

# Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

## RIGHT ON THE NUMBERS

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) was established by the General Assembly in 1987. VHCB makes loans and grants to nonprofit organizations, municipalities and state agencies that work on conservation projects and affordable housing developments in Vermont communities. VHCB is one of a few programs of its kind in the country whose mission encompasses the dual goals of conservation and affordable housing, making investments that are critical to Vermont's economic vitality and quality of life.

VHCB has built a national reputation as an innovative, highly effective public agency that helps community groups implement *local* plans to create affordable housing and protect farmland, forestland, natural areas, recreational lands and historic properties. Responding to local needs, VHCB leverages federal and private funds for community development and land conservation solutions ranging from creating supportive housing for veterans to redeveloping underused historic buildings as workforce housing; from conserving recreation areas on Lake Champlain to keeping farms in production and owner-operated. VHCB's bottom-up approach ensures that solutions are tailored to meet local needs and circumstances.

### VHCB'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS THROUGH DECEMBER 2013

- **Invested \$274 million** in loans and grants in **over 200 different communities** throughout Vermont.
- **Created 11,300 affordable homes and apartments** to house more than 27,000 Vermonters.
- **Conserved 620 farms** covering over 150,000 acres of land.
- **Conserved 255,000 acres** of significant recreational land, natural areas and 59 historic properties for community use.
- **Leveraged an additional \$1 billion** in federal and private funds.
- **Strengthened Vermont's** agriculture, construction, recreation and tourism **economy**.

### THE NEED CONTINUES

- **31,400 lower income renter households lack housing they can afford** with about **16,140** paying **more than half of their income** for housing expenses. Fully 45% of all Vermont renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing costs. Less than half of the homes sold in Vermont in 2013 were likely to be affordable to the households making the Vermont median income of \$53,000.
- Homelessness continues to be a problem. **On one day in January 2013**, Vermont's shelters and service providers counted **nearly 2,600 people who were homeless**.
- Only **10.7 percent of Vermont's best agricultural soils are protected**. Without VHCB protection, much of the rest could be lost forever.
- The **cost of open land and woodlands has jumped by 250%** since 2000.
- Vermont's forestlands are part of the Northern Forest and represent the country's largest remaining stretch of temperate broad-leaved and mixed forests. **Protection of this forestland is critical for sequestering carbon**, which helps mitigate climate change, while still providing for wildlife, recreation, wood products and other uses.
- **Eighty percent of Vermont's forestland is privately owned**, and the number of Vermont landowners owning fewer than 10 acres of land continues to grow, according to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- According to the USDA, each year **thousands of acres of productive cropland are taken out of production** and converted to other uses. By comparison, in 2013 all 828 conserved farmland parcels with easements held by the Vermont Land Trust were in active agricultural use, except for one farm that is part of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service wetland reserve program. NRSC funding provides at least one-half the cost of Vermont's farmland conservation projects.



VHCB is a national leader in implementing the federal HOME program. From FY 1992 through FY 2013, this brought over \$66 million to Vermont for affordable housing. HUD ranked Vermont's program as first in the nation.

Over \$710 million spent on construction jobs in VHCB-assisted housing projects have created approximately 25,000 jobs in Vermont, according to federal estimates.

VHCB has funded more than 108 local developments serving Vermonters with special needs, providing community-based housing and saving the state millions of dollars that would otherwise be spent on more expensive institutional care.



~photo credit: Caleb Kenna

Every dollar spent on Vermont agriculture and forestry products generates an additional \$1.80 and \$1.70 respectively in gross state products.

A recent study of farms that donated or sold conservation easements found that all remained in productive use.

In-state expenditures by hunters, fisherman and wildlife watchers totaled \$357 million according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's most recent report.

Conservation provides resiliency for Vermont communities because it keeps land in productive use through transfers to the next generation and to new owners with solid business plans.