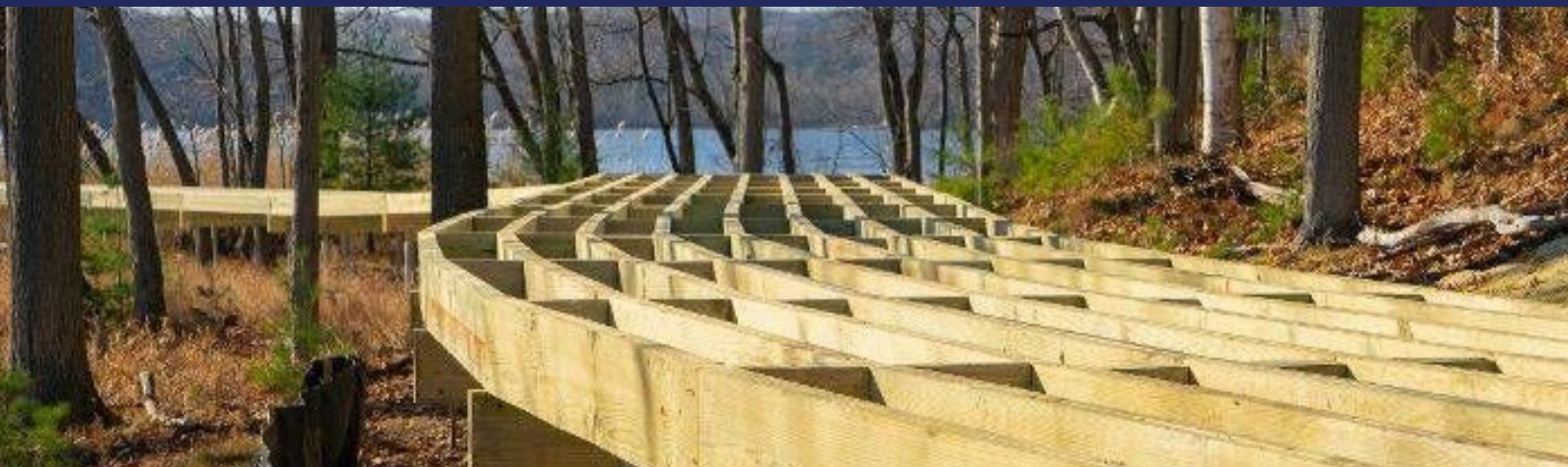




# *Building Bridges to Opportunity*

## Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

2020 Annual Report  
to the Vermont General Assembly





We dedicate this annual report to Brenda Torpy, who recently stepped down as Chief Executive Officer of the Champlain Housing Trust (CHT). Brenda was a founding member of the Burlington Com-

munity Land Trust more than 35 years ago and served as its first Board President. Today CHT is the largest Community Land Trust in the world, with more than 3,000 homes of all types throughout northwestern Vermont serving people experiencing homelessness, homes for people with special needs, affordable apartments for the working class, and a pioneering, shared equity homeownership program that removes financial hurdles for buyers while creating housing that is permanently affordable. Brenda is an internationally recognized leader and advocate for affordable housing and social justice. We salute her groundbreaking work and wish her all the best.

**Front cover photos**

Top, left to right: Eugenie Doyle, Silas Doyle-Burr and Sam Burr, Last Resort Farm, Monkton; Groundbreaking for a recreational bridge across the Winooski by the Cross Vermont Trail; Family outside their new home built by Rutland Habitat for Humanity (Emma Cotton/VT Digger photo); Bottom: Recreational bridge under construction by the Vermont Land Trust, connecting Bluffside Farm with the City of Newport and trails into Canada (Kyle Gray/Caledonia Record photo)

Writing: Doug Wilhelm  
Design: Pam Boyd

**VHCB STAFF**

- Executive Director:** Gus Seelig
- Director of Policy and Special Projects:** Jennifer Hollar
- Administration:** Larry Mires, Pam Boyd, Marcy Christian, Laurie Graves, Dan Herman, Bob Zatzke
- Conservation:** Karen Freeman, Stacy Cibula, Bill Dell’Isola, Nancy Everhart\*, Mark Martin, Ethan Parke
- Housing:** Martin Hahn, Jenny Hyslop, Rick DeAngelis\*, Ian Jakus, Kathleen Kanz\*, Ariane Kissam, Craig Peltier, Erin Riley, Gretchen Rittenhouse, Ron Rupp, Leah Sare, Beth Schwarz
- Healthy & Lead-Safe Homes:** Matthew Hill, Adam Cook, Diane Mackay
- Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program:** Ela Chapin, Liz Gleason, Ashia Gallo\*, Aaron Guman, Katie Michels\*, Mariah Noth
- VHCB AmeriCorps Program:** Francis Sharpstene, Ashley Swasey, Elizabeth Wilcox\*, Ellie Schiappa
- Financial:** Anne Duffy, Kathy Barrows, Amanda Moran-Moshinskie, Ginger Nichols
- Legal:** Elizabeth Egan, Kimberly Foss

\*left VHCB in 2020

**VERMONT HOUSING & CONSERVATION BOARD**

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- David Marvin, Vice-Chair, Butternut Mountain Farm, Morrisville
- Marie Audet, farmer, Bridport
- Maura Collins, Executive Director, Vermont Housing Finance Agency
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- Kate McCarthy, Montpelier
- Julie Moore, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources
- Anson Tebbetts, Secretary, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Emily Wadhams, historic preservation consultant
- Thomas Yahn, Brattleboro

**VERMONT FARM & FOREST VIABILITY PROGRAM ADVISORY BOARD**

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- Abbie Corse, The Corse Farm Dairy
- Joan Goldstein, Vermont Department of Economic Development
- Colleen Goodridge, Goodridge Lumber
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- Sarah Isham, Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation/VEDA
- Pete Johnson, Pete’s Greens
- Michael Snyder, Commissioner, Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation
- Gus Seelig, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

PHILIP B. SCOTT  
GOVERNOR

State of Vermont  
Office of the Governor

January 30, 2021

Dear Vermonters,

The impacts of COVID-19 have required all of us to make sacrifices, take extra health and safety precautions, and pull together to support those in need. This year's Annual Report of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) exemplifies that community partnership and spirit, as they have once again helped our administration respond effectively to Vermonters that need help.

VHCB is an important partner. Their work helps rebuild our downtowns and village centers, create access to land for the next generation of farmers, conserve recreation resources, support rural communities with grant-writing expertise and reduce lead paint hazards. They also bring young people to Vermont through the VHCB AmeriCorps program, and serve as Vermont's Clean Water Service Provider for the Lake Memphremagog Basin.

Vermont has suffered from a shortage of quality affordable housing for years. While we have made great progress, we have a lot more to do. In 2017, we worked together to pass the largest housing bond Vermont has ever seen. As the last of these bond projects come to fruition, we will add 843 homes to our housing stock, with 130 of these homes for Vermonters who had experienced homelessness. Additionally, I'm proud to announce the FY '22 budget I just proposed to the Legislature directs an additional \$20 million to VHCB to build upon this success and leverage additional investment.

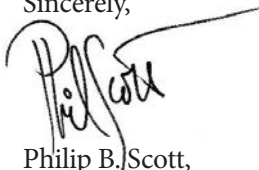
VHCB has also been instrumental in our pandemic response. They led an effort to deploy federal relief funds to improve shelters and expand our housing supply with 247 new homes. This work was done effectively and efficiently, and in close coordination with community partners, contractors, and local officials.

In addition, VHCB's Farm and Forest Viability Program worked closely with our Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets to help more than 500 farmers, and other working lands businesses, access federal COVID-19 relief programs and business planning assistance as they pivoted to develop new markets.

Since taking office, my priorities have been clear: grow the economy; make Vermont more affordable for families and businesses; and protect the most vulnerable. Working with partners like VHCB, we have made significant, and measurable, progress in each of these areas.

I thank every Vermonter who contributed to the programs and projects described in this report. And I look forward to getting even more, and better, results in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Philip B. Scott,  
Governor



# Building Bridges to Opportunity

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

We submit this annual report with deep appreciation for the confidence the General Assembly has placed in the Board and its community partners to help Vermont respond to the effects of COVID-19. Our housing and Viability Program staff have worked intensively to assist more than 1,000 Vermonters in need of housing or business assistance as we all have navigated the impacts of the pandemic.

New price pressures in Vermont's real estate market are making housing and land more expensive and further out of reach, whether one is a renter, buyer, farmer, or a Vermonter who wants to enjoy the outdoors. The pandemic has challenged Vermont to address housing as a fundamental human need, essential to individual health.

As we face the coming year, the terrible police brutality seen across our country and bigotry expressed here in Vermont require that all of us work together to build the bridges that can make Vermont a more welcoming, diverse, and inclusive state. We and our partners at the community level are hard at work in reviewing both programming and outreach efforts to address the systemic issues that will lead us to that future.


A new recreational bridge pictured on the cover of this report will connect the Bluffside farm on Lake Memphremagog to downtown Newport and to trails into Canada. In East Montpelier, pictured above, the Cross Vermont Trail Association celebrated a ground breaking for a bridge across the Winooski for which they have raised more than \$1 million over 10 years to connect sections of the trail with Montpelier's new bike path along the Winooski River. These recreational assets support our economy and enhance our quality of life at a time when getting outside in a safe and socially distanced manner has never been more important.

Our work building bridges has always been both metaphorical and physical. When first established, the Board built bridges both in policy and among practitioners to use and conserve Vermont's world-class landscape for housing, conservation, recreation, downtown development, vibrant rural communities, historic places, and a resilient natural world.

Over the years, the bridges Vermont needed to build asked that VHCB address climate change and smart growth and add services to accompany housing to support our elders and other vulnerable Vermonters. We are at the table helping to build bridges to assist the next generation of farm owners, and we're working across agencies and programs to address water quality and support initiatives that will strengthen our rural economy and communities.

As you read this report please know that your constituents and their creativity make our work possible. We look forward to continuing to work with you in bringing resources to them, realizing Vermont's motto of Freedom and Unity.

Sincerely,

  
Neil Mickenberg, Board Chair

  
Gus Seelig, Executive Director



# Benefits of VHCB Investments

## Stimulating the Economy and Creating Jobs

**Affordable housing development** yields multiple economic benefits. Housing construction stimulates the economy, generating millions of dollars of economic activity through the creation of jobs and the purchase of goods and services. New housing developments generate a considerable increase in Vermont's Grand Lists.

VHCB's **farmland conservation** investments, matched with federal funds from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, protect our state's most valuable agricultural land while also providing capital for farmers to expand, diversify, reduce debt, and facilitate transfers.

**Business planning assistance and capital investments** provided through VHCB's Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program are increasing net income for farm and forest enterprises, creating new jobs and proprietorships, and helping families plan for retirement.

Recreational activities, from snowmobiling and mountain biking to hunting, fishing, and backcountry skiing are estimated to generate \$2.5 billion annually in economic activity. **VHCB funding for recreational land** assists communities establishing or expanding trail systems, town forests, and state parks.

## Adapting to Climate Change

VHCB awards support **wetland conservation and restoration projects**, protect wildlife corridors and water quality, improve **flood resilience**, and conserve forests that sequester carbon.

Investments in **energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy** across the state's portfolio of affordable housing reduce operating costs, saving approximately \$2.1 million annually, helping to maintain housing affordability, and **reducing carbon emissions** dramatically.

## Revitalizing Historic Downtown Buildings

The Board invests every year in the rehabilitation and preservation of historic downtown and village center buildings that provide affordable housing in areas of opportunity and maintain Vermont's historic settlement patterns. The preservation and renovation of performing arts centers, libraries, and town halls can play an important role in **community vitality** and provide **economic stimulus**.

## Improving Water Quality

Water quality is key to our tourism and recreational economy, to the health of our ecosystems, as well as to property values. In partnership with other agencies and organizations, VHCB is committed to improving water quality and soil health. **Easement restrictions and management plans** focus on compliance with state water quality rules, on soil health, and on environmental stewardship. Farmland conservation easements include provisions to protect water quality such as buffers along waterways and establish special environmental protection areas around wetlands. The Farm & Forest Viability Program also makes grants for **infrastructure improvements on farms** that protect water quality.

## VHCB INVESTMENTS IN FY20 & FY21

\$29 million invested;  
\$174 million leveraged

- 775 homes and apartments
- 12 shelters with 253 beds
- 36 farms; 5,579 acres farmland
- 4 historic preservation projects
- 27 projects conserved 8,504 acres of natural areas, forestland, and public recreational land
- 186 farm, food, and forest enterprises received business planning services and technical assistance; 524 enterprises received Covid-recovery assistance



▲ The construction industry generates millions of dollars in economic activity through the creation of jobs and the purchase of goods and services.



## New housing for stronger communities

### ▲ Vergennes Community Housing

“The walls are really thick here, there’s ventilation in the ceiling, and I think it’s awesome that there are solar panels up on the roof. I love that there’s a playground, and garden boxes. I’m excited to use them!”



— Bianca Dwy, resident at Vergennes Community Housing

New affordable housing developments in Vergennes, Lyndon, St. Albans and Shaftsbury, all made possible through Housing Revenue Bond funding, are providing safe, clean, energy-efficient rental housing to residents at a mix of income levels from low to moderate. Additional new and rehabilitated rental housing is underway in Bennington, St. Johnsbury, and Springfield.

### Vergennes Community Housing

The Addison County Community Trust (ACCT) partnered with Evernorth and brought in funds from a variety of sources to develop this mix of 24 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments that are a short walk from downtown.

“Addison County faces a critical shortage of affordable housing,” noted Elise Shanbacker, ACCT’s executive director. “Almost half of renters pay more than a third of their income in rent. This new mixed-income property will help alleviate the county’s serious affordable housing shortage and provide important wraparound services to support residents, while also helping to address the need for workforce housing.”

“The Housing for All Revenue Bond has been hugely successful,” added Nancy Owens, co-president of Evernorth, “and has been a critical tool in helping us provide new affordable housing near amenities and jobs like these new apartments at 45 Armory Lane.”

Among the new residents here is Bianca Dwy, a single parent of a first-grader who can now bring her daughter to school before commuting to work at an auto dealership in South Burlington.

“The affordability, for me, is ideal,” Bianca said. “I had looked for a really long time. Nothing ever fit my criteria, which was that I want to be able to afford my rent.”

“The walls are really thick here, there’s ventilation in the ceiling, and I think it’s awesome that there are solar panels up on the roof,” she added. “I love that there’s a playground, and garden boxes. I’m excited to use them!”

### Congress Street and Maiden Lane, St. Albans

At the center of St. Albans, a partnership effort with Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) and Evernorth has completed 30 new affordable apartments at 20 Congress Street, providing low- and moderate-income housing with rental sub-



Congress Street, St. Albans

Sally McCay photo

sides to replace deteriorated public housing. Just down the street at 10 Maiden Lane, CHT is partnering with a private developer to build 33 apartments for moderate-income households. Together, the developments are part of a major revitalization of the city center. The City supported the development with site work, including creating the foundations and underground parking for the two residential buildings. The redevelopment also features a new commercial building with space for retail and restaurants, classrooms for the Community College of Vermont, and office space for Northwestern Vermont Medical Center.

## Olivia Place, Lyndon

Twenty energy-efficient units in two new buildings with a central wood-pellet heating system have replaced older, substandard rental housing at Olivia Place in Lyndon, named in memory of RuralEdge employee Olivia Beleau.

“The town of Lyndon has a priority to reinvest in the downtown — and a new, vibrant, community-based site there falls right in with what the town is looking for,” said Becky Masure, project manager of Olivia Place for RuralEdge.

The distinctive buildings were developed by RuralEdge and Evernorth, in a partnership that made use of funding from the Vermont Community Development Program and tax-credit equity invested by TD Bank, along with VHCB and Housing Revenue Bond funds.

“The Northeast Kingdom has historically had tenants with the lowest incomes in the state, so we haven’t seen a lot of income mixing,” added Patrick Shattuck, executive director of RuralEdge. “We truly do have a very diverse mix of residents in this Main Street project, from folks who were homeless to folks who are market rate.”

In the Kingdom, with pressure from a tightening rental market and the conversion of rental units into second homes driving a dramatic increase in homelessness, “we have seen the vacancy rate go from 10% to about 1.25 percent,” Shattuck added. “There’s just nothing out there, and it’s no longer affordable. We know how important affordable housing is, and never has it been as important as during this pandemic.”



Before moving into Olivia Place in Lyndon, brothers Randall Mudge and Sanford Compton lived for about a year in a substandard St. Johnsbury apartment. “We ended up doing a year without hot water, a shower, heat, or a real lock on the door — we had to stack things in front of it,” said Randy, who works at a local gas station while his brother is employed in manufacturing in Morrisville.

“Living at Olivia Place is transformative. Our lives have gotten infinitely better. We’re able to be clean and warm. We haven’t been sick at all since we got here. It’s a lot safer, and it’s nice and quiet. It’s wonderful.”

— Randall Mudge



Olivia Place, Lyndon

“It’s a nice place, very friendly and right next to the lake and the woods. The views are amazing, and it’s so child-friendly that my son can run around outside. There’s a backyard, and a park right next to the complex. It’s everything we’ve dreamed of.”

—Abdul Sumaila



The four housing developments profiled here were supported by Housing Revenue Bond funds. Proposed by Governor Scott and approved by the Legislature in 2017, the \$37 million Housing Revenue Bond provided a tremendous boost to the economy, leveraging \$198 million in other funding, creating jobs, and resulting in 843 new and rehabilitated homes in 23 communities across the state. The bond funds allowed for residents at a wide range of incomes to be served, encompassing working families with moderate incomes struggling to find affordable housing and resulting in mixed-income housing developments, a model that is consistent with state housing policy.



Jude Domski photo

### Lake Paran Village, Shaftsbury

Bennington County has a .4% rental vacancy rate, and this mixed-income 22-unit development filled up quickly when it opened in the fall. “Thanks to VHCB, this is the most mixed-income development that we’ve had in our portfolio,” said Stephanie Lane, executive director of Shires Housing, which developed Lake Paran Village with Housing Revenue Bond funds.

Common green spaces, open front porches, walkways and a walking-path connector to the beach at nearby Lake Paran foster a sense of community at Lake Paran Village, and it is close to public transportation and within walking distance of North Bennington, with its Village School, Head Start program and recreation facilities. Previous VHCB funding helped conserve the lake recreation area and the nearby Robert Frost Museum property, and Lake Paran Village residents have access to both.

The new one-, two- and three-bedroom units are highly energy efficient. “We decided to step this up significantly,” Stephanie Lane said. “So we used some new technology, like AeroBarrier insulation for air sealing and frost-protected shallow foundations. By the time we finished these envelopes, three of our four buildings performed better than passive houses.” The Passive House Standard is a leading indicator of energy efficiency in homes.

Abdul Sumaila and his three-year-old son moved into Lake Paran Village shortly after it opened. “It’s a nice place, very friendly and right next to the lake and the woods,” said Abdul, a community support provider for adults with developmental disabilities in Bennington. “The views are amazing, and it’s so child-friendly that my son can run around outside.

“There’s a backyard, and a park right next to the complex,” he added. “It’s everything we’ve dreamed of.”

◀ Inside the iconic 1870 Putnam Hotel at the four corners in the heart of Bennington, where Shires and Evernorth are developing 12 affordable homes in a public-private partnership to create new housing, retail and commercial space.



## Farmland Conservation: Support and Assistance for New Generations

New generations bring fresh ideas, energy and commitment to Vermont farming, through both intergenerational succession and new farmers coming onto the land. This year VHCB collaborated with a number of partners to help young farmers and multi-generational farm families make positive strides, even through the challenges of a pandemic.

With support from the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Initiative and federal Coronavirus Relief funds, VHCB's Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program expanded its services to help 524 working lands businesses respond to needs caused by the pandemic, offering business coaching and assistance applying for federal relief funds. The Viability Program assists new, young and entrepreneurial working lands businesses as well as retiring farm and forestland owners establish or expand their enterprises, or transfer assets to the next generation. Land conservation is an important tool to make farm properties affordable to the next generation while also protecting Vermont's agricultural land, helping strengthen our local food system, and improving water quality.

### Last Resort Farm, Monkton

Sam Burr and Eugenie Doyle have run this 272-acre family farm since 1986, first as a conventional dairy and since 1998 as a certified organic hay and produce operation. They conserved their farm in 1992 through Vermont Land Trust and the Addison County Community Trust. Last year's VHCB award of \$130,000 for an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) will help maintain the farm's affordability for future purchasers, and it includes water-quality protections for three wetlands and Pond Brook, which runs through the property.

Business planning assistance from the Viability Program is helping the family transition ownership and management to Sam and Eugenie's son, Silas Doyle-Burr. They enrolled in the Viability Program and were matched with advisor Richard Wiswall through the Northeast Organic Farming Association-VT to work together on succession planning.

The farm now raises 90 acres of hay for sale, collects maple sap from more than 1,200 taps, and cultivates 20 acres of small fruit, vegetables, cover crops and hemp. The proceeds of the OPAV transaction, Eugenie said, "could go for equipment, building infrastructure and possibly a commercial kitchen, because Silas has really expanded production."

### Old Road Farm, Granville

Gabby Tuite and Henry Webb are a young couple who each built skills and knowledge working at Vermont farms, then started their own small operation raising garlic and winter rye in 2015 on just a quarter acre in Monkton. They turned to the Vermont Land Trust's Farmland Access Program to help them find a property where they could develop a new farm that would be viable for the long term.



▲ At Last Resort Farm in Monkton, owners Eugenie Doyle and Sam Burr are in the process of transferring ownership to their son, Silas, working with VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability Program.

"Right now, Silas owns the business and we own the real estate, Sam still does a large amount of the tractor work, and I do a lot of marketing and sales and run the pick-your-own operation. We will turn things over [to Silas] entirely in a year and a half."

— Eugenie Doyle



▲ Henry Webb and Gabby Tuite were able to purchase the conserved Old Road Farm in Granville for their established vegetable business.

The summer community has been the main customer base of the farmstand, and they came out. So we had a really successful year."  
—Brenden Beer



▲ Brenden and Lindsay Beer opened the Wilson Farm Market on their farm in Greensboro, selling ice cream, locally grown produce, and their own herbal teas, tonics, and elixirs.

Kyle Gray photo

“With the help of Vermont Land Trust we are now on our forever farm in Granville,” the couple report on their farm’s website, “in a beautiful river valley on prime agricultural soils. We specialize in growing fresh, high quality salad greens and seasonal vegetables for local markets with a deep commitment to the highest standards of ecologically sound, regenerative, and innovative vegetable production.”

“We started doing three different farmers markets, the first couple years. We had some good seasons,” Gabby said. But then this spring the farmers market where they expected to sell their greens and produce did not open.

“It was rough, but we were able to pivot,” she said.

VHCB’s Viability Program helped, pairing Henry and Gabby with Sam Smith, an advisor at the Intervale Center for business planning assistance and for help navigating the land conservation deal with the Vermont Land Trust that was funded by VHCB and federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. They established a 65-member CSA [community-supported agriculture] that they’re hoping to expand and they’ve also kept up a wholesale contract with the Middlebury Food Coop, which features their packaged salad greens.

“It seems like the demand for local produce has gone up with the pandemic, with people wanting to shorten their food chain and support local businesses,” Gabby said.

## Wilson Farm, Greensboro

In summer 2019, with support from VHCB and the Vermont and Greensboro land trusts, young farmers Brenden and Lindsay Beer were able to buy the former Hazendale Farm, a local landmark in the center of Greensboro.

“The farm has a rich history of organic vegetable farming and had provided the greater community with fresh produce, berries and local goods for over 30 years,” says the website for the Beers’ new operation, Wilson Farm. “We are excited to carry on the tradition of farming the land by expanding our herb production, opening a farm market to the community and building our apothecary to continue providing and supporting the growth of alternative medicine.”

This year was the Beers’ first growing season — and they did well, Brenden said, through wholesale sales of the medicinal herbs they’re producing. Thanks to funding from VHCB’s Farm & Forest Viability Program, he said, “we worked with the Center for an Agricultural Economy, out of Hardwick, and through the Vermont Community Loan Fund we obtained a loan for capital and infrastructure improvements.”

The Beers have launched Wilson Farm Apothecary, a line of high-quality herbal teas, tonics and elixirs that they hand-craft in small batches. And in the warm months they operated the Wilson Farm Market, scooping ice cream and selling their products along with produce grown on nearby farms.

“We opened up with guidance in terms of capacity and masks required — and as summer went on, everyone respected the rules,” Brenden said. “The summer community has been the main customer base of the farmstand, and they came out. So we had a really successful year.”



Amanda Guazzoni photo

### Fairmont Farm, East Montpelier and Craftsbury

Founded in 1992 as a combination of three well-established family dairy farms, Fairmont Farms today is an intergenerational operation owned by Richard and Bonnie Hall and their nephew, Tucker Purchase, and run by 10 family members and 30 employees. The team milks 1,400 Holsteins and crops some 3,600 acres in the two separate communities — and through a conservation easement this year, they protected 201 acres in East Montpelier while providing trail access for an important segment of the Cross Vermont Trail between East Montpelier and Marshfield.

The conservation project was supported by a number of partners, including VHCB, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Town of East Montpelier, with additional funding provided by The Nature Conservancy through a grant from Green Mountain Keurig.

The family also enrolled in the Viability Program and worked with UVM Extension on business planning for diversification, establishing a new farm market enterprise where they sell beef, pork, lamb and Cabot Dairy Products.

Early adopters of no-till planting and cover cropping, Fairmont Farm continues to upgrade its practices to protect water quality and improve nutrient management. This year with a \$20,000 VHCB Water Quality Grant, and matching funds from the farm and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, the operation has purchased new innovative injection technology that applies manure more efficiently than spreading and reduces soil compaction and nutrient loss.

“This is able to make us more accurate in what we’re doing, and hit our fertilizer recommendations better — which will also help us reduce our outside fertilizer needs,” said Clara Ayer of the farm family.

“With no-till and cover crops, our soil got healthier because we were getting a lot less compaction, erosion and nutrient loss. So it makes perfect sense that if you improve on all those things, all of a sudden with the same resources you’re able to actually have a better crop.”

—Clara Ayer, Fairmont Farm





## Coronavirus Relief Funds: Creating New Housing and Improving Shelters

▲ The Chalet, a new shelter in West Brattleboro developed by the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust with support services provided by Groundworks Collaborative.

### Acting Quickly, Saving Lives

Vermont's decision to use federal Coronavirus Relief funds to address immediate needs as well as the long-standing shortage of affordable housing and to prioritize the health and safety of citizens experiencing homelessness has been recognized by housing advocates nationally as a life-saving response during the pandemic.

### Federal CARES Act Funding

- \$32.9 million in federal CARES Act funding for housing
- 26 sites in 20 towns
- 247 homes developed or rehabilitated
- Improvements to 12 shelters housing 253 people experiencing homelessness

As the pandemic drove a surge of homelessness across Vermont, the Legislature turned in mid-year to VHCB to manage \$34.25 million in federal funds allotted through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act. The aim was to keep people safe while also securing and rehabilitating permanent housing for households experiencing homelessness, and to make virus-protecting improvements in shelters.

With congregate housing unable to meet CDC safety protocols, by mid-March most Vermont shelters had closed and more than 2,000 Vermonters were reported homeless, with many in emergency housing in hotels and motels. By early August, VHCB had committed \$30 million in CARES funding to shelters and to Vermont's network of nonprofit housing developers. More funds were committed in early October, and by year's end work was complete or underway at 26 sites in 20 towns.

Nonprofit shelter operators have used the funds to make a wide range of safeguarding improvements, and four motels have been purchased to create new homes with support services for people transitioning to permanent housing; a fifth is in use as an isolation and quarantine site to help address and prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Vermont. Shelter staff have also been able to expand and strengthen partnerships that enhance services for Vermonters experiencing homelessness.

"We've kind of pivoted from just providing shelter, housing and services to really working with our community and statewide partners to get people permanently housed," Elizabeth Ready, chief financial officer for John Graham Housing & Services in Vergennes, told the Addison Independent. "That's been the big push at John Graham, and for the state of Vermont."

### STEPS Shelter, Colchester

In Chittenden County, even as the number of people served by the nonprofit Steps to End Domestic Violence (STEPS) increased by more than 50%, the pandemic required a reduction in the already-low number of women and families using its small shelter for safe refuge from violent homes. "The pandemic has only heightened this need and made it more urgent," said Nicole Kubon, executive director of STEPS.

Working with STEPS, the Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) used CARES Act funding granted by VHCB to buy and renovate the former Handy's

Extended Stay Suites in Colchester, establishing a new shelter that can provide safety to up to 21 households, with capacity for both individuals and families with children. The new facility also becomes the home office for STEPS, allowing the organization to provide all services on site for the first time.

“The Champlain Housing Trust and STEPS have been working towards finding a new home for STEPS for a couple of years now,” said Michael Monte, CHT’s new chief executive officer. “CHT was pleased to be able to step in and support this critical community organization.”

The new facility triples their capacity and STEPS is taking a new approach: Instead of keeping the location secret as in the past, it has enhanced security and is letting the community know the shelter is there.

“Our older shelter was very much under wraps,” noted Lindsey Hedges, a member of the direct service staff. “Having it not be a confidential location is almost bringing it out of the shadows, having more awareness that this is going on. It also brings a bit more dignity and autonomy to the residents. In the confidential location, someone couldn’t even order a pizza to their room.

“The new shelter is really exciting,” she added. “The hope is that with a bigger space and all of us under the same roof, we’re going to be able to expand onsite services, and really expand the support network that we’re creating for people.”

### ANEW Place, Burlington

When it became clear in March that ANEW Place could no longer safely operate its low-barrier shelter on South Winooski Avenue, the nonprofit began improvising. With city and state help, it emptied the shelter and moved the residents into 26 newly rented campers at North Beach Campground.

The campers were in place through the end of May. “The city had already decided not to open North Beach Campground, so they agreed to let us use it as an organized camping area,” said Kevin Pounds, executive director of ANEW Place. “We ran it over the summer with about 30 tents on site.”

“The new shelter is really exciting. The hope is that with a bigger space and all of us under the same roof, we’re going to be able to expand onsite services, and really expand the support network that we’re creating for people.”

– Lindsey Hedges, advocate at STEPS, working with victims and survivors of domestic abuse



▲ ANEW staff members, left to right: Nicholas Soutiere, Linnie Miller, Heather Bush, David Berard, Ben Schnier. ANEW Place converted the Champlain Inn on the Shelburne Road in Burlington to a low-barrier shelter, serving up to 50 people year round. A house on the property provides space for on-site services, group meetings, and laundry facilities.



◀ Steps to End Domestic Violence has established a new shelter in a motel in Colchester purchased by the Champlain Housing Trust with federal Coronavirus Relief Funds granted by VHCB.



▲ Lindsey Hedges is a Housing Retention Specialist at STEPS' new shelter in Colchester.

The federal CARES Act funding became available in July, and ANEW applied for funding to create housing on a city-owned site on Sears Lane, but that proposal was turned down by VHCB at a meeting in August due to concerns about the proposed structures. Then as the cold weather approached, “we kind of had our backs against the wall,” Pounds said. With help from Champlain Housing Trust, he searched for a facility that had sufficient space, was close to services and public transportation, and could be quickly converted.

The Champlain Inn on Shelburne Road was the sole good prospect. It was not on the market, but owner Michael Riley agreed to sell. With support from the City of Burlington, Cathedral Square Corporation, CARES Act and state funding — “and from a lot of people and businesses in the neighborhood who’ve been incredibly supportive,” Pounds added — the new shelter was opened at year’s end, with on-site services.

The project fulfills a goal pursued since 2017 by Mayor Miro Weinberger, to secure a year-round, low-barrier shelter that can welcome and safely house virtually anyone experiencing homelessness.

“Low-barrier shelters save lives,” Mayor Weinberger observed.



▲ Former VHCB AmeriCorps member Jennifer Hunt, above, and second-year member Luna Shen, below, are serving with homeless shelters in Brattleboro and Vergennes during the pandemic.



## VHCB AmeriCorps Members Providing Services in Shelters During the Pandemic

VHCB AmeriCorps is a national service project that places 34 AmeriCorps members with affordable housing, land conservation and environmental organizations around Vermont. Among the AmeriCorps members serving with shelter organizations in 2020 were Jennifer Hunt with Groundworks Collaborative in Brattleboro, and Luna Shen with John Graham Housing & Services in Vergennes.

In Brattleboro, “I was the volunteer and service coordinator at the food shelf,” Jennifer said. “We had to close our doors to people coming in, but we set up a delivery program where we would pack boxes with food for people, then deliver those.” After completing her term of service in the VHCB AmeriCorps program, Jennifer was hired on by Groundworks. “Now I’m working as a shelter advocate, in one of the shelters VHCB has provided funds for.”

In summer and fall, Luna was delivering meals to clients housed in hotels and motels around Addison County. Now she’s helping many of those folks apply for permanent housing.

“Something I’ve really noticed is a lot of folks’ patience,” she said. “I see people calm, collected, communicating well. There’s psychological heaviness, with the pandemic and with people who aren’t in situations where they’re at home and secure — and I admire their character.”

# Coronavirus Relief Funding Awards

**Barre** - Downstreet Housing & Community Development, in collaboration with Norwich University, added a second tiny home to a site they own, serving an individual previously experiencing homelessness.

The Good Samaritan Haven, a shelter serving 250 guests annually, added a bathroom, improved ventilation, added touchless fixtures, new flooring, a washer and dryer, and will install a patio to create an outdoor social distancing area.

**Bennington** - Shires Housing rehabilitated 15 vacant apartments at Applegate to be rented to households experiencing homelessness. Support services will be provided in partnership with the Sunrise Family Resource Center.

**Bradford** - At Whistlestop Mobile Home Park, Downstreet Housing & Community Development will place three new zero-energy modular homes. In coordination with the local continuum of care, Downstreet will rent the homes to households experiencing homelessness.

Veterans, Inc., serving homeless male veterans with transitional housing and support services, added ventilation units, touchless fixtures and appliances.

**Brattleboro** - Groundworks Collaborative is building a new, seasonal shelter with 20 beds on South Main Street that will also serve as a year-round day program for people experiencing homelessness and provide administrative space. They will add bed partitions, touchless faucets, and upgrade ventilation in the kitchen. At their existing 12-bed shelter on Royal Road, Groundworks converted office space to a new bedroom, adding 4 beds, improving ventilation, and adding touchless fixtures.

**Bristol** - In partnership with the Addison County Community Trust, the John Graham Shelter has purchased three zero-energy modular homes to place at a mobile home park that will be rented to homeless households.

**Burlington** - ANEW Place purchased the Champlain Inn and will offer free rooms year-round, housing up to 50 people in the 33-unit motel. A home on the property will provide space for on-site services, group meetings, and laundry facilities.

The Committee on Temporary Shelter added touchless fixtures and acrylic barriers at the Daystation and the Housing Resource Center on North Avenue, and at the Waystation and the Wilson on Lower Church Street, also adding a bathroom at the Wilson.

**Colchester** - The Champlain Housing Trust purchased Handy's Extended Stay Suites on Route 15 where Steps to End Domestic Violence has established a new shelter serving up to 21 households escaping domestic and sexual violence, with capacity for both individuals and families with children.

**Essex Junction** - The Champlain Housing Trust converted the former Baymont Inn & Suites to Susan's Place, with 68 permanent apartments for people moving out of homelessness.

**Hardwick** - The Lamoille Housing Partnership will purchase and install two zero-energy modular homes at Evergreen Manor mobile home park. In coordination with the local continuum of care, LHP will rent the homes to households experiencing homelessness.

**Hartford** - The Upper Valley Haven, a shelter serving 14,500 people per year, installed touchless fixtures, automatic doors, and bed dividers for social distancing in the Byrne Family Shelter and Services Building and the Hixon Adult Shelter.

**Middlebury** - Evernorth purchased Weybridge Street Apartments, reserving four apartments for households experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.

The Charter House Coalition will renovate their shelter, installing a ventilation system, reconfiguring the interior, constructing an outdoor pavilion for social distancing, and relocating the Day Station across the street, adding a guest laundry.

**Morrisville** - Clarina Howard Nichols Center, a shelter for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence, renovated 4 bathrooms and added a fifth, replaced flooring, and improved ventilation.

**Randolph** - Clara Martin Center Safe Haven, a 6-bed transitional living residence for homeless individuals with mental illness, installed touchless doors and bathroom fixtures and repaired and upgraded porches to expand the area for social distancing.

**Rutland** - The Rutland Housing Authority purchased a building on Woodstock Avenue and rehabilitated it to provide 9 apartments with support services for households experiencing homelessness.

NewStory Center, a family shelter serving victims of domestic and sexual violence, added a ventilation system, touchless fixtures and doors, a dishwasher, renovated bathrooms, replaced flooring, and expanded a deck to create a 3-season room for social distancing.

**St. Albans** - Samaritan House, providing emergency shelter, transitional housing, and support services to individuals experiencing homelessness, made accessibility improvements, added a bedroom, touchless fixtures, and a ventilation system, and renovated 2 bathrooms.

**St. Johnsbury** - Rural Edge has rehabilitated 5 previously vacant apartments to be rented to households experiencing homelessness.

**South Burlington** - The Champlain Housing Trust purchased the Ho Hum Motel on the Williston Road, with up to 34 rooms for an isolation and quarantine site to help address and prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Vermont.

**Vergennes** - The John Graham Shelter added new flooring, countertops, touchless fixtures, dishwashers, two new bathrooms, acrylic dividers, and a ventilation system.

**West Brattleboro** - The Windham & Windsor Housing Trust purchased Dalem's Chalet and is rehabilitating the former motel to create 27 permanent homes with on-site supportive services to be coordinated by Groundworks Collaborative. The site will allow for additional housing development over time.

## **Windham and Southern Windsor Counties**

The Women's Freedom Center, providing services and shelter to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, added ventilation systems to three buildings.



Erika Mitchell/LCLT photo

## Land Conservation for Human and Natural Communities

▲ Close to downtown Burlington, the trails at Rock Point offer a deep woods experience with views of Lake Champlain on conserved land owned by the Episcopal Church of Vermont.

Public use of recreational land, from hiking to hunting to cross-country skiing and more, increased dramatically during the pandemic year. “The saving grace was the outdoors,” noted Abby Long, executive director of the Kingdom Trails Association, one of several nonprofits that completed land protection or acquisition projects in 2020 with VHCB support. “People were able to socialize and be with each other safely, outside. And with the mental soothing it brought during a very stressful time, people really saw the value of preserving that experience.”

### Rock Point Peninsula, Burlington

Thanks to a multi-partner effort that began more than 30 years ago, this spectacularly scenic and ecologically diverse peninsula just north of downtown Burlington is conserved forever, with public trails that link to the city bikepath.

The 94-acre Rock Point lands are owned by the Episcopal Church in Vermont, which has maintained a retreat center there with walking trails for a century and a half. Next door is the city’s 30-acre Arms Forest — and in 1998 a Rock Point board member wrote to the Lake Champlain Land Trust (LCLT), suggesting they work together to conserve the church’s land. This past year that became a reality, when the LCLT purchased a conservation easement on most of Rock Point with support from VHCB, the church, the city, the Parks Foundation of Burlington and more than 100 individual donors.

Coupled with a 20-acre easement the land trust secured in 2017, the project completes the conservation and public access project, with newly reinforced and safeguarded walking trails that “are built to last,” said Chris Boget, executive director of LCLT.

“It’s a natural area with dozens of rare species, rare natural communities, a variety of habitats, and a very beautiful old-growth feel,” he said, “from the natural sandy beach, which is rare on Lake Champlain, to the cedar-pine forest topping the limestone cliffs.

Anyone can use the trails, with a free trail pass from the church. “Social justice is a very important part of this project,” Boget noted. “You’re getting off the bike path and doing this trail loop, and it could be deep woods anywhere in Vermont; yet you’re in the city. It’s just a gorgeous spot.”





## Darling Ridge at Kingdom Trails, Lyndon

The Kingdom Trails network — more than 100 miles of recreation trails on public and private lands in four Northeast Kingdom towns — attracted 137,536 total visits in 2018, and altogether generates \$10 million annually in estimated economic impact for the region. When the 229-acre Darling Ridge property in the midst of the trail system suddenly came on the market in 2019, a VHCB grant to conserve the property jumpstarted a fundraising campaign by the Kingdom Trails Association and Vermont Land Trust.

“We teamed up,” said Liza Walker of the land trust. “We knew the budget was fairly large, and that community fundraising would be essential. We’ve received 648 gifts, from 645 individuals.” Altogether, the partners raised over \$600,000 in a successful effort to purchase the property.

“What’s amazing is that all this happened in a pandemic,” added Abby Long, executive director of Kingdom Trails.

“The Darling Hill site is in the heart of the Kingdom Trails system,” noted Jody Fried, executive director for Catamount Arts and a board member of the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative, a cross-sector strategic planning effort. Catamount Arts often cross-promotes events with Kingdom Trails, he said, and “it’s been tremendously beneficial to the creative sector, which is about 10% of our economy in the Kingdom, to have that relationship.”

## Huntington Community Forest, Huntington

A state-funded grant program recently enabled 10 Vermont towns to do some planning for community forests. As a result, the Huntington Conservation Commission identified a 245-acre property, adjacent to the local school with a trail network, riparian areas, a river corridor and rich, diverse wildlife habitat, as the ideal site for a new town forest. It set about raising funds to acquire the property.

“We had a great deal of participation. Every public meeting we’ve had for this project has been standing-room only,” said Barrett Grimm, co-chair of the Conservation Commission. “The first one we had, in the library, we literally ran out of chairs.”

Beginning in mid-2019, the Trust for Public Land partnered with the local group to meet the project’s goal for private fundraising. At Town Meeting in March this past year, 89% of voters approved a town bond issue for the project. The next weekend, the pandemic hit and “everything shut down,” Grimm noted. “So we got in just under the wire.” Other funding included a \$50,000 grant from L.L. Bean.

Volunteers have been building trails, and the Brewster-Pierce Memorial School will use the community forest as an outdoor classroom.

“I had the opportunity to walk the property with the principal, and she used words like ‘transformative,’” Grimm said. “To see the students, out at recess working on their outdoor education, is really exciting for the town.”

- ▶ Photos, from top: Darling Ridge, Bikers at Heaven's Bench, Kingdom Trails; Brewster-Pierce Memorial School children at Huntington town forest.  
photos courtesy of Kingdom Trails and Brewster-Pierce Memorial School



During the pandemic, "the saving grace was the outdoors. People were able to socialize and be with each other safely, outside. And with the mental soothing it brought during a very stressful time, people really saw the value of preserving that experience."

— Abby Long, executive director,  
Kingdom Trails Association



▼ Windham County has a new nature preserve at Deer Run. When complete, the reserve will include more than 900 acres of conserved woodland and 2.5 miles of frontage on the West River. The Green Mountain Conservancy is developing trails on the first acquisition of 287 acres.



### Deer Run Nature Preserve, Dummerston, Brookline and Newfane

The Green Mountain Conservancy is working on the second phase of land acquisition for the new nature preserve, which will total 913 acres where the three towns meet in Windham County. The preserve will span both sides of the Putney Mountain Ridge, with more than 2.5 miles of West River shoreline that curves around the southern end of the mountain. Vermont Land Trust and VHCB will co-hold conservation easements on the property.

"The project is going to preserve a tremendous amount of important ecological features — uncommon species, uncommon natural community types, wildlife habitats, well-connected forestland, headwater streams, vernal pools, and seeps," said Jennifer Garrett, regional stewardship manager for Vermont Land Trust, which worked with the Conservancy on the project. "It also has features that provide ecological function that's significant at the statewide level, interior forest and riparian habitat connectivity."

"The area continues to serve as wintering habitat for deer — but just as importantly, it provides quality habitat for a great many other species," reported Forrest Hammon, a state wildlife biologist, in a letter to the Conservancy.

"Phase 1 was 287 acres, and we raised about \$225,000 last year for that, including \$150,000 from VHCB. We had about 60 individual donors," said Ed Anthes, treasurer for the Conservancy. "While we were raising money for that, an adjacent property became available, an additional 626 acres. So we have an additional 150 donors on that piece."

"It's rare to have large parcels in this part of the state any more," added Mary Ellen Copeland, the Conservancy's board chair. "So we're really committed to this. There's a trail on the Phase One parcel, and our trailbuilder has already scouted out the trails on Phase Two." Two additional landowners have also committed to conserving adjacent land, she said; that would bring the total conserved area to over 1,000 acres.

## Habitat for Humanity: A home for new Americans



Emma Cotton/VTDigger photo

▲ Clockwise from top left, Hazar Mansour, Hussam Alhallak, holding Danyal, Mohammad, and Layan on the front porch of their new Habitat home in Rutland.

### VHCB Support

Since 1987, VHCB has supported Habitat for Humanity and Vocational Education Programs, providing \$3.02 million towards the costs of purchasing land and securing the mortgages of 133 homes with permanent affordability restrictions.

In January 2015, Hussam Alhallak, his wife Hazar Mansour and their two young children fled their home in Damascus, Syria after living through almost four years of civil war.

“My kids were scared for everything — for bombs, guns, all the time going to the basement.” Hussam said. “I told my wife, ‘No more, no more, no more.’ Just to save their lives.”

The family lived as refugees for two years in Turkey, then secured a chance to come to the U.S. In January 2017, just before the Trump Administration dramatically cut the number of refugees permitted to enter the country, Alhallak, Mansour and their kids arrived in Rutland, Vermont. Last September, they joined 25 friends and Habitat for Humanity volunteers in a celebration of their new home at 120 Crescent Street.

“We miss our parents, Hazar and me,” Hussam told the gathering, according to VTDigger.com. “But when I see these very nice people — I don’t know how to explain it. It’s like our family.”

Some 145 Habitat volunteers worked on the home, with a number of local businesses donating time and materials. Rutland City had sold the property to Habitat for one dollar after the previous house there burned down. Hussam and Hazar are both accountants: she works for the Rutland public schools, and he’s at Casella Waste Systems. Before it commits to a project, Habitat requires that at least 75% of the funds needed for construction be in hand — and after Hussam’s fellow Casella employees together contributed over \$15,000, company owner John Casella matched that.

“Casella put us over the mark,” said Eric Solsaa, president of Habitat for Humanity of Rutland County and owner of Solsaa Building and Energy Solutions in Rutland.

“We are a service company, but we need to be of service to each other first,” Casella told VTDigger.

Hussam and Hazar now have a third child, born during their time in Turkey, and since arriving in Rutland they’d been squeezed into a small apartment. They both found their jobs after earning their accounting certification at the Community College of Vermont, and they met Habitat’s guidelines for fiscal responsibility.

“They are good with their finances, they respect not carrying debt,” Eric Solsaa said. “It just happened that the Alhallaks were the best candidate.”

After the pandemic hit last spring, construction on the home shut down for a time, then resumed under strict controls. “We could only have a couple people working at a time,” Solsaa said. “Our core volunteers were all over 70, and some of them — all of them almost — put in over 600 hours. The last two months, they really stepped up.”

Hussam and Hazar contributed well over the 200 hours of labor required of new Habitat homeowners. They were able to buy the home with a zero-interest mortgage.

“We love it!” Hussam said. “My kids and my wife, especially my baby. All the time he is flying and running — he likes it very much.”

For the September celebration, Hazar prepared an array of Syrian food, and Charlotte Tuttle, whose family lived in the former home on the property for 31 years, presented the family with a quilt she had made.

“Thank you to everyone who helped me to build this house,” Hussam told the gathering, according to the Rutland Herald. “Thank you to everyone in the nation for this house.”

“It was a really happy day,” he recalled later. “All my friends came.”



Emma Cotton/VT Digger photo

“The reporter from the Rutland Herald called me. She said, ‘Do you know about the Casella group’s donation for your new house?’ I said, ‘No, tell me please!’ She said John Casella has matched this money. I’m very surprised, and I’m very glad!”

— Hussam Alhallak, Habitat homeowner and accountant with Casella Waste Systems



There are 11 Habitat for Humanity affiliates in Vermont. The chapters organize home builds—finding land, lining up volunteers, and securing contributions of time and materials from area businesses. In addition to a down payment and monthly mortgage payments, homeowners are required to contribute hundreds of hours of their own labor to building their new home.

◀ At the dedication ceremony, the Alhallaks were presented with a beautiful quilt made by Charlotte Tuttle, whose family had lived on this site until the house burned down. The City donated the lot to Habitat.



Welcome to  
Memorial Hall  
Swim Area

## Historic preservation: Saving two treasured community halls

Preservation projects that revive historic community halls give new life, and a wide range of community-building new uses, to buildings that have been close to their town's heart for generations. Two excellent current examples are the local efforts to restore and revitalize Broad Brook Community Center in Guilford and Memorial Hall in Calais, two beloved halls that both date to the same year, 1896.

This account of these two projects was prepared by Meg Campbell of the Preservation Trust of Vermont:

► The Broad Brook Community Center will add an elevator during renovations, making the historic building, built in 1896, accessible to all residents of Guilford.

"The building has always been under-utilized, because of its deficiencies – and it's the most beloved building in town. It's never been at its potential, and it will be when we're done. There will be a lot more going on.

– Don McLean, president,  
Broad Brook  
Community Center, Inc.



### Broad Brook Community Center, Guilford

Gail Nunziata recalls that at many of Guilford's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebratory events in 2011, watching elderly members of their community ascend the stairs to the second floor theater space of the Broad Brook Grange was painful. The Broad Brook Grange, built by townspeople in 1896, that had been for so many years the center of the social community of this small southeastern town was not equally serving all its residents.

Still, enthusiasm for the town's community was at an all-time high following the celebrations. So residents of Guilford invited the Vermont Council on Rural Development to do a community visit to help articulate and shape their vision for the future.

One thing that the process identified was that the Grange building was the number one asset of the town. Yet the financial structure of the Grange limited their ability to fundraise for capital improvements. Through a series of meetings and the wise counsel of former Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) President Paul Bruhn, a new group was formed that purchased the property in 2018 (granting the Grange forever use of the building), and the Broad Brook



Jude Domski photos

Community Center was born. Their phased approach to fundraising and renovations — all while keeping it open and operating — helped build enthusiasm and support for their ambitious plans.

A typical year now sees a healthy schedule of events including dances, community suppers, potlucks, game nights, theater, an apple pie social and more. During the pandemic, the Guilford Food Pantry has used it as a distribution hub and the Broad Brook Community Center has made free wi-fi available from the safe space in the parking lot.

A \$60,000 VHCB award along with \$1.3 million in other funds, including a \$100,000 Bruhn Revitalization grant from the Preservation Trust of Vermont, will restore significant historic features and finally help address the needed code improvements to make the building — and the second floor theater space — safe and accessible for all.

## Memorial Hall, North Calais

The residents of Calais have a remarkable track record of saving historic buildings: the Old West Church, Robinson Saw Mill, Maple Corner Community Center, and the Calais Town Hall. So when the big white building located on a promontory overlooking Mirror Lake (known locally as Number 10 Pond) was condemned in 2014, members of the community, with a treasure trove of important skills, eagerly stepped up.

Built as a Grand Army of the Republic Post in 1886, Memorial Hall served for generations as the place to honor veterans, but also for dances, graduation ceremonies, birthday parties, plays, and more. With the help of a small Robert Sincerbeaux Fund grant from PTV to help with fundraising planning, the North Calais Memorial Hall Association raised enough money to demonstrate their preparedness to revitalize the building, and then received transfer of ownership from the Hall's previous stewards, the Women's Relief Corps.

A VHCB award of \$130,000, together with locally raised funds and a Bruhn Revitalization Grant of \$100,000 will support structural and electrical work, kitchen upgrades, neglected maintenance, and a new paint job. A separate accessibility grant will help with ramps and an elevator. North Calais will soon have its community gem back!

◀ Movers and shakers behind the North Calais Memorial Hall Association seated in the dance hall on the second floor of the historic building that has hosted countless veterans events, dances, graduation ceremonies, birthday parties, plays, and other events over the years. VHCB funding is helping to restore historic features, address structural deficiencies, and improve safety and accessibility. Three acres around the building with 2,000 feet of frontage on the pond will be conserved, with special protections for sensitive shoreline and permanent public access for swimming provided for in the conservation easement.

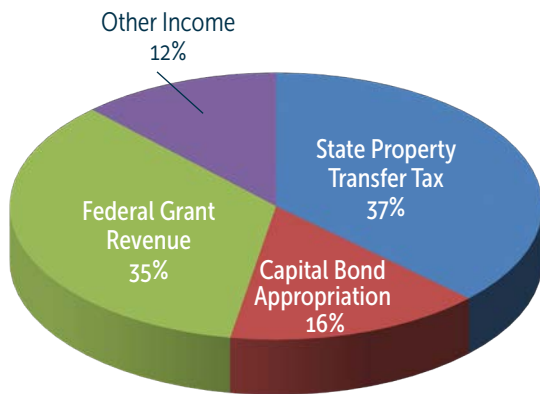


Tim Seaver photo

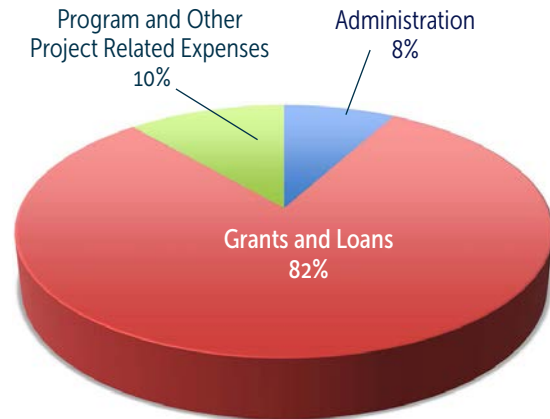


Calais Lakes and Streams Committee photo

## Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Fiscal Year 2020



Resources  
\$29,094,644



Expenditures  
\$37,904,568\*

\*Expenditures include use of prior year revenues, including Housing Revenue Bond issued in January 2018.  
Audited financial statements are available upon request.

### \$57.8 Million in Federal funds Awarded by VHCB in FY20 & FY21

Over FY20 & FY21 to date, VHCB has administered \$57.8 million in federal funding for programs to develop housing, increase affordability, reduce lead paint hazards, add support services, and leverage state and private dollars for land conservation and to support working lands enterprises with business planning and technical assistance.

**CARES Act Funding:** \$33.09 million for new housing and improvements to shelters

**Natural Resources Conservation Service:** \$8 million for farmland conservation

**Lead Paint Hazard Abatement Funding:** \$2.3 million

**VHCB AmeriCorps:** \$800,000 to place 34 AmeriCorps members statewide

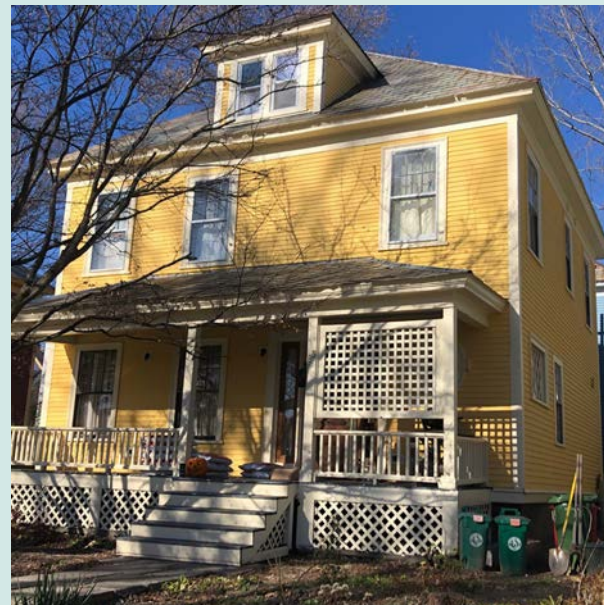
**HOME Program:** \$5.4 million to increase the affordability of rental housing

**National Housing Trust Fund:** \$6 million for housing serving very low-income residents

**Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS:** \$956,000

**Northern Borders Regional Commission:** \$788,000

**USDA Rural Development:** \$237,000



▲ VHCB's Healthy & Lead-Safe Homes Program recently completed lead paint abatement work on this home on Green Street in Brattleboro. Operating since 1994, the program has utilized more than \$35 million in federal funding to improve 2,787 homes.

**Vermont Housing & Conservation Board**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**June 30, 2020**

	Restricted Funds	
	Trust Funds	Other Funds
<b>ASSETS:</b>		
Cash Accounts	\$ 8,776,132	\$ 16,739,826
Due from Other Funds	862,796	66,288
Due from the State of Vermont	412,500	4,604,476
Receivables and Prepays	47,231	72,467
Loans Receivables	150,805,483	82,164,117
Anticipated Grant Revenue	2,767,476	17,252,248
Grant Reimbursements Receivable	-	2,494,636
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$163,671,618</b>	<b>\$122,854,058</b>
<b>LIABILITIES and FUND BALANCES</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES:</b>		
Accounts Payable & Accruals	\$ 350,792	\$ 29,890
Due to Other Funds	366,112	562,971
Due to the State of Vermont	-	2,067,410
Deferred Revenue - Loans	150,805,483	81,617,421
Anticipated Grants Committed	2,767,477	17,252,247
Long-term Debt	-	546,695
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>154,289,864</b>	<b>102,076,634</b>
<b>FUND BALANCES:</b>		
Restricted for Project Awards	8,994,476	19,220,290
Restricted for Programs	387,278	1,557,134
<b>TOTAL FUND BALANCES</b>	<b>9,381,754</b>	<b>20,777,424</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; FUND BALANCES</b>	<b>\$ 163,671,618</b>	<b>\$ 122,854,058</b>

Audited financial statements are available upon request.



## Housing Awards

July 2019–December 2020

### **Addison County Community Trust**

2020 Organizational Grant. \$69,000 VHCBC award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Brattleboro Housing Authority**

Red Clover Commons II, Brattleboro. \$375,600 VHCBC award for development of 18 apartments for elderly and disabled residents on Fairground Road in the second phase of replacement housing constructed after Tropical Storm Irene flooded 80 apartments at Melrose Terrace, a public housing development in West Brattleboro. All homes will have project-based rental assistance and support services, including SASH. \$254,000 federal HOME Program award; \$674,400 National Housing Trust funding. Total development costs: \$6,126,930.

### **Cathedral Square Corporation**

Bayview Crossing, South Hero. \$750,000 VHCBC award for development of 30 service-enriched homes for adults 55 or over and persons with disabilities. The development will include a common area for residents, office space for C.I.D.E.R, a local service organization, and offices for SASH services with an on-site wellness nurse. \$600,000 federal HOME Program funding. Total development costs: \$9,639,000.

Family Support and Services at Home (SASH) Capacity. \$30,000 VHCBC award for planning over a nine-month period to create a two-year pilot program for service delivery to 200 families in central Vermont. Funds will be used to hire a part time temporary coordinator who will seek the input and engagement of residents to design a program that will address a spectrum of challenges, potentially including social determinants of health, food insecurity, the need for social engagement, stable employment, and access to reliable childcare. Funds will also support the development of a strategy for both short and long term funding for program implementation.

2020 Organizational Grant. \$21,433 VHCBC award and \$37,567 federal CHDO award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Champlain Housing Trust**

The Swanton School, Swanton. \$75,000 VHCBC award towards conversion of underutilized commercial space to add six apartments to the 16 existing apartments developed in the vacant schoolhouse in 2000. Total development costs: \$3,535,407 Dalton Drive Condominiums, Colchester. \$100,000 VHCBC to make capital repairs and improvements to 28 permanently affordable, resale restricted homeownership units in a condominium association with 77 homes in 19 buildings at Fort Ethan Allen. Total development costs: \$300,000.

Recovery Housing, Essex. \$600,000 VHCBC award to assist with refinancing and reconfiguring apartment buildings at Fort Ethan Allen to create 32 service-supported beds for individuals in recovery from substance use disorder. Resident services to be provided by the Vermont Foundation for Recovery (VFOR), a Vermont organization operating five recovery homes around the state. VFOR will staff each building with a program manager that works with residents in recovery. Total development costs: \$1,800,000

Stuart Avenue Apartments, Colchester. \$2,220,000 VHCBC award for development of 36 new family rental apartments to be constructed in a designated Growth Center at the intersection of Routes 2 and 127. The homes will be part of a larger community development project that will include more than 200 market rate apartments and condominiums, retail, commercial, and office space, restaurants, and a day care center. \$500,000 federal HOME Program funding; \$1,720,000 Housing Revenue Bond funds. Total development costs: \$11,717,100.

Harbor Place, Shelburne. \$50,000 VHCBC award refinance debt and make site improvements and building repairs to a motel with 59 rooms and one accessory

apartment. Harbor Place, in operation by CHT since 2013, is available as a motel to all members of the general public, but particularly serves very low-income people without a home. Total project cost: \$50,000.

Ethan Allen Condominiums, Essex. \$189,000 VHCBC award and \$189,000 Housing Revenue Bond funds to provide downpayment assistance for 19 homes at Fort Ethan Allen that will be rehabilitated and sold as condominiums. Total development costs: \$3,786,000.

2020 Organizational Grant. \$101,000 VHCBC award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **City of St. Albans**

Maiden Lane Redevelopment, St. Albans City. \$150,000 award of Housing Revenue Bond funds for costs associated with site work for new construction of affordable housing. Together, the Maiden Lane and Congress Street housing developments are a part of a larger downtown revitalization effort.

### **Downstreet Housing & Community Development**

Stimson & Graves, Waterbury. \$198,705 VHCBC award to rehabilitate 14 apartments for senior and disabled residents in a historic downtown building. Rehabilitation will address severely deteriorated windows and a heating system at the end of its useful life. Some apartments will have major upgrades including accessibility improvements. \$225,000 federal HOME Program funding. Total development costs: \$2,661,213.

Recovery Housing Initiative. Project capacity award of \$50,000 to support Downstreet in creating a streamlined rapid response to the urgent housing needs of people in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD). The project includes conducting a statewide housing needs assessment for people in recovery from SUD, supporting the Vermont Association of Recovery Residences (VTARR) which will certify participating recovery residences and coordinate

## Housing Awards

July 2019– December 2020

the delivery of services, and Downstreet creating a “toolkit” for statewide education and promotion of the model.

Franklin Square Condominiums, Montpelier. \$540,000 VHCB award for 10 homes in six buildings currently organized in two condominium associations. The two condominium associations will be combined, capital needs will be addressed, and the quality of the homes will be improved. Total development costs: \$1,076,130.

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$33,102 VHCB award and \$37,586 federal CHDO award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Downstreet Housing & Community Development and Evernorth**

Wells River Historic Housing, Newbury. \$761,250 VHCB award. Rehabilitation and refinancing of 29 family apartments in five centrally located historic buildings, including 9 apartments above eight street-level commercial spaces. Improvements will include roof replacement, exterior repairs and painting, energy upgrades, comprehensive renovations, and re-capitalized operating and replacement reserves. Rental assistance for 7 apartments to be prioritized for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. \$497,835 federal HOME Program funding; \$505,813 National Housing Trust Fund award. Total development costs: \$6,229,047.

### **Evernorth**

Affordable Homeownership Initiative, Windsor County. \$300,000 VHCB award for acquisition, rehabilitation, and resale of four single-family homes, addressing deferred maintenance and reducing high utility expenses to create high quality, energy efficient homeownership opportunities. Total development costs \$937,80.

New Avenue Apartments, St. Johnsbury. \$2,037,000 Housing Revenue Bond funds; \$843,000 National Housing Trust Funds for reconfiguration and rehabilitation of 40 apartments in a historic, central

downtown building with first floor commercial use. Total development costs: \$14,904,692

### **Good Samaritan Haven**

Homeless Housing Delivery Project Capacity, Barre. \$50,000 planning grant to restructure the system for housing the homeless in Central Vermont, employing consultants to guide the organization and creating an Advisory Committee of housing and social service partners to analyze the feasibility of creating new housing solutions.

### **Groundworks Collaborative**

54 South Main Street, Brattleboro. \$418,000 VHCB award and \$125,000 Housing Revenue Bond funds for development of a new, two-building campus under construction on South Main Street providing a day shelter and drop-in center, program and administrative offices, and a seasonal overflow shelter with up to 34 beds, bathrooms, showers, kitchen, laundry, and lockers for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. Supportive services and case management will be provided by Groundworks Collaborative and other partners. Total development costs: \$3,321,501.

### **HomeShare Vermont**

\$75,000 in Housing Revenue Bond funds for work with the City of Burlington’s Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) on a 3-year pilot program to develop standard designs for one-bedroom or efficiency apartments, either as separate buildings or additions to existing single family homes, to serve low-income and senior housing needs. HomeShare and CEDO will develop an outreach and educational campaign, pursue policy changes to facilitate the development of accessory apartments, provide technical assistance to homeowners, and perform marketing, screening, and matching of prospective tenants with the homeowners. The program is modeled after a successful effort in Brattleboro.

### **Housing Foundation Inc.**

Organizational Development grant. \$15,000 VHCB award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Housing Trust of Rutland County**

Lincoln Place, Rutland City. \$373,300 VHCB award to develop 19 affordable homes with support services at the long vacant Immaculate Heart of Mary school building. \$495,000 federal HOME Program award. \$631,348 National Housing Trust Fund award. Total development costs: \$5,734,816.

Hopkins Street Family Housing, Rutland. \$150,000 supplemental VHCB award to rehabilitate 12 apartments in five buildings, three of which are historic.

2020 Organizational Grant. \$39,433 VHCB award and \$37,567 federal CHDO award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Lamoille Housing Partnership**

Safford Commons, Woodstock. \$320,000 of Housing Revenue Bond funds for construction of 4 single-family homes in an existing development. Total development costs: \$1,399,490.

2020 Organizational Grant. \$59,000 VHCB award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Lamoille Housing Partnership and Evernorth**

Village Center Apartments, Morrisville. \$1,400,000 Housing Revenue Bond funding award for development of 24 apartments to be constructed off Portland Street in the heart of the downtown, in proximity to shopping, recreation, social and health care services, schools, entertainment, and public transportation. The apartments will be affordable to a broad range of incomes, including both moderate- and very low-income residents. \$585,000 federal HOME Program funding. Total development costs: \$7,576,300.

## Housing Awards

July 2019–December 2020

### **Milton Mobile Home Park Cooperative, Inc.**

Milton Mobile Home Cooperative, Milton. \$50,000 supplemental VHCB award for construction and related expenses for infrastructure upgrades to this 100-lot mobile home park on Kapica Lane. Total development costs: \$2,691,129.

### **Rural Edge**

Governor Prouty Apartments, Newport City. \$355,226 VHCB award to rehabilitate 12 apartments in a 24-unit development for elderly and/or disabled households. The work will include a new, energy efficient heating system and accessibility upgrades to meet current standards in two apartments as well as in the community room, community room renovation, window replacement, insulation, and site improvements. \$375,000 federal HOME Program funding. Total development costs: \$3,004,523.

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$67,000 VHCB award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Shires Housing**

Woodland Station Housing, Manchester. \$265,229 VHCB award for the rehabilitation of 27 units, featuring 20 two and three-bedroom units spread throughout four buildings in Manchester, and seven two and three-bedroom units in two buildings in Bennington. . \$940,494 National Housing Trust Funds. Total development costs: \$6,372,175.

Willows Mobile Home Park, Bennington. \$15,000 VHCB award for 4 net-zero, rental modular homes to be installed on vacant lots in the 23-lot park. Infrastructure upgrades to water and sewer systems, fencing and paving. \$285,206 Housing Revenue Bond funding. Total development costs: \$979,127.

Bennington Family Housing, 300 Pleasant St., Bennington. \$175,000 VHCB and \$140,000 Housing Revenue Bond funds award for acquisition and rehabilitation of 7 downtown apartments and the creation of two new homes and

program-related office space. Bennington Coalition for the Homeless will operate a family shelter owned by Shires. \$284,600 VHCB Land Bank Loan to bridge acquisition financing. Total development costs: \$2,734,898.

Organizational Development Grant. \$71,000 VHCB award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Tri-Park Mobile Home Cooperative**

Project Capacity, Brattleboro. \$50,000 VHCB award to hire a consultant and develop a scope of work to address infrastructure improvements for this 312-lot mobile home park.

### **Twin Pines Housing Trust**

Wentworth Community Housing Phase 2, Hartford. Second phase of construction, to develop 21 apartments on two sites, one four-unit building in the village of Wilder and the remaining 17 units in White River Junction on the site of a recent 30-unit development. Located on the bus route within the Designated Growth District, the development includes a playground, access to trails and woodlands, and new sidewalks. \$1,785,661 Housing Revenue Bond funds; \$204,339 HOME Program funding. Total development costs: \$6,525,027.

Organizational Development Grant. \$71,000 VHCB award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Vermont Community Loan Fund**

Organizational Development Grant. \$21,356 VHCB award for FY20 organizational development costs.

### **Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development**

\$40,000 VHCB award for a project to develop model municipal bylaws to help communities of varying sizes address barriers to the creation of affordable housing. Local governments will be able to update zoning requirements to encourage housing in already developed areas. Case studies of several communities, outreach to municipalities with identified

barriers to housing development, dissemination of the model bylaws, and technical assistance. Total project cost: \$91,000.

### **Washington County Mental Health**

90 Barre Street, Montpelier. \$158,400 VHCB award for rehabilitation of 4 apartments in a historic downtown building serving clients of the agency and community partners for more than 25 years. Three of the apartments are master-leased by the Good Samaritan Haven, Central Vermont's homeless shelter, for individuals on a path to more permanent housing. Rehab will include roof and heating system replacement, rebuilding the chimney and repairing the front porch. Total development costs: \$333,439.

### **Windham & Windsor Housing Trust**

Bellows Falls Garage, Rockingham. \$562,711 VHCB award for demolition of a vacant auto repair facility and parking garage and new construction to create 27 apartments. Located within walking distance of the train station, bus stops, social services, and shops. \$540,000 federal HOME Program funding; \$399,333 National Housing Trust Fund award; \$1,144,917 Housing Revenue Bond funds. Total development costs: \$9,923,906.

Organizational Development Grant. \$90,176 VHCB award and \$37,567 federal CHDO award for FY19 organizational development costs.



▲ Architectural rendering of 27 new apartments being developed by the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust in Bellows Falls.

## Housing Awards

July 2019– December 2020

### STATEWIDE

#### Feasibility Fund

\$125,000 recapitalization of the VHCB feasibility fund providing awards of up to \$15,000 for predevelopment costs including surveys, options, appraisals, market and engineering studies and architect's fees.

#### Habitat for Humanity and Vocational Education Program-built homes

\$175,400 VHCB award to provide an estimated six down payment grants for newly constructed energy efficient homes. Total development costs: 702,000.

#### Shared Equity Homeownership

\$1,200,000 VHCB award for grants to provide purchase subsidies plus rehabilitation loans for an estimated 30 home-buyers working with community land trusts and Home Ownership Centers. The program provides grants of up to \$50,000 or 20-25% of the purchase price

of a home, whichever is less. Buyers agree to limit the amount of appreciation upon resale and the grant funds stay with the home to be recycled to the next income-eligible buyer.

#### Single-Family Homes Stewardship Fund

\$65,000 VHCB award to recapitalize a fund to provide assistance to non-profit groups for carrying costs, real estate fees, advertising or other transactional costs for affordable homes in challenging markets.

#### Organizational Development Grants

\$832,822 in VHCB awards to provide FY21 Organizational Development grants to 11 non-profit housing development organizations around the state. \$255,429 in HUD HOME funds for organizational development grants to 5 Community Housing Development Organizations.

#### Purchase Subsidy Program

\$12,000 VHCB award to assist buyers of mobile homes in non-profit or cooperatively owned mobile home parks with down payment assistance and closing costs.

#### Vermont Center for Independent Living

Home Access Program. \$445,000 VHCB award and \$600,000 in Housing Revenue Bond funding for home access improvements to 51 homes. \$100,000 in funding from the Agency of Human Services, Department of Disability, Aging and Independent Living. Total development costs: \$820,000.

#### Vermont Center for Independent Living

Home Access Program. \$890,000 VHCB award funding for home access improvements to 102 homes. \$200,000 in funding from the Agency of Human Services, Department of Disability, Aging and Independent Living. Total development costs: \$1,640,000.

#### VHCB Land Bank Fund

\$702,678 award for capitalization of fund to secure land to provide opportunities for future housing development.



◀ Historic exterior details of the landmark 1868 Woolson Block in the center of downtown Springfield have been restored and 20 apartments have been created, including 4 service-supported homes for at-risk youth with a live-in supervisor. The \$8.6M redevelopment by Evernorth and Springfield Housing Unlimited used CARES Act funding, Housing Revenue Bond funds, federal HOME Program and National Housing Trust funds.

## Conservation Awards

July 2019– December 2020

### **Bridgewater Area Community Foundation**

Bridgewater Community Center, Bridgewater Village. \$50,000 VHCB award FOR interior and exterior restoration of the former Bridgewater Village School. The project will preserve and transform a town-owned historic building into a community center to house a child-care facility, senior center, community gathering space, retail activity, and an emergency shelter. Located on Route 4 between Woodstock and Killington, the former school is filling critical needs that have been identified by the community. \$7,500 VHCB award to the Preservation Trust of Vermont for stewardship of the easement. Total projects costs: \$1,393,410

### **Broad Brook Community Center**

Broad Brook Community Center, Guilford. \$60,000 VHCB award towards restoration and improvements to a former Grange Hall to better serve the town as a central and accessible hub for social, civic, educational, and recreational activities. The circa 1896 Queen Anne-style structure is located adjacent to the town library, meeting house, and historical society and near the town offices and the Guilford Central School. Renovations will address safety code issues and ADA standards for accessibility, improve energy efficiency, add an elevator and sprinkler system, restore windows, and refinish floors. \$7,500 VHCB award to the Preservation Trust of Vermont for stewardship of the easement. Total project costs: \$1,450,000.

### **Catamount Trail Association**

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$14,000 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

### **Champlain Housing Trust**

Old North End Community Center, Burlington. \$92,500 VHCB award for restoration and renovation of a significant historic building into a community center serving mostly low-income residents of Burlington's Old North End. The reha-

bilitation expands the building's use as a center in providing a wide variety of services and activities for youth, seniors and families. Total project costs: \$8,925,813

### **Cross Vermont Trail Association**

Fairmont/Lylehaven Trail Easement, East Montpelier. \$20,000 VHCB award to purchase a trail easement across Fairmont Farms's Lylehaven property. The acquisition would provide an important link in the Cross Vermont Trail. The project is supported by a \$5,000 contribution from the town of East Montpelier. Total project costs: \$25,000

Morse Property, Plainfield. \$27,300 VHCB award to conserve 12 acres to construct a section of the Cross Vermont Trail that will connect the community of Plainfield and remove the trail from Vt. Route 2. The project also enhances water quality and flood resilience along the Winooski east of Plainfield. Total project costs: \$27,300

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$17,000 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

### **Fairbanks Museum**

Fairbanks Museum, St. Johnsbury. \$80,000 VHCB award to restore exterior features of the historic building listed on the National Register of Historic Places and located within St. Johnsbury's historic district. This project is one component of multi-phased work the organization is undertaking to upgrade, enhance and restore the main building. The work on the main building will be accompanied by a state of the art mass timber addition to be built on the back of the existing building to house a new Science Annex. \$7,500 award to the Preservation Trust of Vermont for stewardship of the easement. Total project costs: \$665,900

### **Green Mountain Club**

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$34,000 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

### **Green Mountain Conservancy**

Deer Run Nature Preserve, Dummerston. \$150,000 VHCB award to acquire and conserve 287 acres of forestland, protecting a critical wildlife corridor, preserving biodiversity, supporting resilience against climate change, and protecting water quality. Conservation will protect important wildlife habitat and preserve permanent public access for hunting and walking, along with 3 miles of tributaries of the West River, 1.4 acres of wetlands, and vernal pools that provide breeding habitat for a number of species. Total project costs: \$261,419

Deer Run Phase II, Newfane and Brookline. \$150,000 VHCB award to conserve 626 acres with significant community and water quality benefits, including more than 2.5 miles along the West River, vernal pools, streams, and wetlands, a popular public trail network and access for hunting and fishing. Open fields on the property will continue to be leased to a farmer for haying and an existing sugarbush will continue to be leased by a sugar-maker. The project abuts the Deer Run Phase 1 project, conserved with VHCB funding in 2019. Together the two projects conserve 913 acres of intact forestland, and have high significance for climate resilience. Total project costs: \$471,300

### **Greensboro Land Trust**

Green Mountain Monastery, Greensboro. \$68,000 VHCB award to conserve 149 acres surrounding GMM's home in North Greensboro. The project will protect ecological and recreational resources including forestland important for wildlife habitat and rare plants, brooks that empty into the Lamoille River and public trails. Total project costs: \$138,833

### **Lake Champlain Land Trust**

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$25,000 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

## Conservation Awards

July 2019–December 2020

### **Preservation Trust of Vermont**

Old North End Community Center Stewardship, Burlington. \$7,500 VHCB award to the Preservation Trust of Vermont for stewardship costs associated with the historic preservation easement on the Old North End Community Center building.

### **Putney Mountain Association**

Missing Links Project Phase I, Dummerston. \$116,000 VHCB award for the acquisition and conservation of two parcels containing wildlife and recreation corridors, and a tributary of the West River. Project also includes three donated trail easements crossing five land parcels and will extend the popular Putney Mountain Association/Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association's Ridgeline Trail south to Prospect Hill in Dummerston. Total project costs: \$200,721

### **Stowe Land Trust**

Brownsville Forest, Stowe. \$175,000 VHCB award to conserve 759 acres of forestland on the west side of the Worcester Range for addition to the C.C. Putnam State Forest, allowing for public access to the land for the first time in several years. Close to Stowe Village, with 2 miles of Class IV roads and connections to a VAST trail. Conservation protects wildlife habitat and the headwaters of Moss Glen Brook. Sustainable timber management and non-motorized public recreational use. \$750,000 in local fundraising; private philanthropic donation of \$5 million. Total project costs: \$5,750,000.

### **The Conservation Fund**

Windham Working Forest Initiative, Townshend. \$82,500 VHCB award for the conservation of 183 acres of privately-owned working forest that is part of a much larger Forest Legacy Program project involving more than 9,000 acres. The parcel has extensive frontage on Simpson Brook in the Connecticut River watershed and spring feeding habitat for black bears. Total project costs: \$331,000

### **The Nature Conservancy**

Lamson Pond, Brookfield. \$25,000 VHCB award to conserve 55 acres of managed

woodlands plus a 5-acre sloping rich fen and wetlands that form part of the headwaters of the Second Branch of the White River. The woodland and wetlands are important habitat for unusual plants and animals and serve to filter and disburse rainwater, mitigating potential flooding episodes downstream while protecting and improving water quality. The conserved land will remain open for public pedestrian access and forestry uses, and proceeds from the sale of the conservation easement will allow the owners to complete infrastructure projects, improving their farm business. Total project costs: \$46,575

Glebe Mountain, Windham. \$500,000 (of a total \$750,000 VHCB award over 2 years) to conserve 3,569 acres, protecting regionally significant bear habitat, 17 natural communities and 6 species of rare plants while providing public access for hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and birdwatching and maintaining an existing snowmobile trail. Conservation protects the water quality of Cobb Brook, a tributary of the West River, and increases flood resilience. The land has been closed to the public and operated as a private hunting reserve for the past 20 years. Total project costs: \$5,552,371

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$37,000 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

### **Town of Arlington**

Arlington Town Forest, Arlington. \$150,000 VHCB award to conserve 407 acres on Red Mountain close to the town's center and local schools which includes 7 miles of trails, wildlife corridors and headwaters of the Batten Kill River. Total project costs: \$285,636

### **Trust for Public Land**

Third Branch Headwaters, Roxbury. \$105,000 VHCB award to an 108-acre inholding forestland in the Roxbury State Forest, part of a larger conservation initiative to conserve an additional

619 acres to be added to Green Mountain National Forest in Warren and Lincoln. Across Route 12A from the Roxbury Fish Hatchery, the property has almost a mile of headwater streams and 16 acres of riparian areas located in the headwaters of the Third Branch, one of the three major tributaries to the White River. Total project costs: \$550,000

Huntington Community Forest, Huntington. \$125,000 VHCB award to conserve 245 acres adjacent to the Brewster-Pierce Memorial School in Huntington's Lower Village for creation of a new community forest. The property provides access to the Huntington River and a diverse trail network for walking, trail running, cross-country skiing, hiking, birding and mountain biking. The property also includes a VAST snowmobile trail. The land's rich and diverse habitat is home to black bear, fisher, otter, and bobcat. This project has significant water resources including 32 acres of wetlands, 2.3 miles of headwater streams, and 18 acres of riparian protection areas. Total project costs: \$995,000

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$31,000 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

### **Upper Valley Land Trust**

Gile Ridgeline Forest, Norwich. \$125,000 VHCB award to conserve the 186 acre Adams Tract located between two town forest parcels to form 290 contiguous town-owned acres and secure public access to a 2.5 mile popular trail network for hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing. The project protects high quality timber stands, numerous vernal pools and seeps, and includes 10 acres of water protection zones along 1.5 miles of tributaries of the Connecticut and White Rivers. Total project costs: \$747,500

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$45,500 VHCB award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

## Conservation Awards

July 2019–December 2020

### **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets**

Act 250 Mitigation. \$110,000 VHCB award to support the Agency's work related to Act 250 9(b).

Water Quality Stewardship. \$50,000 VHCB award for water quality-related inspections and other related work on VHCB farmland conservation projects.

### **Vermont Agency of Natural Resources**

Long Range Management Planning. \$20,000 VHCB award to support continued development of long-range management plans for state lands.

### **Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Fitzgerald Farm Retirement, Colchester. \$459,290 award of water quality bond funding to acquire and conserve 143 acres farmland with 1.5 miles along the Winoozki River. The former dairy is located entirely in the floodplain and subject to regular flooding. Existing buildings will be removed and the land will be restored to floodplain forest and wetlands and managed as a Wildlife Management Area by the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Public ownership of the Fitzgerald farm will greatly improve the accessibility of state-owned lands in the urban and suburban areas of Chittenden County. Total project costs: \$809,290.

Farrow Farm Retirement, Morgan. \$250,000 award of water quality bond funding towards acquisition and restoration of 163 acres of farmland in the Memphremagog watershed, just north of Lake Seymour. Collaborating with the Agency of Agriculture and other partners, DF&W plans to remove the barn and manure pit and restore native vegetation along Valley Brook a primary tributary for spawning and nursery waters for game fish. Access for hunting and fishing will be improved and made permanently available and a stream crossing for a VAST trail on the property will be upgraded. Total project costs: \$486,500

Roaring Brook Wildlife Management Area, Vernon. \$156,250 VHCB award for

acquisition and conservation of 446 acres for addition to the 1,460-acre Wildlife Management Area, serving to connect three separate parcels within the WMA, protecting wildlife habitat, improving public access for recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, wildlife viewing, and snowmobiling. The project protects 41 wetland acres including a state-significant natural community with rare plants and will habitat for two federally listed species. Total project costs: \$720,000 The project serves to significantly improve public access to the WMA, conserve habitat for two federally listed species and more than a dozen rare and state listed species, a

Deering Farm Retirement, Bridport. \$415,000 VHCB award, including \$400,000 of water quality bond funding, to support the purchase of and retirement of a 433-acre farm. The acreage will be added to the existing Lemon Fair Wildlife Management Area, improving public access to the WMA. Wetland features will be restored, which will protect and enhance the Lemon Fair River's water quality and the Lake Champlain watershed. Restoration of the wetlands and forest will greatly accentuate flood attenuation while increasing and improving wildlife habitat. Total project cost: \$1,775,000

### **Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation**

Alburgh Bluffs, Alburgh. \$116,730 VHCB award to facilitate the addition of 160 acres to Alburgh Dunes State Park, continuing the partnership of FPR, The Nature Conservancy and VHCB over two decades to conserve 600 adjacent acres. The project includes \$554,500 of federal Land and Water Conservation Funds administered by FPR, and significant match from The Nature Conservancy and Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. This extraordinary lakefront parcel has outstanding public and natural resource values including almost 1 mile of shoreline and 80 acres of high quality wetlands. Total project cost \$1,160,500.

Okemo Wildlife Corridor, Mount Holly. \$224,000 VHCB award to acquire and conserve 346 acres of high elevation land off of Route 155, the last unprotected parcel linking Okemo State Forest to the Green Mountain National Forest, establishing a wildlife corridor and enabling wildlife connectivity. The acquisition adds to nearly 30,000 acres of state land protected in the area over 25 years by ANR's Forests, Parks & Recreation and Fish & Wildlife Departments. The Catamount and VAST trails cross the property, and the headwaters of three watersheds will be protected by the acquisition. Total project costs: \$979,000

Lamson Pond, Brookfield. \$25,000 VHCB award to conserve 55 acres of managed woodlands plus a 5-acre sloping rich fen and wetlands that form part of the headwaters of the Second Branch of the White River. The woodland and wetlands are important habitat for unusual plants and animals and serve to filter and disburse rainwater, mitigating potential flooding episodes downstream while protecting and improving water quality. The conserved land will remain open for public pedestrian access and forestry uses, and proceeds from the sale of the conservation easement will allow the owners to complete infrastructure projects, improving their farm business. Total project costs: \$46,575

### **Vermont Land Trust**

Auclair Farm Parcels B & C, South Burlington. These two related projects are the second and third phases of conserving the Auclair family's former South Burlington lands. In 2019, VHCB awarded \$325,000 to VLT for protection of the first phase, the 191-acre Auclair Parcel A. In 2020, VHCB awarded \$164,000 of state funds and \$1,053,000 of federal NRCS Funds for the protection of Parcels B and C. Vermont Agrarian Commons, a landholding subsidiary of Agrarian Trust, a national non-profit organization, will own the conserved farmland, and lease it to individual farmers or farm enterprises

## Conservation Awards

with affordable 99-year terms, allowing the farmers to focus on capital improvements and on growing their businesses. The project is highly leveraged, with The City of South Burlington contributing \$915,000. The easements include special protections for wetland and riparian areas, as well as public access to a planned trail system around the properties. Total project cost \$2,122,000

Booth Living Trust, Barre Town. \$230,500 VHCB award to conserve 102 acres, with 95 acres of open farm fields located on a high plateau near the airport. The cropland is used by a local dairy. Special protections in the easement for a 7-acre wooded wetland. \$217,500 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$448,000

Brigham Farm, St. Albans Town. \$123,000 VHCB award, with \$155,000 federal NRCS funding and a bargain sale to conserve 58 acres, supporting an organic dairy operation. The project also protects 41 acres of prime agricultural soil and 5 acres of wetlands. Total project costs: \$323,000

Brisson-Foster, Weybridge. \$45,816 VHCB award to conserve 74 acres including 68 acres of level cropland near Otter Creek. The property would be purchased by a local dairy and used for corn and hay. The project was financially supported by the town of Weybridge and by local fundraising. \$34,184 Ag Mitigation funds; \$165,000 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$343,000.

Cesario, Cornwall. \$165,500 VHCB award to conserve 125 acres and facilitate a transfer to Meeting Place Pastures, a custom-grazing and diversified livestock operation. Special ecological protections and riparian protection along Beaver Brook. \$169,500 federal NRCS funding. \$17,000 bargain sale. Total project costs: \$352,000.

Chaput IV Farm, Newport. \$93,000 VHCB award to conserve 126 acres. Tillable land supports a large dairy. Project includes a 14-acre wetlands protection zone, and restoration of a portion of the wetland area. \$50,000 Ag Mitigation

funds; \$130,000 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$273,000

Rich & Lyman Clark Farm, Huntington. \$13,000 VHCB award to conserve 18 acres of prime farmland along the Huntington River, recently purchased by an existing, organic vegetable operation, Burnt Rock Farm. 50-foot riparian buffer along the river frontage. \$30,000 Ag Mitigation funds; \$60,000 federal NRCS funding. \$30,000 contribution from the town of Huntington. Total project costs: \$133,000

Clifford Farm, Starksboro. \$255,500 VHCB award with \$257,500 federal NRCS funds to conserve 300 acres of farm and forestland on the east side of Route 116 at the Clifford Farm, which was established in 1796. Eric and Jane Clifford are 8th generation farmers, milking 235 cows, raising 170 young stock, and growing crops on 450 acres. The conservation easement will include water quality protections on wooded streams that are tributaries of Lewis Creek. Total project costs: \$513,000

Dodd Farm, Sheldon. \$178,000 VHCB Award and \$185,000 federal NRCS funds to protect a 165-acre dairy farm with 80 acres of high quality tillage, and nine recorded archeological sites. This project will protect 1,600 feet along the Missisquoi River with a riparian buffer. Total project costs: \$363,000

Dimuzio, Middlebury. \$105,500 VHCB award to conserve 113 acres for a fallow deer operation. Special protections in the easement for a 30-acre woodlot featuring a significant natural community. The landowner is contributing a significant bargain sale. \$30,000 Ag Mitigation funds; \$247,500 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$508,000

Dimuzio II, Middlebury. \$41,500 VHCB award to conserve 19 acres of open land to be purchased by the adjacent fallow deer farm. The town of Middlebury is contributing \$25,000 toward the project. \$62,500 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$129,000

## July 2019–December 2020

Dodge Farm, Pownal. \$130,500 VHCB award with \$157,500 federal NRCS funding to conserve a 210-acre farm and help facilitate transfer of the property to a family operating a multi-generational organic dairy. The protected property includes tillable land, pasture, wetland protection zone, and sugarbush. \$40,000 of match is provided by a bargain sale. Total project cost: \$328,000

Douglas Orchards, Shoreham. \$208,000 VHCB award to conserve 184 acres, including a 100-acre apple orchard and small fruit operation that has been owned by the same family for four generations. Special protections in the easement for a wetland and for a riparian area along a small stream. \$195,000 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$403,000

Fairmont/Lylehaven II, East Montpelier. \$235,000 VHCB award to conserve 196 acres with 100 acres of high quality tillage used by Fairmont Farm dairy. Special protections in the easement for wetlands and riparian areas. \$370,000 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$753,000

Farm on the River, Springfield. \$155,500 VHCB award to conserve 69 acres of excellent agricultural soils near the Connecticut River. This former Christmas tree farm is in transition to organic vegetable production to support a large, existing CSA operation near New York City. Special protections in the easement for 2 acres of wetlands that will be restored, as well as protection of archeological resources and a notice provision on the historic barn. \$157,500 federal NRCS funding. \$15,000 bargain sale. Total project costs: \$328,000

Farmland Access Program. \$80,000 for Vermont Land Trust program that links farmers seeking land with farmers wishing to sell, and facilitates affordable purchase using sale of development rights and innovative financing. Total project costs: \$716,173.

Foy-Yonker, Lewis Creek II, Danville. \$50,000 VHCB award to conserve 24 acres for a diversified meat, hay, and



## Conservation Awards

July 2019–December 2020

heifer operation. Conservation will enable the landowners to take ownership of land they have managed since 1985. \$31,000 bargain sale. Total project costs: \$81,000.

Harness/Ryan OPAV, Enosburg. \$130,000 VHCB award to acquire an option to purchase at agricultural value on a previously conserved farm. The transaction will assist with the transfer of this dairy farm to the next generation and help maintain the farm's affordability to farmers in the future. Total project costs: \$130,000.

Hewitt Farm, Granville. \$68,000 VHCB award to conserve 25 acres of prime agricultural soils along the White River and to facilitate a transfer to Henry Webb and Gabby Tuite, who had been operating a small diversified vegetable business on rented land. Easement provides for a 50-foot buffer on 1,650 feet of river frontage. \$55,000 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$123,000.

Hodges Farm, Cornwall. \$308,000 VHCB award with \$335,000 federal NRCS funding to protect a 171-acre orchard. 72 percent of the soils on the property are classified as prime or statewide, and the orchard produced 120,000 bushels of apples in 2019. Total project cost: \$683,000

D&S Howrigan Farm, Fairfield. \$173,000 VHCB award to conserve 140 acres of meadow and sugarbush adjacent to Fairfield village. The cropland is used to support the Howrigan's organic dairy farm. \$160,000 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$333,000

Huizenga, Monkton. \$185,500 VHCB award to conserve 350 acres leased as cropland. The project, located in the Lake Champlain Basin, will protect tributaries and forested headwaters flowing into the Little Otter Creek. \$212,500 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$438,000.

King Farm, Fletcher. \$188,000 VHCB award with \$175,000 federal NRCS funding to conserve 180 acres and facilitate transfer to Hannah and John Doyle, who have been leasing farmland for five years in Bakersfield. The Doyles have worked on

business planning with the Intervale Center through VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability program to plan for their purchase of the farm and business expansion. This project includes a 9.5-acre riparian buffer zone. Total project costs: \$363,000

Kingdom Trails II, Lyndon. \$150,000 VHCB award to purchase a 40-acre parcel of land and conserve a recently purchased 228-acre parcel in Lyndon that are part of the 100-mile trail system managed by the Kingdom Trails Association. The parcels contain five miles of recreational trails, including a mile of VAST trail. This project supports a major driver for the local economy and will protect wetland and streams and provides public access to the East Branch of the Passumpsic River. Total project costs: \$665,805

Krusch Nature Preserve, Cambridge. \$50,000 award to conserve 51 acres of farm and forestland including 27 acres conserved by donation to the Vermont Land Trust in 2003. The owner is working with the town to create the Peter A. Krusch Nature Preserve, with a mix of old forest with ancient hemlock and pines, meadows and spectacular ravines. Conservation offers the opportunity to improve access to the adjacent Cambridge Pines State Forest. Total project costs: \$235,000.

Monument Farms II, Weybridge. \$113,000 VHCB award with \$100,000 federal NRCS funding to conserve 160 acres. The project protects 13 acres of wetlands with an ecological protection zone. Total project costs: \$213,000

Nelson Farm, St. Albans. \$245,500 VHCB award with \$257,500 federal NRCS funding to protect 129 acres that produces feed for a dairy operation. This project adds to the 8,000-acre St. Albans–Swanton block of conserved land, which is thought to be the largest contiguous block of conserved farmland in all of New England. Total project cost: \$528,000

2020 Organizational Development Grant. \$120,000 VHCB award for organiza-

tional development costs and stewardship activities.

Orr, Orwell. \$205,500 VHCB award to conserve a 287-acre former dairy farm that is converting to beef, heifers, and small livestock. Special protections in the easement for a woodlot with an uncommon natural community and for wetlands. The easement also has a notice provision encumbering a historic house. The project facilitates transfer of the farm to the Orrs' daughter, Rachel. \$192,500 federal NRCS funding. Total project costs: \$398,000.

Philip & Suzanne Parent, Enosburg. \$262,000 VHCB award with \$316,000 federal NRCS funding to conserve 281 acres of farm, forest, sugars bush, and two farmsteads, located on Route 105 on the boundary between Enosburg Falls Village and Sheldon Town. The project will protect 3,994 feet along the Mississquoi River with a riparian buffer. Total project costs: \$578,000

Rupert Valley Holsteins, West Rupert. \$140,500 VHCB award with \$127,500 federal NRCS funding to conserve 177 acres used to support a highly successful and longstanding dairy operation. The project includes 8,000 feet of creek frontage that will be protected by buffer zones. Total project cost: \$268,000

Seidman & Harrower Farm, Middlesex. \$187,570 VHCB award with \$192,500 federal NRCS funding to conserve 88 acres of organic land and facilitate a transfer new highly qualified operators. The project protects 1,000 feet of a tributary of the North Branch of the Winooski River. Total project costs: \$385,070

Snow Farm, Charlotte. \$40,000 VHCB award with 207,500 federal NRCS funding, to protect a 71-acre former dairy farm on Route 7 in Charlotte near the base of Mount Philo. A young couple is under contract to buy the land with plans to establish a vegetable and flower operation. Additional funding includes \$180,000 of match from the town, the Charlotte Land Trust, and a bargain sale. Total project cost: \$428,000

## Conservation Awards

Tomasi Meadow, Underhill. \$155,000 VHC B award to conserve and transfer into town ownership a 16-acre parcel adjacent to the town-owned Casey Hill parcel, an iconic sledding hill. Located within the Lake Champlain Basin with ~1,000 feet of forested riparian frontage on the Browns River wetland complex. Productive hayfield with perimeter trails for year round recreation and an outdoor classroom for the Underhill Central School. The Town will oversee agricultural use of the property. Total project costs: \$273,000.

J. Townsend, Bethel. \$53,500 VHC B award to conserve 86 acres of excellent agricultural soils along the White River, facilitating a transfer to an existing dairy operation. Project includes 50-foot riparian buffers on all the river frontage, as well as a notice provision on the historic barn. \$79,000 federal NRCS funding. \$39,500 bargain sale. Total project costs: \$173,000.

Tupper, Orwell. \$118,000 VHC B award to conserve 159 acres, supporting a small, organic, grass-based dairy operation. The easement specifies riparian and wetland protections on 7,500 feet of Lemon Fair River frontage. \$105,000 federal NRCS-RCPP funding. Total project costs: \$223,000.

Valcour Farm, Morristown. \$298,000 VHC B award with \$305,000 federal NRCS funding to conserve 173 acres of a former dairy that now produces hay and corn. This project includes a 20-acre wetland protection zone as well as riparian buffer zones along the streams, and 1 mile of the Catamount Ski Trail. Total project costs: \$603,000

Wilson Farm, Greensboro. \$68,000 VHC B award to conserve 44 acres and facilitate a transfer to a growing medicinal herb business. Special protections in the easement for 5 acres of wetlands. \$120,000 federal NRCS funding. \$65,000 leverage from local fundraising and a bargain sale of the easement. Total project costs: \$253,000

### Vermont River Conservancy

Lamoille River Access, Cambridge Junction. \$26,600 VHC B award for acquisition and conservation of 5.5 acres along the Lamoille River, establishing a new access point for the Lamoille River Paddlers' Trail, a network of river access points, primitive campsites, and portage trails from the Lamoille River's headwaters west to Lake Champlain. The property also serves as a trailhead to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. Conservation will secure floodplain and water quality protections. Total project costs: \$40,000

North Branch Cascades, Worcester and Elmore. \$15,500 VHC B award for stewardship and costs associated with the conservation of the 72-acre North Branch Cascades property on Route 12. With more than a mile of frontage and an accessible pedestrian trail along the North Branch of the Winooski the public will be ensured access to a spectacular series of waterfalls, cascades, pools, and swimming holes. The project includes storm-water management measures, native stone stairways to prevent erosion, and the protection of native vegetation and geologic features. Total projects costs: \$265,000

Bethel Floodplain Restoration, Bethel. \$37,109 VHC B award to conserve 9 acres immediately upstream from the village of Bethel. The property will be conveyed to the Town of Bethel and conserved as a public riverside park. Total project costs: \$37,109.

New Haven Floodplain, Bristol. \$21,500 VHC B award to conserve 15 acres as an addition to the conserved Bristol Flats public access property. Conservation enhances wildlife habitat, increases buffer protection and bank stabilization while allowing the natural mitigating function of the floodplain to protect downstream residents. Total project costs: \$33,000.

2020 Organizational Development Grant \$28,000 VHC B award for organizational development costs and stewardship activities.

## July 2019–December 2020

### STATEWIDE

#### Feasibility Fund

\$25,000 recapitalization of fund to provide awards of up to \$8,000 for predevelopment costs including surveys, options and appraisals.

#### Organizational Development Grants

\$362,178 for FY21 organizational development grants to 10 conservation organizations operating around the state.

#### VHC B Farm & Forest Viability Program

Business Advising Services. \$862,069 in VHC B funds to support the Viability Program and its business planning and technical assistance to farm, food and forestry businesses. Additional funding support from USDA Rural Development, VT Working Lands Enterprise Board, Northern Border Regional Commission, USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund, Commonwealth Dairy, Vermont Community Foundation, High Meadows Fund, and the Sustainable Future Fund for contracts with service providers including UVM Extension, the Intervale Center, NOFA-VT, the Center for an Agricultural Economy, Land for Good, Strolling of the Heifers, the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund, and Vermont Woodlands Association.

Business Plan Implementation Grants. \$54,926 in funding to 10 working lands businesses, leveraging an additional \$256,784 to help bring business plans from concept to reality and support long-term viability.

Water Quality Grants. \$1,234,001 for Water Quality Grants to 37 farms, leveraging an additional \$6.3 million to help farmers make water quality-related capital improvements to on-farm infrastructure.

Rural Economic Development Initiative a \$75,000 special legislative appropriation to help nine rural enterprises and small towns secure \$1.4 million in federal, state, and philanthropic funding, with an additional \$2.5 million pending. Four additional projects were assisted with fundraising strategic plans.



## Statement on Our American Tragedy

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Vermonters:

The national trauma that is the murder of George Floyd at the knee of a police "training" officer has horrified us. In the weeks preceding this awful event we saw the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. What is more troubling are the many, many incidents of racism that American society and culture has for generations too easily accepted, either without notice or without sufficient outrage to demand and result in change. What is now called America's institutional racism is revealed as we see the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus and related economic fall-out on communities of color.

America's modern civil rights movement took on urgency when Emmett Till's mother provided an open casket for the world to see the brutality that a lynching had on her son. Today, as in 1955, we must confront what can only be viewed as acts that shock our collective conscience and define what evil looks like.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board is established both to promote access to housing and land. Our work and that of our community partners helps to mitigate and overcome some of the inequalities that are the byproduct of an economy and culture that leaves too many behind.

At this very difficult moment as a white-led organization we must listen first and with humility, we need to encourage open hearts, and support those whose anger and rage comes from justice deferred and denied for too long.

Dr. King in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail said,

"Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity."

Today our body politic is polluted by leaders who, like the segregationists of the past, sow division, and seek to demonize those who are in the streets demanding justice. They are aided by tech giants who have monetized and profit from the divisiveness their platforms encourage.

Now is a moment to push ahead for lasting change. Now is the time for all of us, and especially those who have enjoyed the benefits of white privilege, to overcome ancient fears and hatred. Now is a time for us to act in Vermont's spirit of Freedom and Unity.

We are committed to acting in that spirit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gus Seelig".

Gus Seelig  
Executive Director  
June 10, 2020

▶ With CARES Act funding the Champlain Housing Trust converted a hotel in Essex Junction to Susan's Place, with 68 permanent apartments for people moving out of homelessness. The property is named in honor of the life's work of Susan Ainsworth-Daniels who passed away in 2020 due to complications after surgery. Susan was a social worker at CHT for decades.

▶ The crew at Last Resort Farm in Monkton, an organic hay and produce farm assisted with land conservation funding and with technical assistance from the Viability Program as they transition to ownership by the next generation.

▶ Appletree Apartments in Fairhaven, where the Housing Trust of Rutland County acquired and rehabilitated 40 apartments in 10 buildings. Executive Director Elisabeth Kulas retired in December 2020 after 27 years leading the organization to complete 22 housing developments with 366 affordable homes.

Supporting the preservation and development of affordable housing, the conservation of agricultural land, forest land, and natural areas, and the restoration of historic public properties.



Champlain Housing Trust photo



Vermont  
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