



House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife

January 30, 2019



House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Committee

“Conservation and development of the state’s water resources; conservation and development of lands; land resources; land use; geology; fish and wildlife; natural habitats; air quality, environmental permitting; climate change; scenery; and solid waste and toxic substances management.”

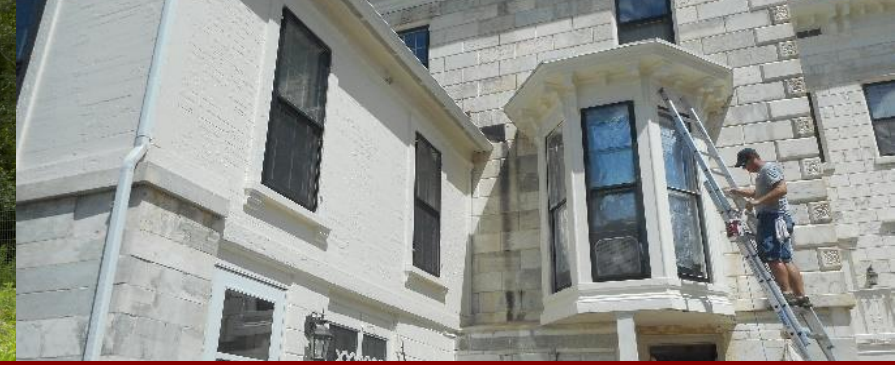
House Rule 25

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board



“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands in order to improve the quality of life for Vermonters and to maintain for the benefit of future generations the essential characteristics of the Vermont countryside.

10 V.S.A.15 §302



30 Years of Housing & Conservation

- 267,900 acres of working forests, natural areas and recreational lands
- 13,000 affordable homes – rental and homeownership
- 167,000 acres on 725 farms
- 70 historic buildings have been restored for community use
- 800 businesses have enrolled in our Farm & Forest Viability Program
- 550 AmeriCorps members have served through VHCB AmeriCorps
- 2,600 homes with reduced lead paint hazards

BENEFITS OF VHCB INVESTMENTS

Stimulating the Economy and Creating Jobs: Housing development yields multiple economic benefits

- Increases the value of grand lists.
- Generating millions of dollars of economic activity through the creation of jobs and the purchase of goods.

Protecting Forests and Wetlands for their Multiple Public Values

- Every \$1 Vermont invests in land conservation returns \$9 in economic value in the form of water quality protection and increased flood resiliency, resulting in millions in avoided costs.
- Conservation investments protect wildlife habitat, water quality, sequester carbon, and secure outdoor recreation resources.

Downtowns, Village Centers and Historic Preservation

- Key downtown and village center buildings play an important role in community vitality.
- The preservation and renovation of historic buildings with public use can revive community spirit and provide economic stimulus.
- Locating housing in town centers maintains Vermont's historic settlement patterns.

Improving Water Quality

- Easement restrictions and management plans focus on compliance with state water quality rules, on soil health, and on enhancing environmental stewardship.
- VHCB also makes grants to farmers for capital projects to improve and protect water quality.

Boosting our Ag Economy: VHCB's farmland conservation investments:

- Protect our state's most valuable agricultural land
- Provide capital for farmers to expand, diversify, reduce debt, and facilitate transfers.

Energy Efficiency: Strategic investments in energy efficiency in the portfolio of affordable housing:

- Measures include air sealing, increasing insulation, and replacing aging boilers with air source heat pumps and biomass boilers.
- Energy efficiency improvements reduce operating costs—saving approximately \$1.9 million annually—and help maintain affordability.

Public Outdoor Recreation—Integral to Vermont's Economy

- Recreational activities are estimated to generate \$2.5 billion annually in economic activity.
- Direct spending at outdoor retailers, service providers, and trip expenditures support our rural economy by bringing business to small towns.



Revitalizing a Community through Housing and Conservation Investments



VHCB has invested state funds in housing, land conservation, and agricultural business planning services in the Morrisville area. Housing awards to 10 properties with 76 homes have helped reenergize downtown, grow the grand list, and provide decent and affordable housing while also leveraging millions in private and federal funding. Investments in agriculture enterprises and land conservation provide capital to farmers and business planning support to farm, forest, and food enterprises and protect important natural resources for wildlife habitat and traditional recreational uses.

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Ridge

A 27-year effort by the Windmill Hill Pinnacle and Putney Mountain Associations, supported with VHCB grants, has conserved 26 miles of trails and 2,100 acres in Rockingham, Athens, Grafton, Brookline, and Westminster.



Morgan Street Wetlands - Bennington



Housing Revenue Bond Initiative

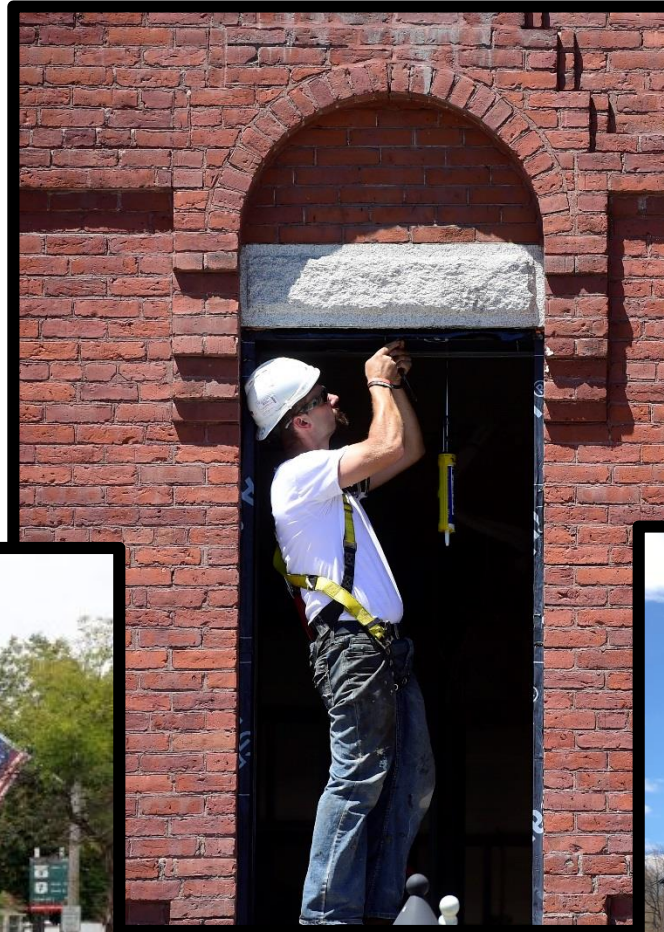
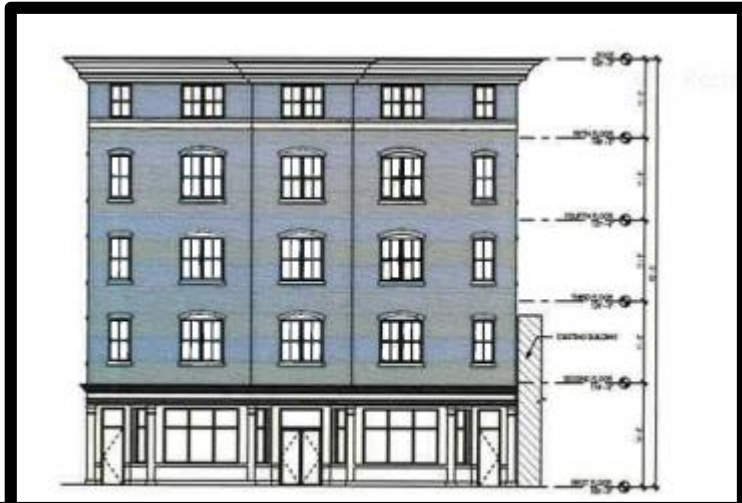
HRB has funded 21 projects with 550 homes in 16 different communities across 9 counties plus accessibility improvements and Habitat for Humanity homes statewide.

First 86 homes are completed and occupied, including these in Putney. Another 240 are under construction with 200 more set to get underway by the end of the year.



Downtown Revitalization

Brattleboro, Springfield, Montpelier, St. Albans and Bennington Funded. St. Johnsbury to be Considered Soon

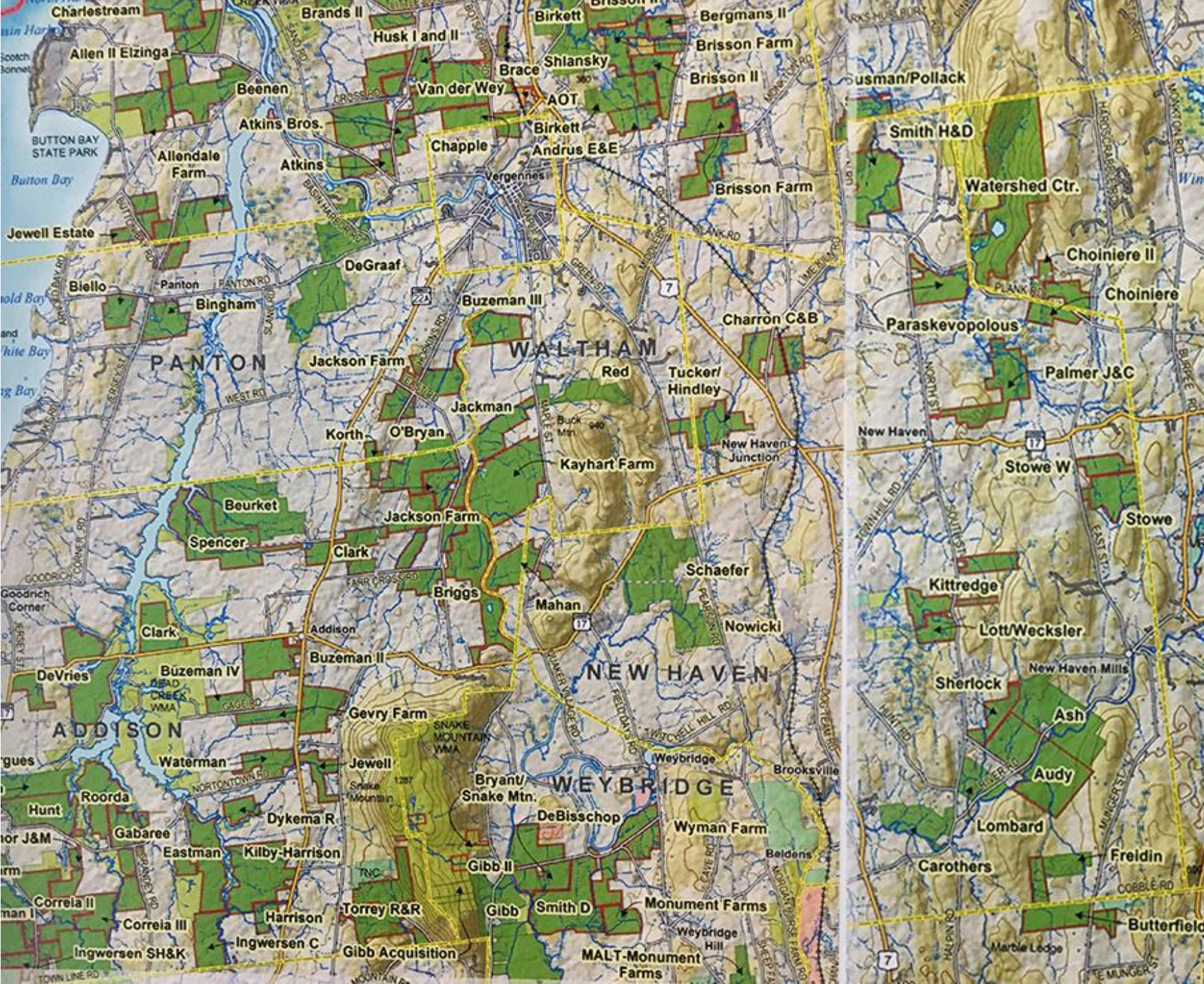


Cambrian Rise Burlington



New neighborhood of 700 new homes under development. 12 acres of conserved land with public access on Lake Champlain. All levels of affordability from luxury condos to apartments dedicated to the homeless. Partnership between the City, private developer, housing nonprofit and land trust. HRB funding committed to or under consideration for 157 apartments and condominiums for moderate to low income households.

Conserved Farmland and Natural Areas in Addison County

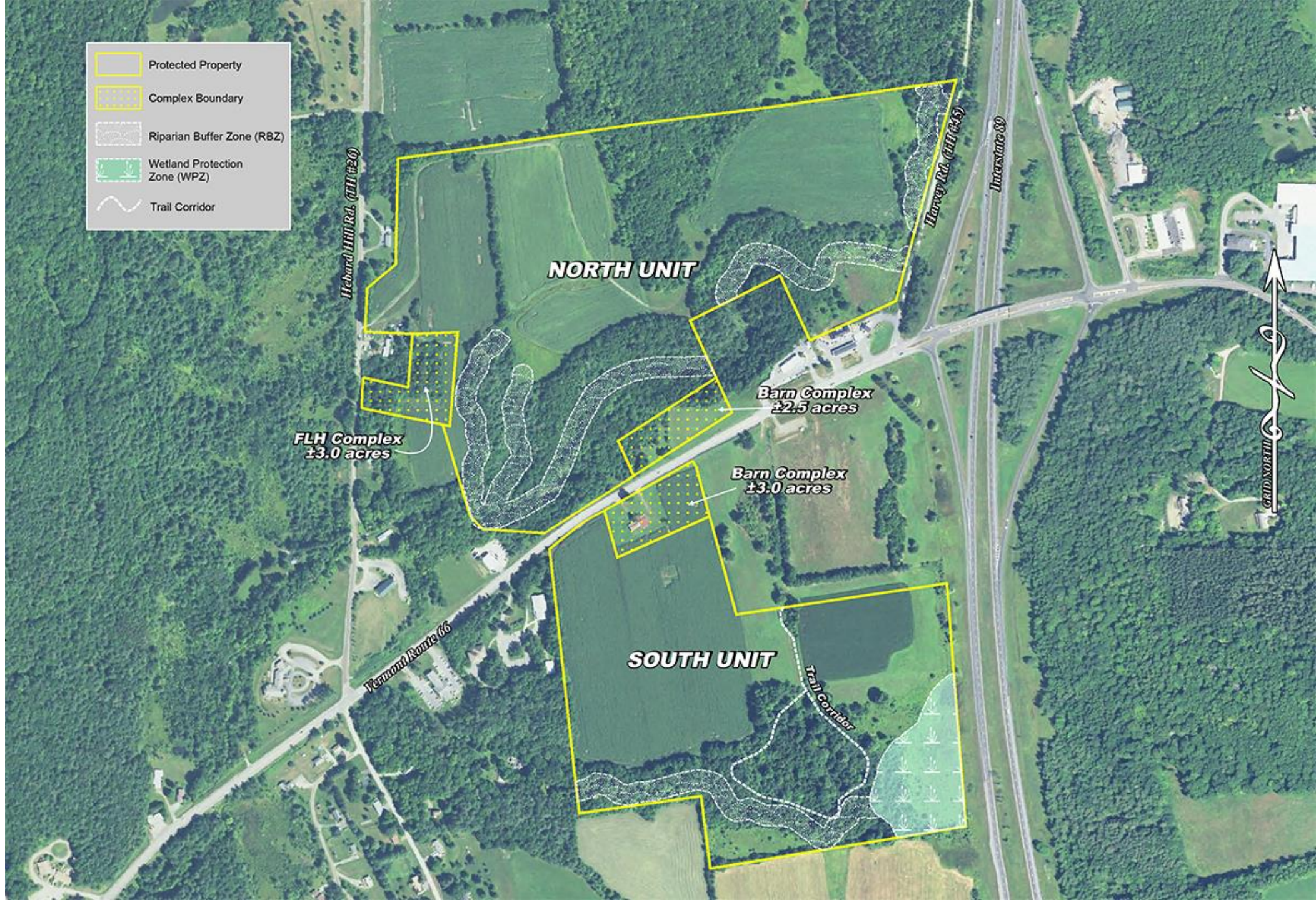




Exit 4 Land Conserved

Working with the Vermont Land Trust, VHCB funded the conservation of land at I-89 Exit 4 for addition to the Ayers Brook demonstration goat farm in Randolph owned by Allison Hooper and Bob Reese, founders of the Vermont Creamery.

The Ayers Brook project includes riparian buffers and wetland protection zones in addition to conserving the land and protecting scenic vistas.



Water Quality Improved and Protected



Photo by Paul Richardson

“... the protection of lands for multiple conservation purposes, including the protection of surface waters and associated natural resources.

10 V.S.A.15 §303



Photo: The Nature Conservancy

Conserving working forests & supporting the forest economy

- The Vermont forest products industry contributes 10,555 jobs and \$1.5 billion in economic output, including value-added manufacturing and tourism.
- Forests provide a backdrop for Vermont's world-class tourism industry and boost rural economies, as demonstrated by the Westford Town Forest, Mount Ascutney in West Windsor, and Kingdom Trails, all conserved with VHCB funding.
- VHCB has protected 7 town forests totaling 2,083 acres over the past three years.
- The Viability Program has worked with more than 50 foresters, loggers, and forest products businesses, and provides succession planning services to forest landowners.

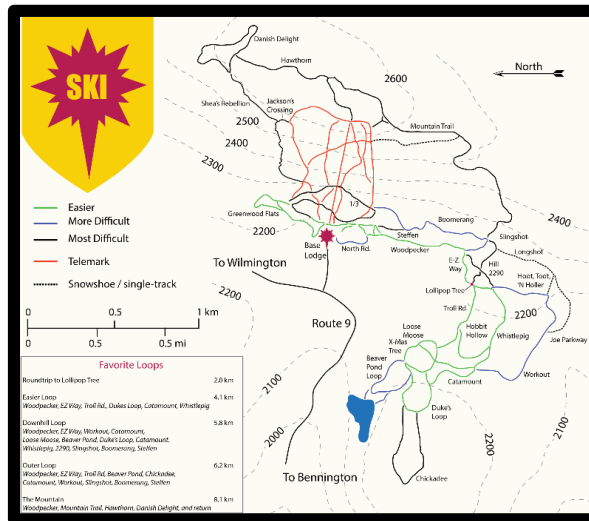
Conservation of Natural & Recreational Areas

Ascutney Mountain, West Windsor



- Acquisition and conservation of 469 acres that were added to the town forest creating a 4,730 acre block of protected land.
- Added 11 miles of trails to an existing network following the loss of the local ski area.
- Values of the land include wildlife habitat, natural resource protection, sustainable forest management, water quality protection.

Recreation Landscape to be Protected and Enhanced



Prospect Mountain Nordic Ski Area in Woodford



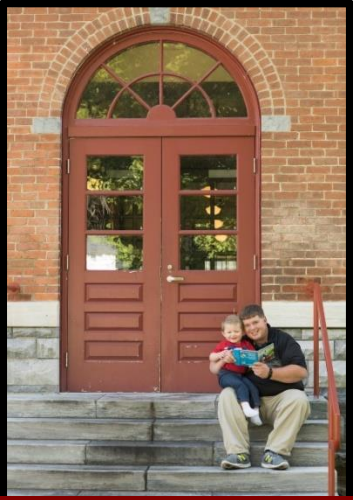
Bluffside Bike Path Recreation Corridor in Newport

VHCB committed \$199,000 targeted to economic and community development in the NEK towards the recreation corridor and bridge connecting Bluffside Farm with Newport's Prouty Beach Recreation area and trails in downtown Newport and Quebec.



Biomass in Affordable Housing

Converted school and convent in West Rutland. One of 39 biomass heating systems installed in affordable housing developments statewide providing heat and hot water to 940 homes and using 1540 tons of wood pellets annually.



Energy-Efficient Innovation McKnight Lane, Waltham

Net-zero modular duplex buildings in a new affordable neighborhood of 14 homes on the site of an abandoned mobile home park.



Energy Efficient Affordable Housing



New affordable homes for 30 elders in Milton. Recognized nationally for its innovative and energy efficient design, Elm Place is the first apartment building in Vermont built to passive house construction standards.



VHCB and Water Quality

- Adopted Water Quality and Flood Resilience Guidelines and revised Conservation of Agricultural Lands policy to incorporate water quality/flood resilience attributes
- Management (ALE) plans are now required to address soil health and water quality prior to closing on a farm easement
- Special easement language protects surface waters – riparian buffers, wetland projection zones.
- Pledged over \$5 million match to the state's \$16 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award from NRCS: 20 farms funded with 16 closed
- The VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program has awarded \$881,099 in water quality grants to 29 farms, and \$492,302 in dairy improvement grants to 17 farms

Choiniere Family Farm, Highgate Mississquoi Bay Watershed



The Choinieres implemented numerous conservation practices, installing buffers along the river, cattle lanes and fencing, and keeping manure under cover using bedded pack barns. The farm now produces milk without feeding grain. The Choinieres are in the process of purchasing a neighboring conserved farm.

Poulin & Daughters Family Farm, Randolph



Beef and maple farm conserved by VLT with VHCBC funding in 2013; easement includes 50-foot riparian buffer along Third Branch of the White River. Received VHCBC water quality grant in 2017 to install manure containment structures.



Water Quality and Dairy Improvement Grants



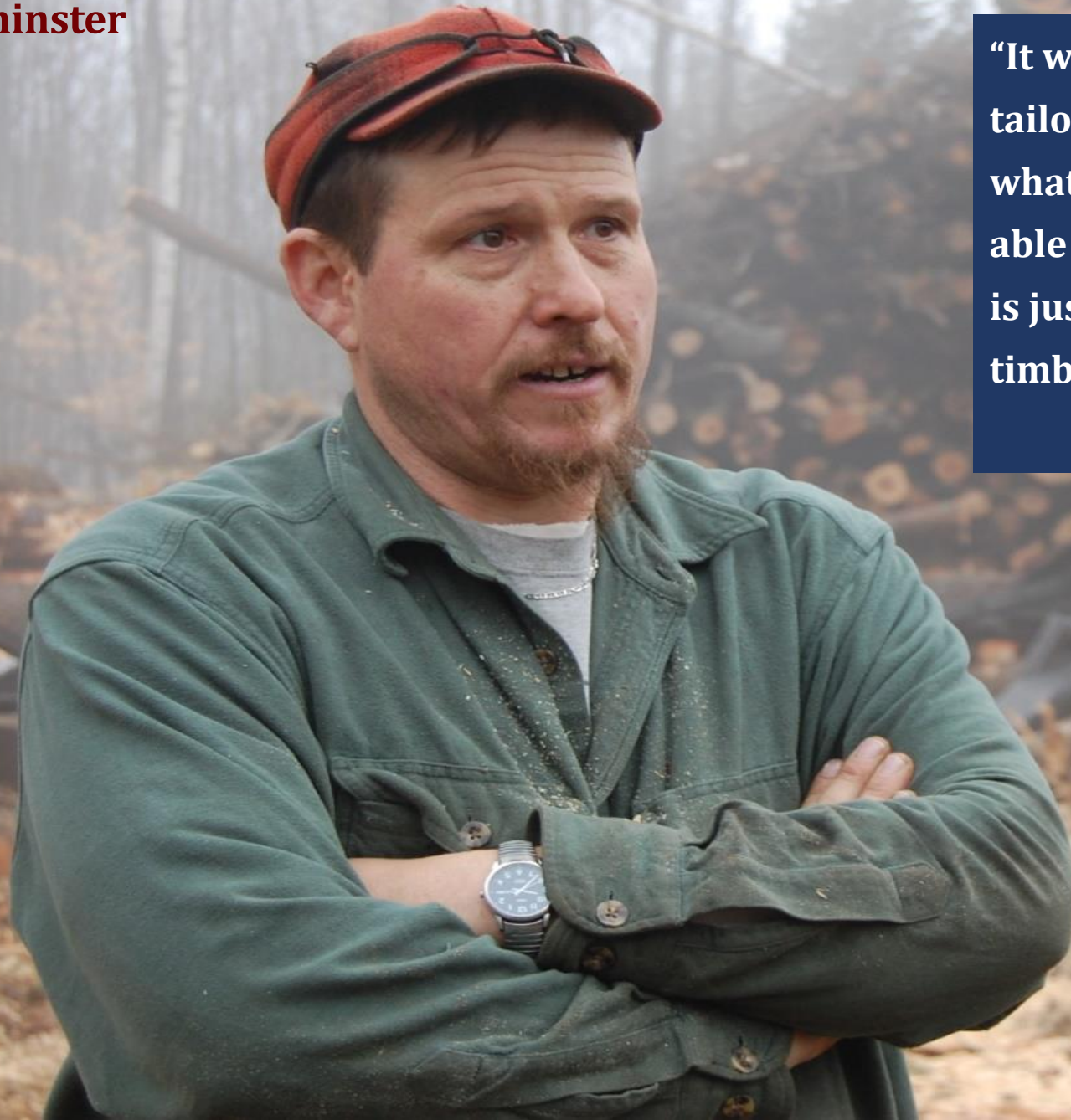
The O'Donnells milk Holsteins on their farm in Westfield along the headwaters of the Mississquoi River. With a VHCB Water Quality Grant, they purchased a manure injection system to help them manage phosphorus and nitrogen levels in the soil, reduce nutrient runoff, and increase crop yields. A dairy improvement grant will help them construct a new manure storage facility.



VT Farm & Forest Viability Program in 2018

- 85 farms received business or transfer planning services
- 41 farms received a second year of services
- 18 farms received shorter-term business coaching
- 5 food hubs received strategic planning assistance
- 16 forest products businesses received technical assistance
- 27 loggers attended 2 business management workshops
- 23 family forestland owners and consulting foresters attended 2 succession planning workshops
- 6 forestland-owning families received one-on-one succession planning assistance
- **Total enrolled Viability clients: 171**

Brookside Timber Harvesting Westminster



“It was great to have the program tailored around my schedule and what my business needs. Being able to read financial statements is just as important as looking at a timber lot.”

Jon Parker

REDI

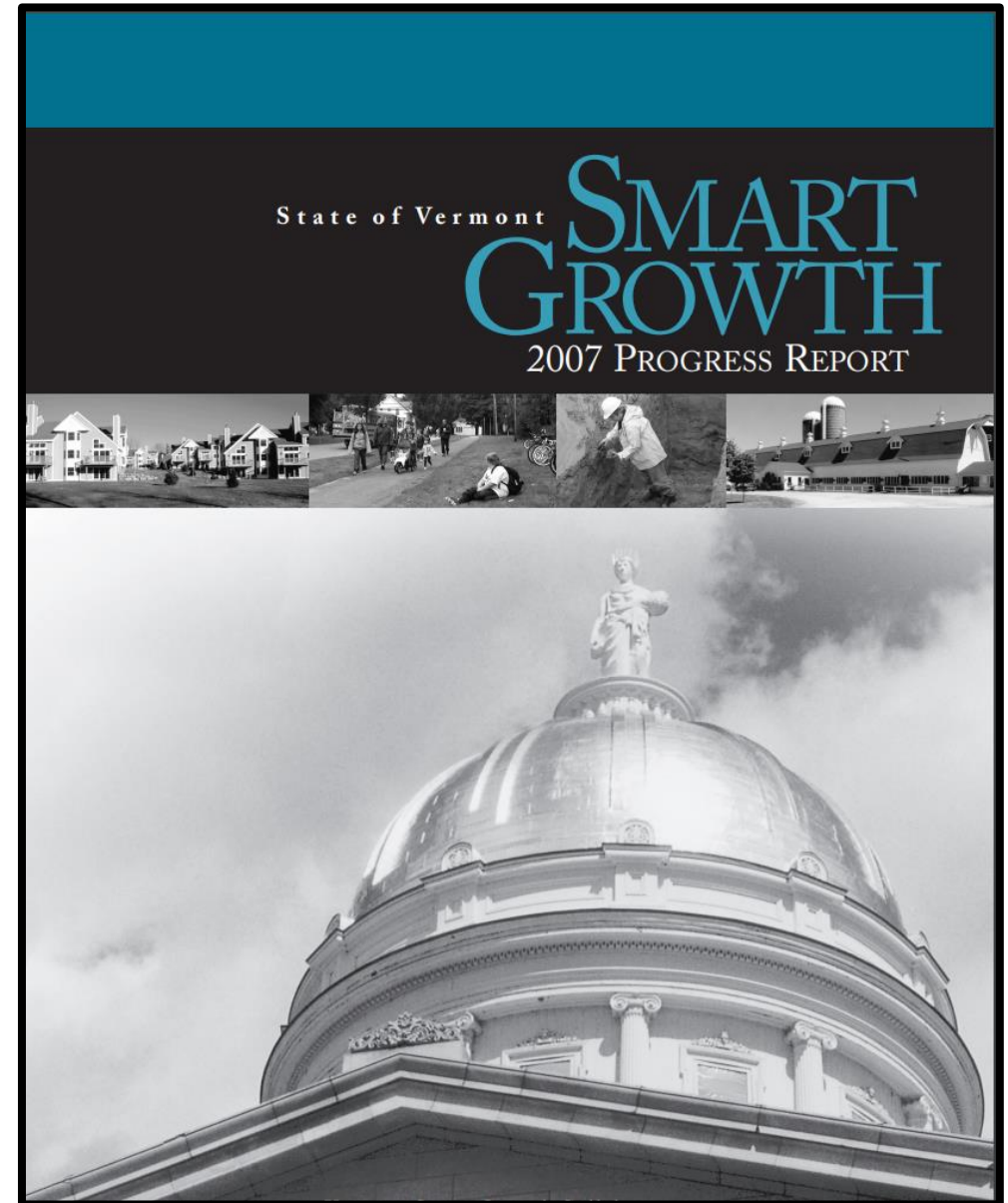
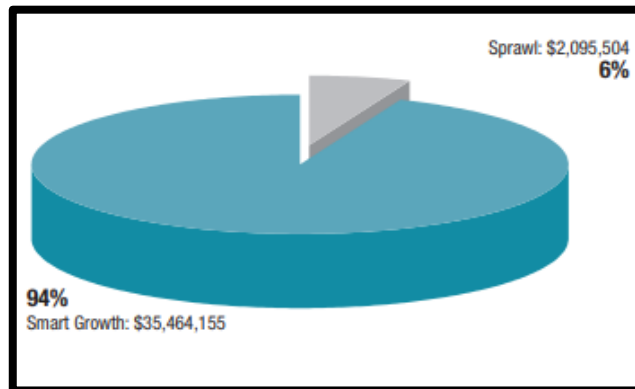
Act 194 of 2017 directed VHCB to create a Rural Economic Development Initiative. Using **\$75,000** for grant-writing services, the Viability Program helped 10 rural enterprises and small towns secure **\$1.78 million** in grants from federal, philanthropic and state sources.



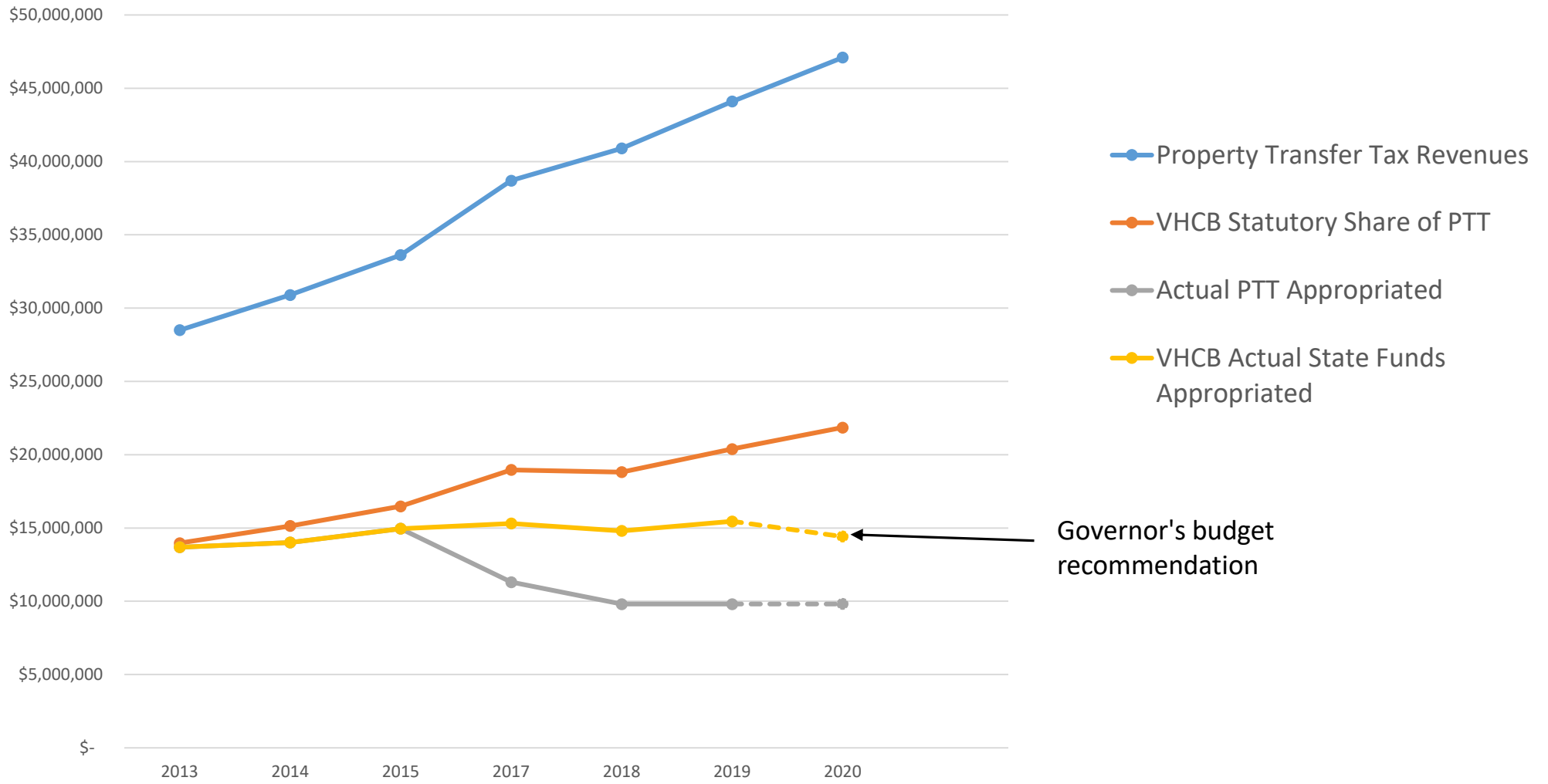
With REDI help, the Pownal Trails Association secured a \$24,000 grant to develop a trail and recreation area on a remediated brownfield site on the Hoosic River.

State investments through VHCB support smart growth.

Most recent progress report found that 94% of the affordable housing projects funded by VHCB were in smart growth locations.



VHCB Appropriations 2013-2020



Gus Seelig
Executive Director
Jen Hollar
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