking is Enabling
and Empowering Residents
to Create Places they Love
and Feel Connected to.*



YOU KNOW IT WHEN YOU SEE IT!



WELCOME TO

BELLOWS FALLS

"A friendly place
to hang your hat."



F.W. RAMKENS





*Plantings Maintained
By The Arlington
Garden Club*



POSITIVE PIE

LIVE MUSIC ♦ HAND TOSSED PIZZA

NO PARKING
ANY TIME
IN ANY ZONE

ITALIAN







PROTECT

LOVE

RESPECT

TRUST

HURTURE

CHERISH

NOURISH

Roots
THE RESTAURANT







Credit: Lee Krohn



Credit: Zach Freeman



The **DEN** EST. 2017
at
HARRY'S HARDWARE
Cabot, Vermont

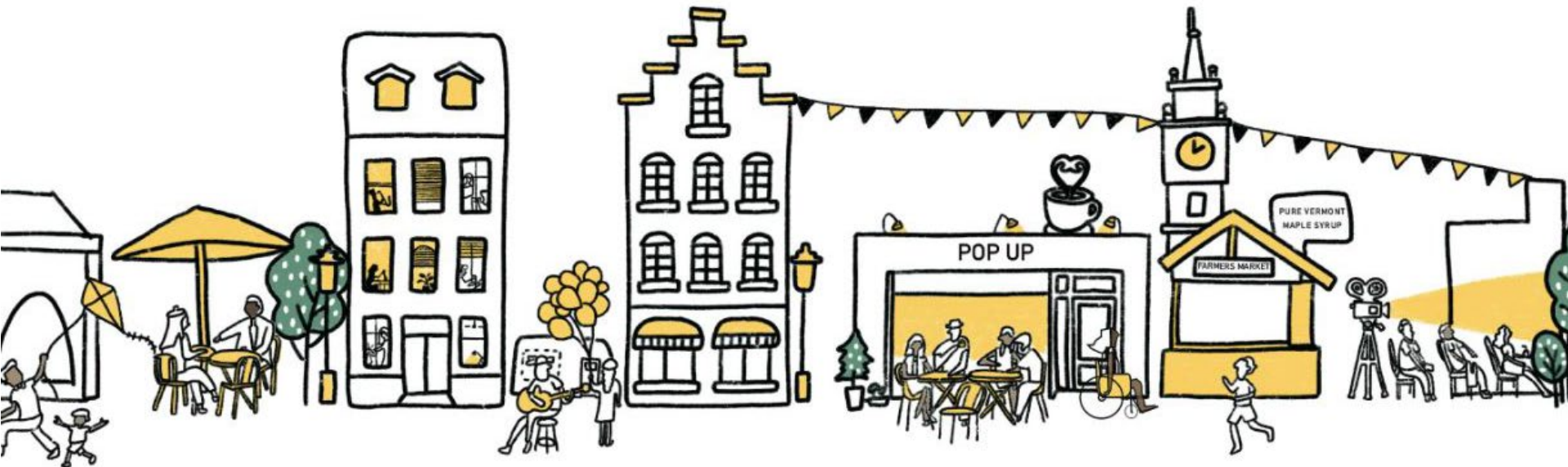
S U M M A R Y

Placemaking **is**

- 1 About Creating Places People Love**
- 2 People-focused, Community-driven**
- 3 Inclusive and Collaborative**
- 4 Flexible, Adaptable, and Iterative**
- 5 Co-creation and Co-ownership**

Better Places

Empowering Vermonters to Create Vibrant Public Places





A new grant program
that's about **building
community,** not just
implementing projects.

Better Places

Empowering Vermonters to Create Vibrant Public Places



MAD RIVER VALLEY

WARREN, VT

Help Us Bring a Dog Park to Mad River Valley!

We are creating a welcoming park where dogs (and their people) can socialize, recreate, have fun, and safely play.

\$12,305 of \$12,000 **6** days left

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUPPORT



MIDDLEBURY, VT

Middlebury Bike Pump Track Project

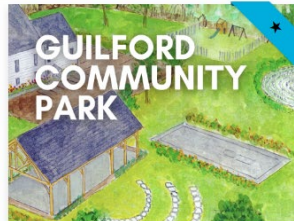
Building a bike pump track in town that is free, fun, and accessible for bicyclists of all ages.

\$6,068 of \$6,000 **27** days left

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUPPORT



GUILFORD, VT

Guilford Community Park needs YOUR support!

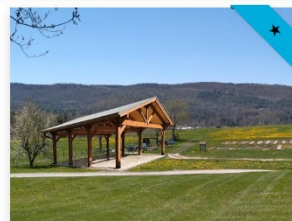
Create and foster community through shared recreational experiences...

\$9,480 of \$20,000 **48** days left

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUPPORT



PITTSFORD, VT

Pittsford Village Farm Pavilion

Help us raise the funds needed to install a pavilion for the community at the Pittsford Village Farm!

\$11,358 of \$11,000 **Project Closed**

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUCCESS!



STOWE, VT

Lamoille Art & Justice Project Community Mural

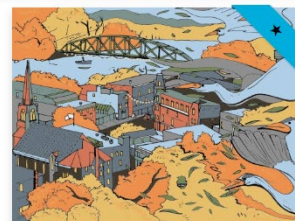
Join the Lamoille Art & Justice Project in a community-created mural on the Stowe recreation path to highlight local conversations around racial justice.

\$5,400 of \$5,000 **Project Closed**

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUCCESS!



BRATTLEBORO, VT

High Street Mural

Revitalizing Downtown Brattleboro Together

\$8,411 of \$8,000 **Project Closed**

★ Matching Grant: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

VIEW

⚡ SUCCESS!

<https://www.patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT>





SMALL TOWNS, HEALTHY PLACES



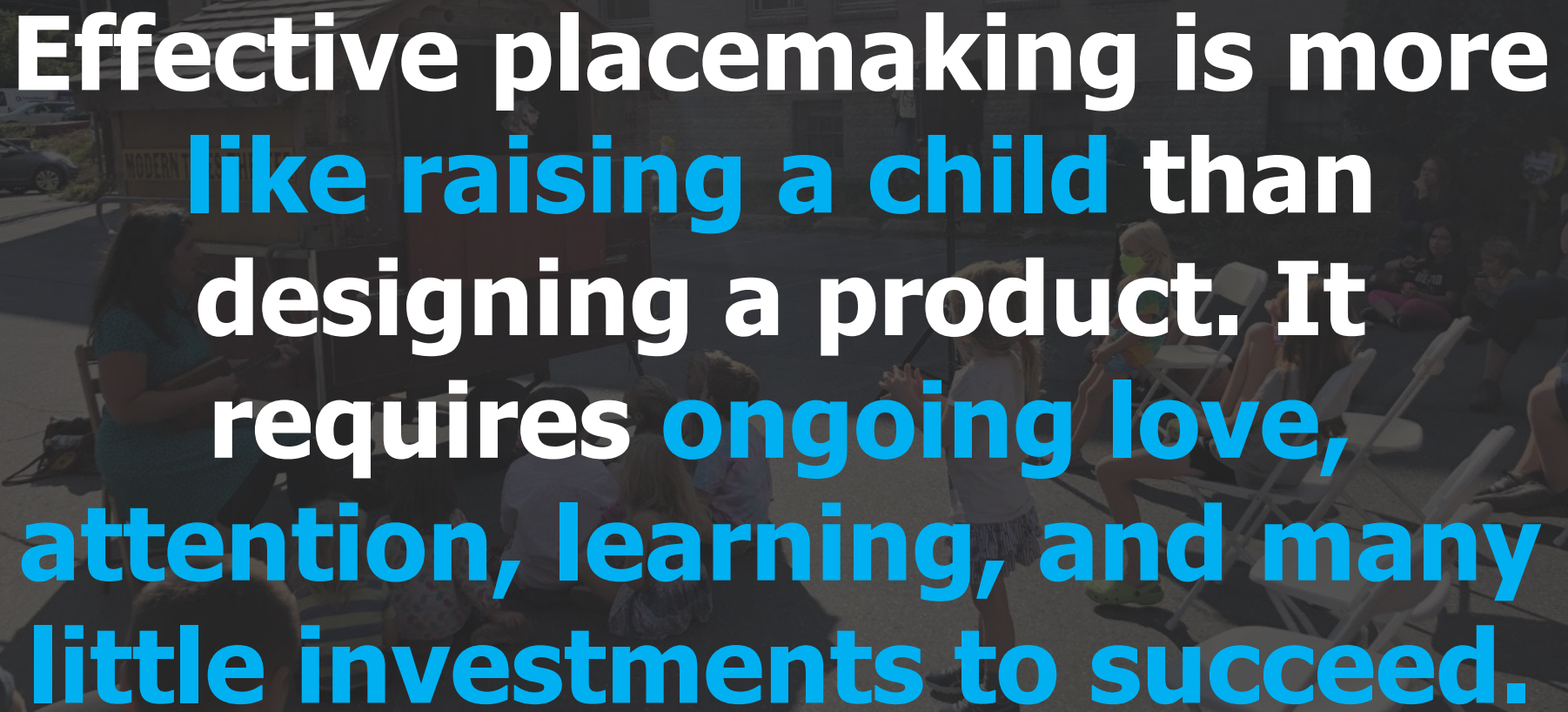
Podcast

Creating a Healthier Vermont:

Advancing Health Equity in
Vermont through
Placemaking, Funding, and
Support



Listen here: <https://healthycommunitiesvt.com/podcast/>

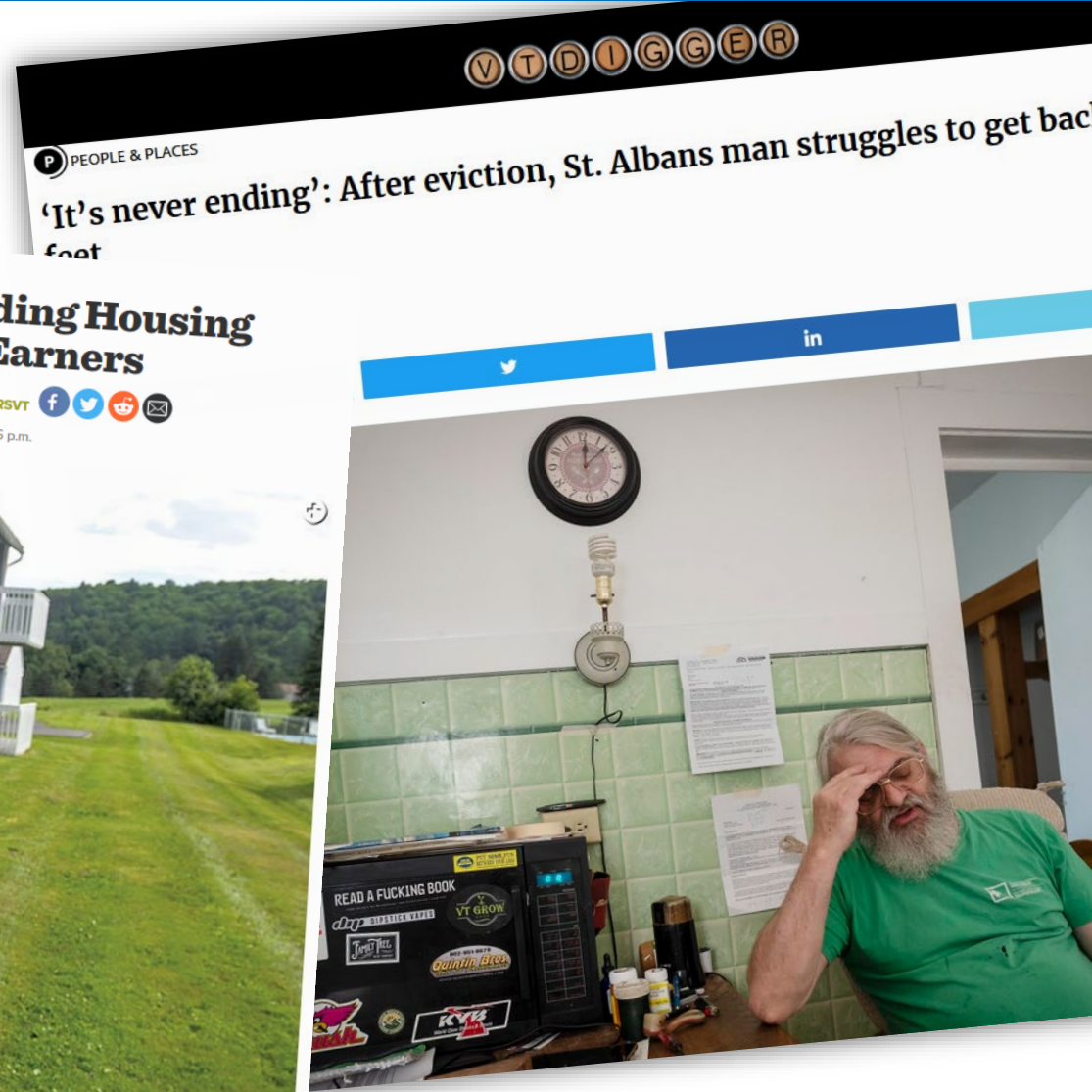
A group of people, including children and adults, are seated on folding chairs outdoors. They are positioned in front of a multi-story brick building with many windows. To the left, there is a small wooden structure with a sign that partially reads "MODERN". The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The text is overlaid on the image, with some words in white and others in blue.

**Effective placemaking is more
like raising a child than
designing a product. It
requires ongoing love,
attention, learning, and many
little investments to succeed.**

Expanding Housing Options



Vermonters Need Greater Choice & Opportunity



Vermont Households Are Changing



Many Are Locked Out from Downsizing, Buying Moving, Renting



SPECIAL REPORT

VERMONT'S HOUSING CRISIS

Aging Vermonters Who Can't Find New Housing Are Part of the State's Real Estate 'Gridlock'

Locked Out Series, Part 9

By RACHEL HELLMAN



Enabling Better Places Zoning Guide

HOUSING TYPES

Triplex

Newly-constructed structures that are more grand in scale, or converted existing larger residences, may easily accommodate three households within a single building. Vermont has a rich collection of historic mansions that have been subdivided to provide multiple homes while maintaining the historic character of the neighborhood, and the type can add much-needed additional housing to a community with an abundance of homes larger than what the market is demanding.



Four-plex

Buildings in the scale of larger residences may even be able to accommodate up to four individual households. Keeping the building height and massing consistent with the historic mansions common in Vermont maintains a character appropriate to the surrounding neighborhood while providing multiple smaller individual units.



Townhouse

Small- to medium-sized dwellings, townhouses typically consist of two to eight (usually) attached single-family homes placed side by side. While not a common historic type in Vermont, the popularity of townhouses in new development underscores a market demand for this type of attached housing. With appropriate detailing in character with the materials of homes in surrounding neighborhoods, the type can provide multiple smaller units on smaller parcels of land.



Cottage Court

A series of small, detached structures, cottage courts provide multiple units arranged to define a shared court that is typically perpendicular to the street. Vermont towns often include small historic cottages scattered across neighborhoods, and introduction of this type would reflect the scale of those dwellings in a compact and concentrated way.



What is the “biggest little change” you can make to improve housing access and affordability in your community?

ENABLING BETTER PLACES:
A ZONING GUIDE FOR
VERMONT NEIGHBORHOODS

You can't
build the
home, if you
can't get the
permit.

PERMIT NOTICE

Address: _____

Applicant: _____

Project Description: _____

☐ **Permit / Approval**

Type: _____

Date Issued: _____

Appeal by: _____

☐ **Public Hearing**

Date / Time: _____

Place: _____

Purpose: _____

For more
information
contact:

Applicant: This notice shall be displayed on the subject premises and be clearly visible from the public way. Notice shall be displayed at the time of application and shall not be removed until after the appeals expiration date.

 VERMONT LAND USE
Education & Training Collaborative

Topics of Reform



Dimensional Requirements

Building heights, setbacks, and lot coverage regulations are often similar between towns, in spite of differences in character. These dimensional requirements should be carefully crafted to reflect the existing built patterns and local goals, and should avoid needlessly restricting desirable housing options.



Parking Standards

The effects of excessive parking requirements on housing availability are often underestimated. Especially in areas that have transit and are walkable to school, jobs, and other daily needs, the cost of each unneeded parking space inflates the cost of housing. (The average cost of a parking space is estimated at about \$4,000.) High parking requirements can block new housing options that fit seamlessly into existing neighborhoods, such as ADUs, small infill buildings, and conversions of large houses into more than one residence.



Allowable Uses

Restrictions on the use of property is a central purpose of zoning, but many Vermont towns and villages severely restrict housing other than a single-family home by requiring complex review processes and/or applying onerous restrictions. Small buildings containing two, three, or four dwellings have historically provided housing variety with minimal neighborhood impacts. These buildings can be enabled again through minor changes to local regulations.



Street Standards

Streets should be designed according to the intensity of activity through which the street passes. The capital and maintenance costs of overly wide streets can increase the cost of delivering housing as well creating a long-term drain on municipal budgets. Disconnected street networks hinder walking, biking, and transit, increasing individual household transportation costs.



Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

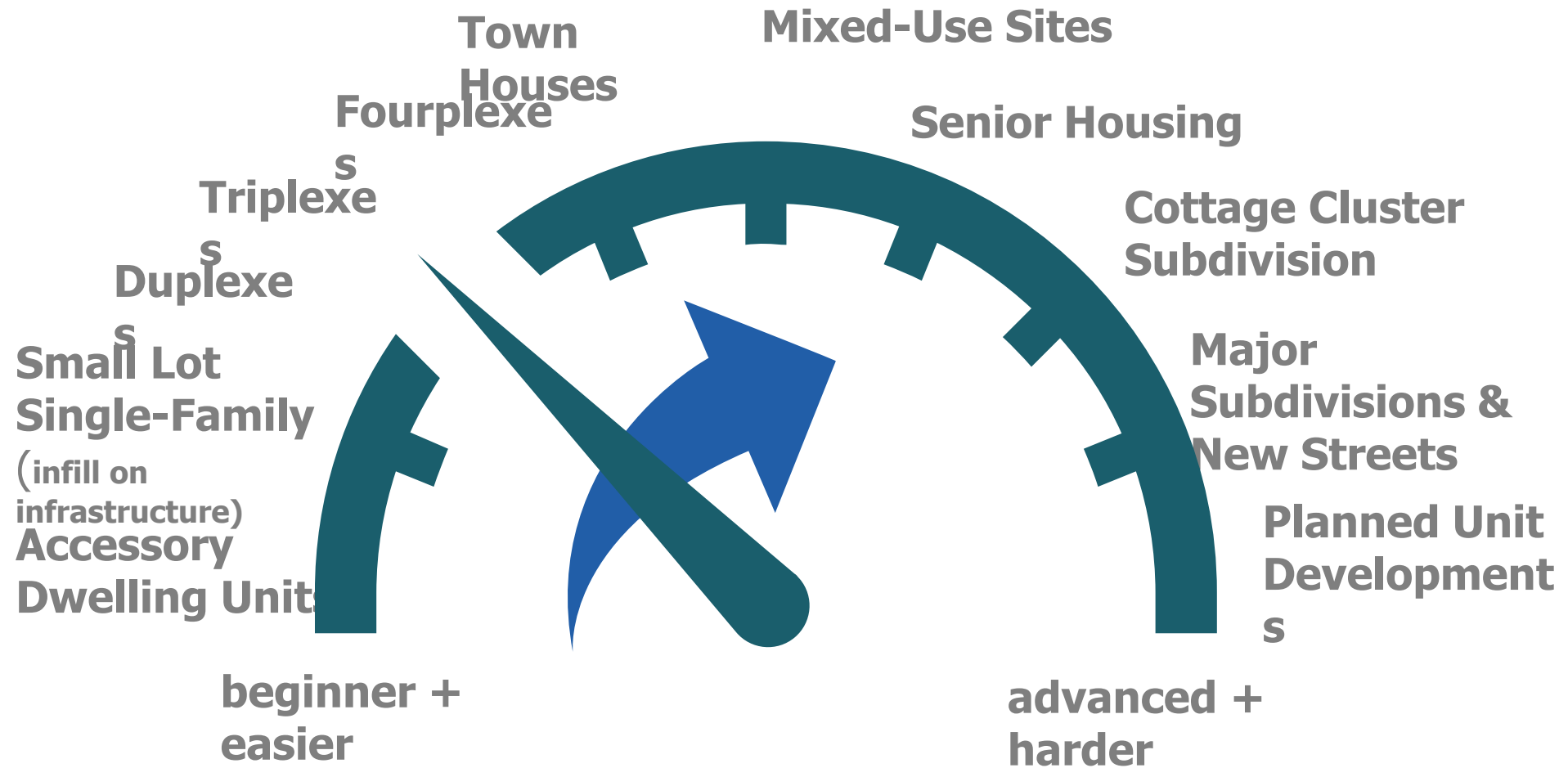
Vermont has progressive ADU provisions that are applied through regulations of individual towns. Local regulations could be improved to encourage creation of more ADUs through minor changes to parking standards and to size and ownership restrictions.



Development Review Process

Layers of regulatory review can aid environmental stewardship and protect local character, but they also add time and cost to the production of housing. Strategic streamlining can retain the important functions of the development review process while eliminating unnecessary barriers to locally desired housing.

Increasing the Speed Limit on Housing*



*In Wise Location



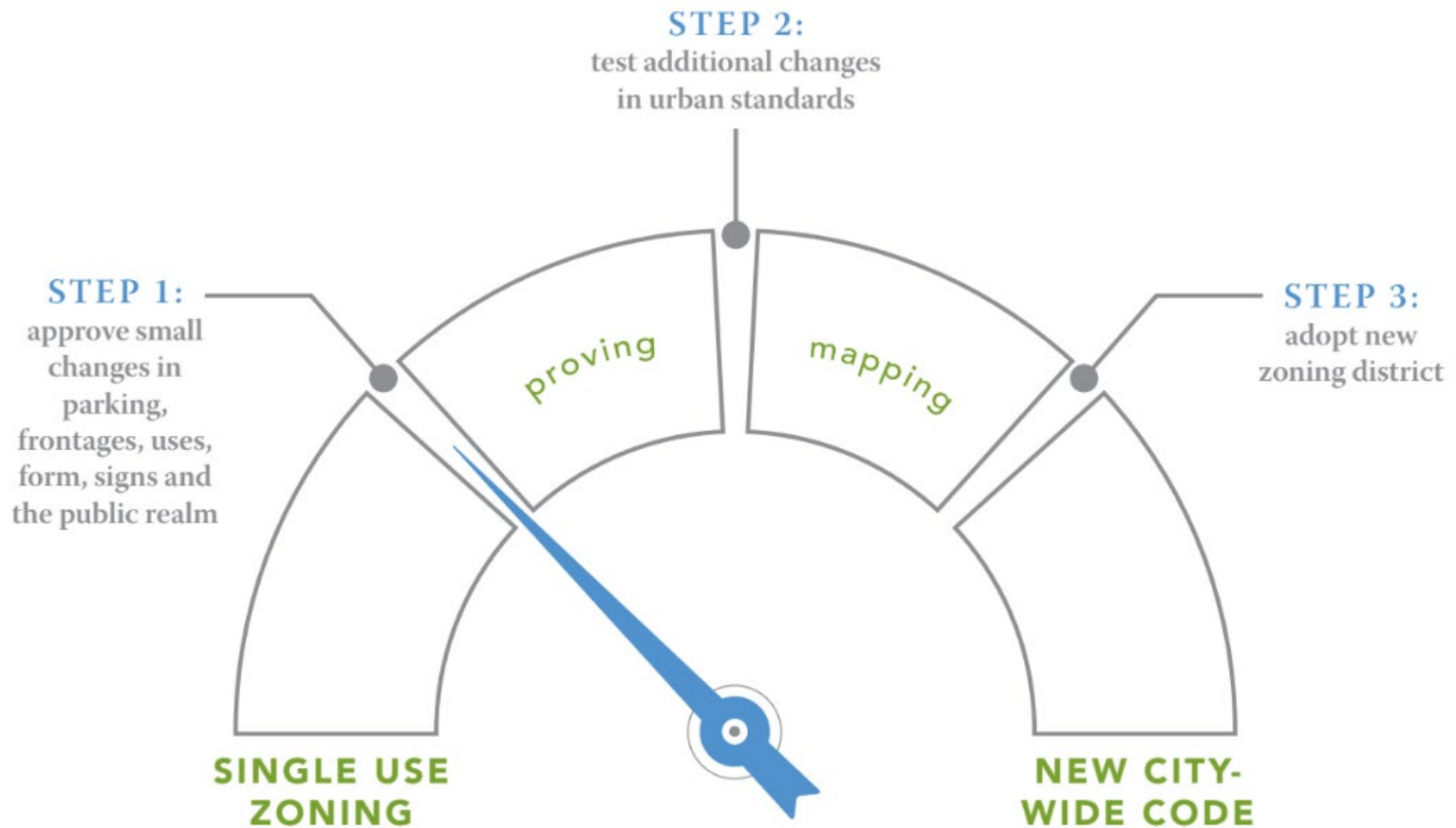
Legend

- new residential
- new mixed-use
- mixed use/re-use
- complete streets

VISUALIZING DENSITY STUDY FERRISBURGH CENTER, VERMONT

A 2020 VT Department of Housing and Community Development Municipal Planning Grant Project





ARC OF ENGAGEMENT

What is the “biggest little change” you can make to improve housing access and affordability in your community?

Zoning for Great Neighborhoods



“If you do nothing else, do this...”

Allow what exists



0% of existing principal structures/lots fully conform

Adjust Dimensional Standards



Optimize ADU Regulations



Reassess Parking Requirements

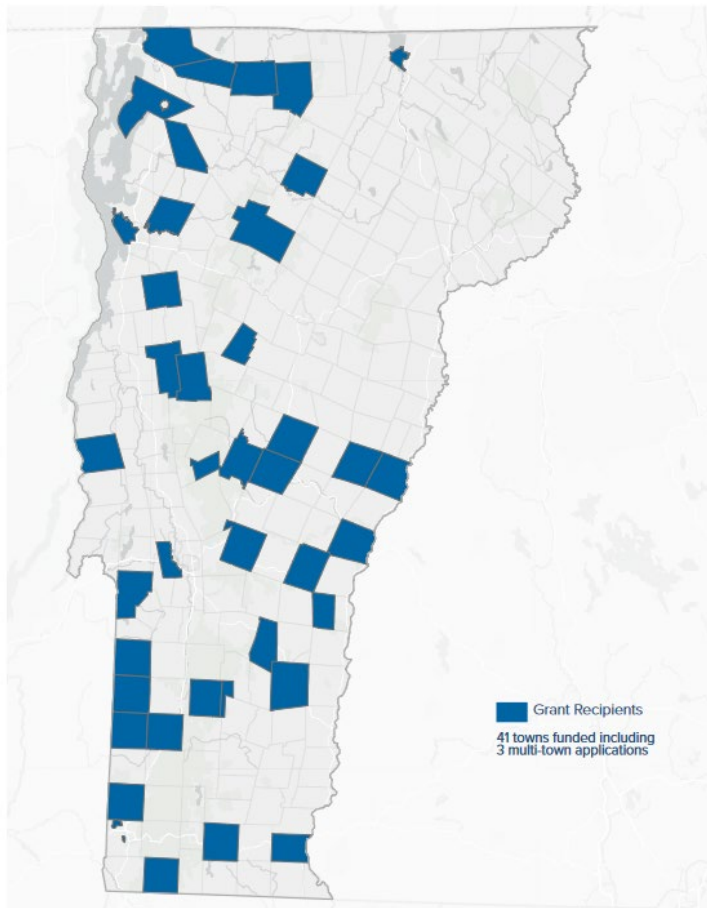


Review Road Standards



BYLAW MODERNIZATION GRANTS

Special funding for bylaw updates to expand opportunity & choice of homes available in and around Vermont's centers.



Vermont Housing Improvement Program



Vermont Housing Improvement Program

ADU Focus

Marni Leikin in front of her Montpelier home. She built a one-bedroom ADU above the carriage barn in her backyard.

JEB WALLACE-BRODEUR



One Unit at a Time

**A New Incentive for Homeowners
Could Solve Vermont's Housing Crisis**





A typical street in Bristol, Vermont. From *Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods*. Credit: Richard Amore.

POLICY

Vermont adopts historic housing reform

The HOME act allows missing middle housing statewide, reduces parking requirements, targets entitlement delays, and received widespread support.

AMY LOVE TOMASSO JUN. 12, 2023

Missing Middle Housing Toolkit

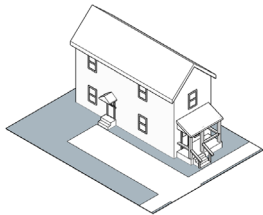


MMH Design + Cultivating Small Scale Developers + Community
Design Solutions for Infill Development

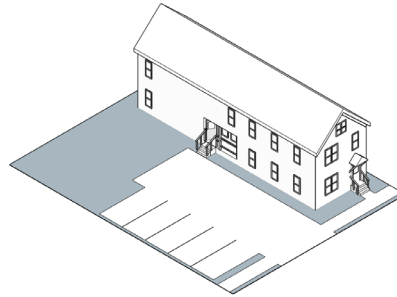
Missing Middle Homes Design Guide



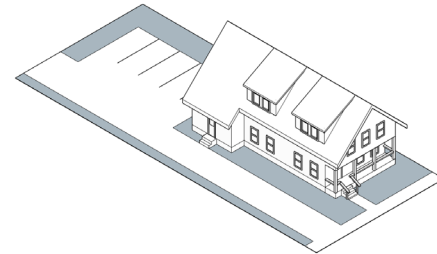
Typology 1



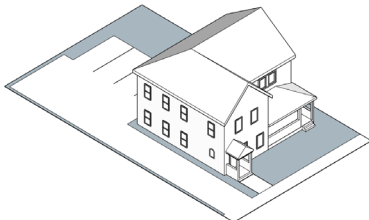
Typology 2



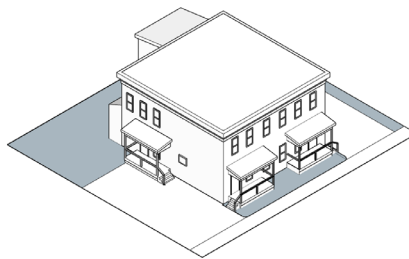
Typology 3



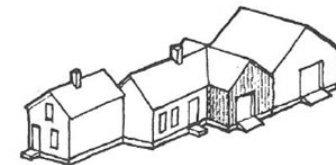
Typology 4



Typology 5



Typology 6



7 Ways to Create Vibrant and Inclusive Communities





01 Walkable and Accessible!

In vibrant communities, places are walkable and accessible to all, and include sidewalks, bike paths, parks, and green spaces near housing and businesses.



01 Walkable and Accessible!

In vibrant communities, places are walkable and accessible to all, and include sidewalks, bike paths, parks, and green spaces near housing and businesses.

A photograph of a modern multi-story brick building with large windows and a street sign that reads "Manseau St". The building features a mix of red and dark grey brickwork. The windows are large and multi-paned, some with white frames. A street sign for "Manseau St" is visible on the corner. The building is part of a row of similar structures, suggesting a residential development.

02 No Place Like Home!

Vibrant communities feature housing that is affordable and accessible for all ages and abilities so they can live where they feel most comfortable.

03

Local Shops, Services, and Community Anchors



Vibrant Communities offer an abundance of small businesses, local shops, civic institutions, and essential services like healthcare, schools, groceries, and more!

04 Create and Activate Gathering Spaces!



Parks and “third places” that invite residents of all ages to gather and interact are a staple of vibrant communities.

A group of people, including an older man in the foreground, are painting a colorful mural on a street. The mural features vibrant stripes of yellow, pink, and red. In the background, other volunteers are working, and a white pickup truck is parked nearby. The scene is set outdoors with trees and buildings in the distance.

05 Everyone is in the Mix!

In vibrant communities, everyone can contribute in meaningful ways by working, volunteering, or simply being included and welcomed.

06 Know When to Get out of the Way!

COMMUNITY-LED DEMONSTRATION PROJECT POLICY + GUIDE

City of Burlington, VT | April 2016



Make it easy and get out of the way for local folks to create vibrant communities. This one's for you local and state governments!


07

Think Big. Start Small. Have Fun and Work Together!



I always thought someone should do something, until one day, I realized that I was SOMEONE.

John. F. Kennedy



*The places we live
determine our wealth,
health and happiness
more than
anything else.*



**Developments happen
incrementally, but great
communities happen
strategically with a VISION.**

Bristol, VT



*Stay Connected and Let's
Create Better Places Together!*



THINK BIG....START SMALL

Thank You.

Richard Amore, PLA|AICP

richard.amore@vermont.gov

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/richardamore/>



AGENCY OF COMMERCE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPT. OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT