

# Land Access and Opportunity Board Touchstones:

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1. Listen generously. Speak your truth from your heart & mind.
2. Make the way we work together an example of what's possible.
3. Trust that we all hold a piece of the puzzle & we need each other's pieces to understand the whole picture



# Land Access Opportunity Board

Community Led Rural Housing

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# Our Agenda Today

- Introduction to LAOB's Small Scale Developer Training Program with Homes for All
- Why rural housing strategies are essential to farm viability and Vermont's thriving culture of agriculture
- There are low hanging fruit opportunities to make real progress. Our communities have good ideas on what to do next, we need to build momentum by working together and investing our resources into community leadership.
  - Farmworker housing
  - Agri-hoods and Collective land ownership



What is the Land Access and Opportunity Board?  
(LAOB)

[Act 182, 2022](#)

**10 V.S.A. § 325u (a) Creation.**

There is created the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board to promote improvements in access to woodlands, farmland, and land and home ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities who continue to face barriers to land and home ownership.

[Act 182, 2022](#)

## **10 V.S.A. § 325u (f) Powers and duties of the Board.**

LAOB has Advisory Powers → SOV and affiliated institutions

- Retain experts from disadvantaged communities
- Put data at the center of policy and program analysis
- Develop strategies to overcome structural barriers

LAOB has Grant Making Powers → marginalized communities & individuals

- Improve access to land, housing, safety, sustainability and health

# LAOB Appointing Authorities

Vermont Office of Racial Equity

Vermont Every Town Project

Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs

National Association of Social Workers, VT

Vermont Branches of the NAACP

Pride Center of Vermont

Vermont Racial Justice Alliance

U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, VT

Liberation Ecosystem

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Migrant Justice

Vermont Psychiatric Survivors

# LAOB is working efficiently and effectively

Act 2022  
creates LAOB

Sunrise Report  
submitted

\$200,000  
appropriated -  
one time

\$1.2M  
appropriated -  
one time

\$1M  
appropriated  
- one time

\$1.63M  
appropriated  
- base

\$1M reverted -  
returned via  
FY26 BAA

*Projected FY27*  
\$3.2M - **FY27**  
**appropriation**  
**currently @**  
**\$1.68M**

**2022**

**2023**

**2024**

**2025**

**2026**

LAOB  
convened  
by ORE

LAOB Priority  
Objectives Adopted

MOU signed with  
VHCB for  
administrative  
services

2 Co-Directors Hired

Program Research  
Systems Resource Mapping  
Working Groups & Advisory  
Powers

- Priority Housing Projects
- CCB - 166
- Act 59
- DDHI
- Community Resilience

3 Staff Hired

Program Development  
Community Activation  
Working Groups & Advisory  
Powers

- FLU maps
- LURB rulemaking
- VERTA
- Land Banks
- Smarter Growth
- Act 59
- Food Land
- Community Resilience

Program Launch  
Community Activation  
Working Groups & Advisory Powers

- Beginning Developer Training Program
- Community Resilience Grants
- Shelter for All
- Secure Housing Coach Program
- VERTA
- Act 250/Act 181, Act 59
- Land Banks
- Food Lands
- CCB
- DDHI
- ONA Housing



## How We Work

# Our values - this is how we work

- Our touchstones.
- Vision: We can create the world we all want to live in.
- Our shared humanity: everyone wants to be seen, to be valued, to feel dignity, and to have agency over their lives.
- Trust: acknowledge best intentions and shared limitations.
- Honesty: Continuous improvement relies on being honest about what is not working well.
- Community: we create better outcomes when we work together.
- **Creativity and Resourcefulness: What do we have when we don't have enough money?**

# What are the problems we see?

- Affordability & prosperity rely on us unlocking the power of our people and community-led solutions - What do we have when we don't have enough money?
- Vermont needs more people power: families, workers, participation in public processes.
- Disconnect between public institutions and the people they are supposed to serve.
- Silos and false objectives prevent us from working together to understand the real problems and create innovative solutions.
- Compounding crises are threatening our communities materially and psychologically.
- Those who are most vulnerable are hit hardest by all crises.
- The lack of effective solutions is inefficient, expensive & demoralizing.
- Too much focus on business interests and not enough focus on people



# Homes for All Developer Training Program



**LAOB is  
collaborating  
with the larger  
Homes for All  
initiative**

**Design + Do Toolkit (Complete in 2024)**

**802 Homes**

- Pre-approved design plans for homes
- Support for communities to streamline approvals

**Beginning Developer Training (and capital!)**

- One-Day immersion program
- Six-Week Intensive classroom learning
- Hands-on Technical Assistance in the field
- Community of Practice
- Grants & Preferred Loan Program

# Small-Scale Developer Program Engagement

As of 4/24/26

Program Launched 1/16/26


**261** Total Registered Participants

**220** CoP and 1:1 TA Participants

**65+** Participants at the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshops

Search for members

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## Members (95)

 Show map:

 Sort by: Recently active

**Jean Hamilton**

Active today · VT, United States

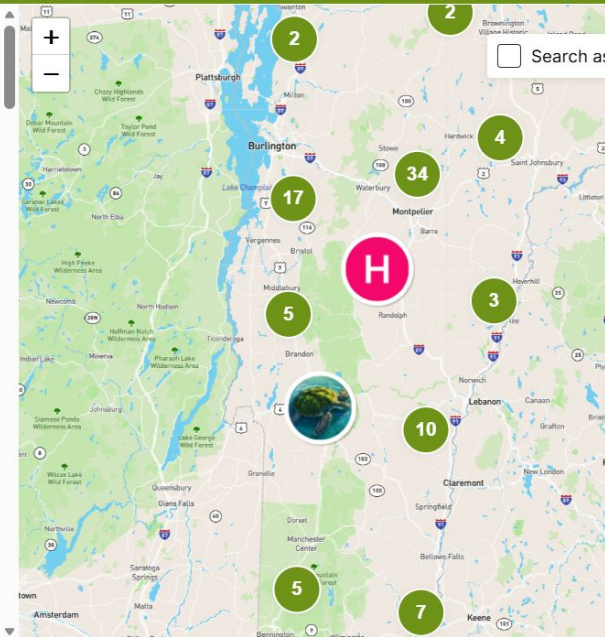
Community Role: LAOB Admin, Related Business or...

[Go to profile](#)

**Audrey Clare Homan**

Active today · VT, United States

Community Role: Small-Scale Developer

[Go to profile](#)
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A **community of practice (CoP)** is a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly".

# Community of Practice

## Affinity Groups

- Black-Led Housing Development
- Community Land Trusts/Cooperative Communities/Agrihoods
- Accessible Housing for Folks with Disabilities
- Low-Income Housing
- People-Led Shelters and Transitional Housing
- Farmworker Housing
- Housing for New Americans
- Policy
- Trades Folk Network (Education, Networking, Apprenticeships)



# Alternative and Collaborative Land Access

Grace Oedel

Executive Director, Northeast Organic Farming  
Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)



# (Some) Key Challenges & Factors:



- Land costs extremely high
- Farmland disappearing
- Access to capital
- Larger dairy parcels being sold without the same type of operation to take them over
- Family / nuclear family ownership model not working well
- Extreme lack of racial diversity in land ownership in VT
- Farmers and members consistently asking us to work on land access
- See also: AFT's Farms Under Threat; HEAL food alliance platform, etc

# Six major goals for our land access work:

1. Ensure that farmland becomes accessible, and in organic or ecological production for future generations.



# Six major goals for our land access work:

2. Create opportunities for combining agricultural land access with safe and affordable housing, modeling that dual-purpose projects can succeed.



# Six major goals for our land access work:

3. Expand the possible pathways for collaborative and non-traditional structures for land access and food production.



# Six major goals for our land access work:

4. Center agricultural projects led by historically- marginalized groups, like first-generation farmers, BIPOC, LGBTQ+ farmers and land stewards, and farmers without access to generational wealth.



# Six major goals for our land access work:

5. Move toward decommodifying land while supporting farmers and land stewards in building long-term resilience.



# Six major goals for our land access work:

6. Cultivate Vermont's Food Sovereignty to ensure that all people have access to nutritious, culturally relevant food, the agency to grow or purchase local food, and to build community resilience.



# Land Together Learning Network

- Witnessed several examples of a group coming together quickly to purchase ag land and get it off the market
  - Without solid vision, communication and relationship skills, and plans for managing change and conflict, these projects struggled
- NOFA-VT: could we provide skill building for producers who want to collaborate but need support to build a functional and aligned group?
- Collaboration can help to address affordability and also requires time and intention to build functional relationships and a shared vision
  - (ideally before folks are on the hook for a big mortgage!)
- Megan (Farmer Services) collaborating with Fran Miller (VT Law School), with support from Martha Caswell (UVM Agroecology)



# On the horizon

- **Colchester Project**- in partnership with ICF and VLT, interested in going along for the ride to identify potential support role we can play, and ground truth potential community-held project structures.
- **Alternative Equity Building**- supporting land holders or wealth holders to invest or share their resources through investing in land access or alternative wealth building channels (e.g. land donation, VT Community Loans Fund, CAE Revolving Loan).
- **Coordinating with Partners**- connecting with Champlain Housing Trust, LAOB, Land Matters, NEFOC, VLT, VHCB, to build collaboration around dual-purpose projects.
- **Gift Acceptance Policy**- creating a policy to ensure that when wealth (land or funds) are given to NOFA, we can ensure that those resources are used with directionality, toward our [Land Access Goals](#).



# *Discussion & Questions*

