

# VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION BOARD BEYOND THE NUMBERS

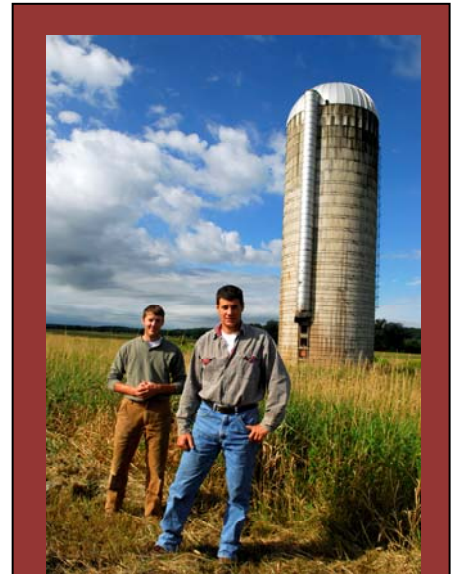
## STIMULATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VHCB-funded affordable housing creates jobs during and after construction. According to the National Association of Home Builders, 12.2 short-term and 3.2 permanent local jobs are created for every 10 housing units constructed. Affordable housing also helps to attract and retain employers by providing sorely needed workforce housing.

VHCB's housing and historic preservation policies give priority to projects in downtowns and village centers. Rehabilitating downtown buildings helps to maintain a mix of commercial and residential uses. VHCB has invested in the redevelopment of a cinema in downtown Springfield, restoration of theaters for the performing arts in Brattleboro, Rutland and Burlington, and new facilities for a community library in Groton.

Conservation of our working lands and natural areas is an economic development engine that helps protect local farms, creates recreational access, assists with flood protection and supports tourism and rural vitality. Farm and farm-related sectors are responsible for 17% of Vermont's gross state product. The USDA reports that Vermont agriculture generates 11% of jobs in the state.

The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program (VFFVP) works to enhance the economic viability of Vermont's working lands businesses by providing business planning and targeted technical assistance to farm, food and forestry enterprises. In 2013, 83 farms and 9 value-added food businesses were provided services. The program is currently enrolling its first group of forestry and forest products enterprises. The program enables business owners to make significant improvements in managing their business, generating profits, accessing financing, increasing production and implementing business expansions and ownership transitions. Eighteen farmers were able to source \$905,000 in capital they needed to implement their business plans immediately.



—photo credit: Caleb Kenna

Brothers Jeff and Jason Boissoneault conserved 400 acres of Essex farmland that is vital to their dairy farm business. Jeff and Jason manage over 1,000 cows at their milking facility in St. Albans. As other land is being lost to development, they have to go further to find cropland to support their herd. The parcel contains 287 acres of excellent tillage and 20 acres of woods that is considered a welland of statewide significance. With this conservation project Jason and Jeff also created riparian buffers for the Browns River, which runs through their Essex property. "We did it to stop the banks from washing out and to provide shade for trout," says Jeff.



The Environmental Protection Agency presented Housing Vermont, the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust, and the Brattleboro Food Co-op with the 2012 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement for an innovative multi-use building in downtown Brattleboro. The new building provides 33,600 square feet of retail and office space for the Co-op on the first two floors and 24 affordable apartments on the top two floors. A sophisticated mechanical system recaptures waste heat produced by the store's refrigeration equipment to heat the apartments.

Many farmers use the proceeds from the sale of development rights on their property to expand their operation, reduce debt, build new barns, or transfer the farm to the next generation. Farm businesses on conserved land produce over 500 value-added products, support many Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprises and farm stands, and help to create food security for our state. Conserved farms also contribute to retail and wholesale markets, selling food both in and out of state. Protecting our forestland prevents fragmentation and secures the future for our forest and recreational industries. Additionally, conservation supports Vermont's annual \$1.5 billion tourism industry by protecting our special Vermont brand which depends upon our world-class landscape and access to natural area recreation. These investments bring additional returns by spurring economic growth, both in the agricultural sector and by encouraging outdoor recreation activities and promoting travel and tourism, maintaining Vermont's high rank as one of the world's great tourist destinations.

## PROMOTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND MINIMIZING CLIMATE CHANGE



In West Rutland, the Housing Trust of Rutland County created 21 affordable apartments in three buildings including the former St. Stanislaus Kostka School and the adjacent convent. The development is a prototype for energy efficiency in historic buildings and returning vacant buildings to productive use. A single wood-fired pellet boiler provides heat for both the convent and the school while solar panels preheat the domestic hot water.

VHCB has been a national leader in creating energy efficient housing both in new developments and in the existing portfolio of permanently affordable housing. VHCB spearheaded the creation of a “roadmap” which describes techniques and materials we can use now to build energy efficient apartments. Notably, VHCB secured additional federal and philanthropic funding to implement the roadmap, including the installation of solar hot water and wood-pellet boilers. These upgrades will produce energy savings averaging 39% and as high as 56%.

Housing and conservation mean energy efficiency, shorter commutes, carbon sequestration in our forests, and foods coming from our local farms. The top recommendation of Vermont’s Climate Change Report is to “keep our farms, farms and forests, forests.” VHCB investments are the cornerstone of the permanent conservation of Vermont’s working lands and natural areas. Also, many Vermont farmers are at the forefront of devising new methods for creating on-farm energy through methane digesters, wind turbines, and bio-fuels. By protecting working farms and forests we are creating options for future energy independence.

## RESPONDING TO NEEDS CREATED BY TROPICAL STORM IRENE

Vermonters demonstrated remarkable resilience and a renewed sense of community spirit in the aftermath of tropical storm Irene. In a process that is familiar to VHCB, Vermont communities stepped up and directed their own emergency response. As our collective attention shifted from responding to the immediate emergency to planning and implementing long term solutions, communities needed outside assistance, expertise and financial support. VHCB and the network of affordable housing and conservation nonprofits that it supports built upon past successes to help communities meet their diverse needs.

Tropical storm Irene confirmed the value of conserving floodplains, which provides a cost-effective method of reducing flooding and curtailing erosion. Conserving farms and natural areas along our rivers and tributaries with river buffer enhancements will help to absorb the impact of severe weather events and lessen the impacts of flood and erosion downstream.

VHCB has played a key role in helping Vermonters recover from Irene by providing \$2 million to help homeowners who wanted buyouts of their destroyed homes and towns that sought to convert those parcels to open space or park land. VHCB’s conservation investments in farm and forest land along river corridors proactively address the challenges of climate change and promote flood resiliency. VHCB’s Manufactured Housing Innovation Project addresses the need to respond to the loss of housing during Tropical Storm Irene and to increase the supply of quality affordable, resilient and energy efficient homes in Vermont.

### *Publication of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition*

The more than 50 private, nonprofit organizations which are members of the Coalition represent a wide spectrum of interests from small, community-based land trusts which secure and steward public and recreation areas to statewide developers of affordable housing.



—photo credit: Jerry and Marcy Monkman

The Trust for Public Land worked with the Millstone Trails Association, Vermont Land Trust, and the Town of Barre to create a new community forest out of 355 acres of former quarry land. The Barre Town Forest is part of a 70-mile trail network built by volunteers with the non-profit Millstone Trails Association. The trail network provides recreational opportunities for mountain bikers, cross country skiers, hikers, hunters, and snowmobilers. A recent economic analysis estimates that the Town Forest and trail system will result in an annual economic benefit of \$640,000 from visitor spending and support 20 local jobs by 2015.