

# Revitalizing the Rural Economy in the Hardwick Region through Housing and Conservation Investments



Gary Hall photo

The Bemis Block - rental housing & commercial space



Arts programming at the restored, historic firehouse



Staff photo, the Cellars at Jasper Hill

The Cellars at Jasper Hill - conserved dairy farm; cheese making and cheese aging for an international market

Since 1988, VHCB has made strategic investments in housing, land conservation and agricultural business planning services in Hardwick and surrounding towns in Caledonia, Lamoille and northern Washington Counties. VHCB's housing investments have helped revitalize Hardwick's Main Street, grow its grand list, and provide decent and affordable housing throughout the town. VHCB has invested in 90 affordable homes, leveraging millions in other private and federal funding. Agricultural and conservation investments have helped build a critical mass of conserved working lands in the area, laying the groundwork for an economic renaissance based on farm, forest, and food enterprises.

## Creating and Preserving Affordable Housing

- In the early 1990s, the Hardwick Housing Partnership Project filled a block in the heart of the downtown left vacant after a fire with a new three-story mixed commercial and residential building with 9 apartments.
- In 1998, VHCB funding supported the Highland Hill project, rehabilitating deteriorated and unsafe housing in three neighborhood buildings.
- VHCB is bringing homeownership and rental housing to the Evergreen Mobile Home Park with funding to replace inadequate park infrastructure and filling vacant lots with 13 new, net-zero modular homes.
- VHCB helped preserve 16 homes for seniors with federal rental assistance in two historic buildings known as the Maple Street Apartments.
- In 2006, VHCB supported the rehabilitation of the Bemis Block after a fire severely damaged the building. There are 14 homes for seniors on the upper stories and ground floor commercial space.

## Conserving Land, Supporting Agriculture

- VHCB and the Vermont Land Trust have conserved 35 farms and 4 conservation projects in Hardwick and surrounding towns ranging from dairy farms, to Christmas tree plantations, diversified livestock farms, and vegetable farms.
- VLT's Farmland Access Program helps beginning farmers find affordable farmland. In Albany, Paul Lisai bought a permanent home for his dairy through the Farmland Access Program; conservation made the purchase affordable. Paul was able to grow his dairy and creamery business with business planning services.
- 29 farm and forest businesses in the area with \$14.5 million in annual sales and 138 full-time jobs have undertaken business and ownership transfer planning through VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability Program.
- Ten businesses in the Hardwick area have received grant funds from the Viability Program, totaling \$116,100, and leveraging \$998,525 in further investment on the part of recipient businesses, almost a 10:1 ratio.
- VHCB funds attracted private capital to build the Food Venture Center, a 15,000 square foot food processing facility and kitchen incubator managed by the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE).
- VHCB contributions in the downtown include CAE's Atkins Field, a multi-use recreational and community greenhouse space, and the restoration of the historic Old Firehouse building into a community arts center.



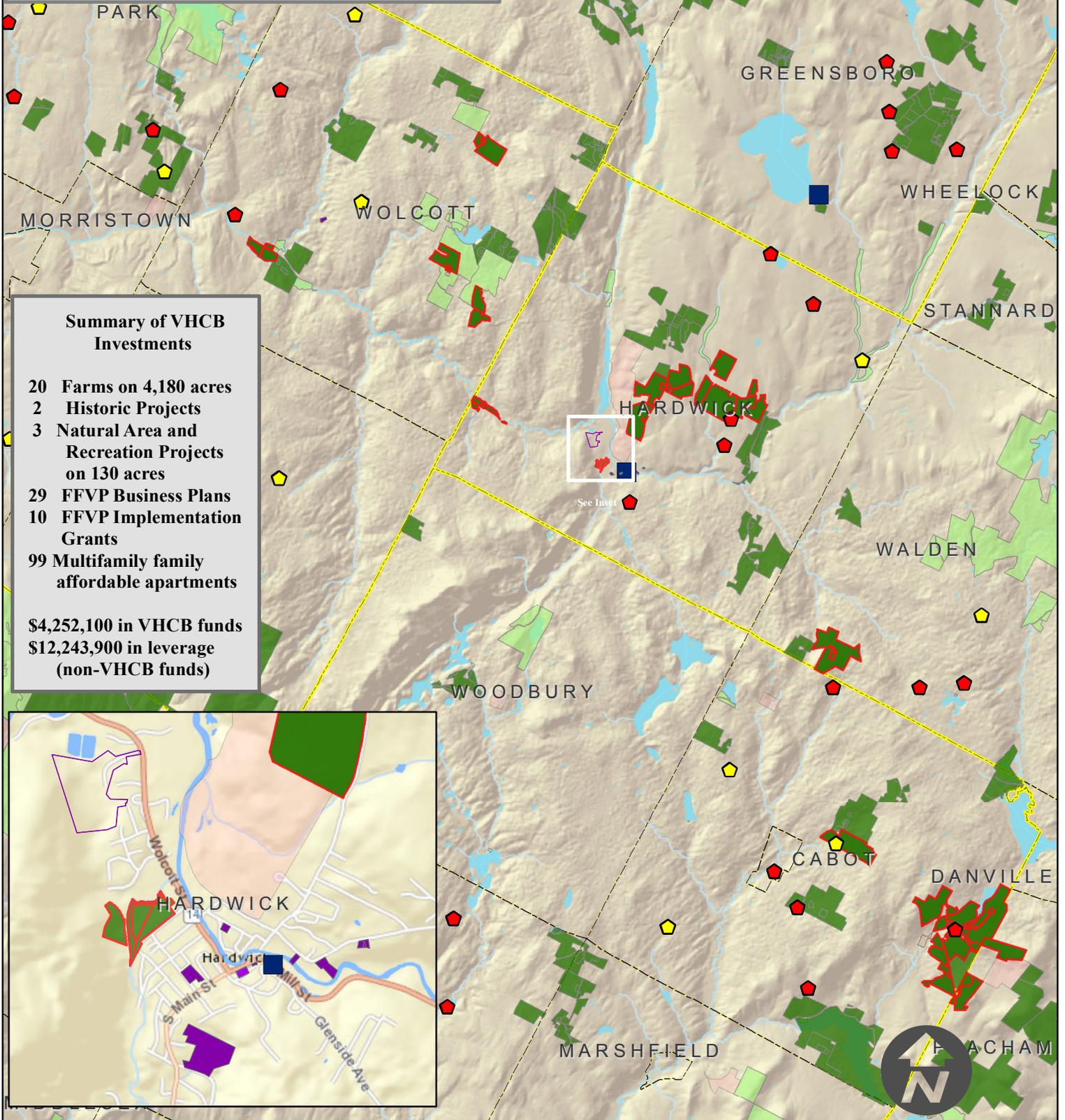
Net zero modular home at Evergreen Mobile Home Park



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## VHCB Investments in the Hardwick Area

- ◆ Farm & Forest Viability Business Planning
- ◆ Farm & Forest Viability Implementation Grants
- Housing Projects
- VHCB conserved land
- Other conserved land
- Historic Sites
- State land
- Municipal land
- Federal land



**Summary of VHCB Investments**

20 Farms on 4,180 acres  
 2 Historic Projects  
 3 Natural Area and Recreation Projects on 130 acres  
 29 FFVP Business Plans  
 10 FFVP Implementation Grants  
 99 Multifamily family affordable apartments

\$4,252,100 in VHCB funds  
 \$12,243,900 in leverage (non-VHCB funds)

