

# House Committee on Corrections & Institutions

February 11, 2025



Vermont  
Housing &  
Conservation  
Board

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**Gus Seelig**  
Executive Director

**Liz Gleason**  
Farm & Forest Viability  
Program Director



Bay Ridge, Shelburne  
under construction





Prospect Mountain, Woodford



Putnam Block, Bennington



Morgan Street Wetlands, Bennington



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## Statutory Purpose

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“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.”

10 V.S.A.15 §302



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# Conservation Impact since 2020



**22,674**  
acres conserved across  
25 towns in 10 counties

## NATURAL LANDS

56 projects  
9,997 acres

## FARMLAND

78 farms  
12,677 acres

## WETLANDS

843 acres of special water  
quality protection zones  
53 miles of surface water

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

14 projects  
12 towns  
8 counties

Boissoneault, St. Albans





Camp Outright, Benson/Orwell

# Conservation Programs

- Recreational Lands, Forests, and Natural Areas Conservation
- Historic Preservation
- Water Quality
- Farmland Access
- Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)
- VHCB AmeriCorps

# VHCB Housing Impacts since 2020\*

4,964 households served (rental & homeownership)

Total VHCB investment: \$377.4M → Total leverage: \$680.6M

## RENTAL

2,303 total units  
1,925 new units  
694 homes for unhoused Vermonters

## SHELTER

24 shelters served total  
10 new shelters  
571 beds  
269 new beds total

## HOMEOWNERSHIP

389 households supported  
169 new construction  
single-family homeownership units

## ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

384 households received accessibility improvements

## MOBILE HOME COMMUNITIES

27 infill units  
944 lots in 11 communities

## FARMWORKER HOUSING

59 repair projects  
6 replacement projects  
237 farmworkers to be served

## RECOVERY RESIDENCES

4 projects  
59 residents benefitted

## LEAD ABATEMENT

77 households served  
58 apartments  
19 single-family homes

\*January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2024



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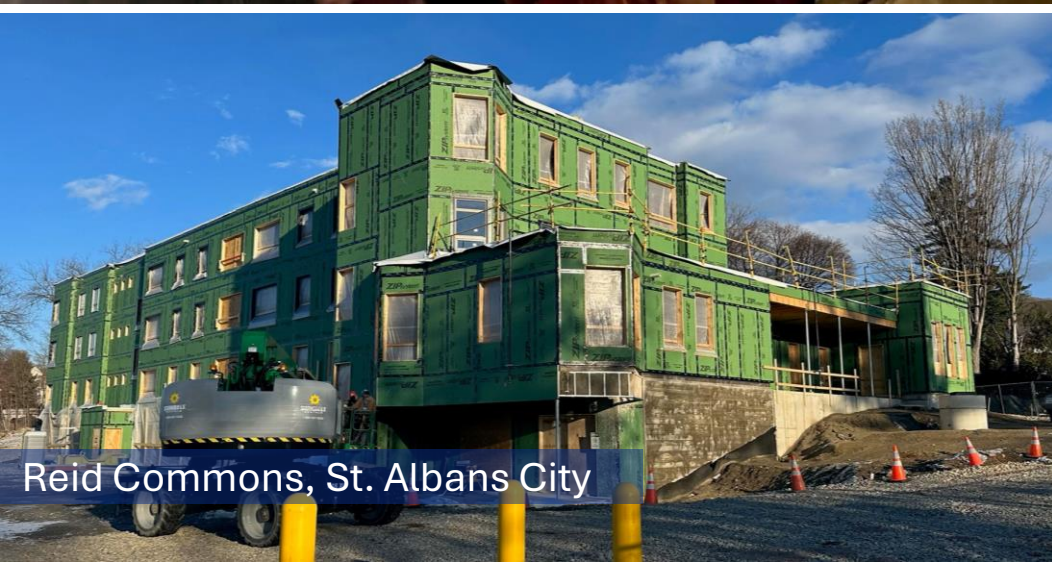


Squire House, Bennington

## Investing in Downtowns



Pearl Street, Montpelier



Reid Commons, St. Albans City



Allard Square, South Burlington





Benn High, Bennington



Marsh House, Waterbury



McKnight Lane, Waltham

## Housing Programs

- Multi-Family Rental Housing
- Home Ownership
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Shelter Improvement and Expansion
- Manufactured Home Communities
- Home Accessibility Improvements
- Community Planning & Technical Assistance
- Farmworker Housing
- Recovery Residences

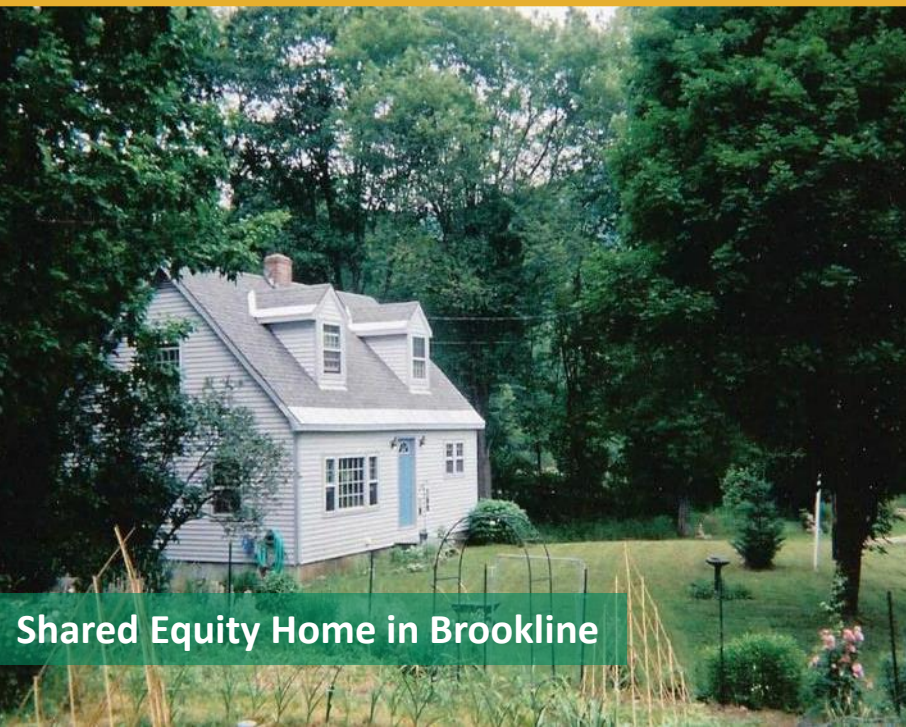
**16,335 permanently affordable homes  
(rental & homeownership)**



# Permanent affordability through Homeownership



Shared Equity Homeowner  
Kelly DeFelice, Barre City



Shared Equity Home in Brookline

- 389 new shared equity homeowners since 2020
- The Shared Equity model provides an affordable path to homeownership
- Homes created in partnership with Vermont's affordable housing developers and Habitat chapters
- The subsidy is recycled through generations
- From 2021 to 2023 the share of renters financially able to buy a median home dropped from 32% to 6%





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# Permanent Affordability

## Protects Vermonters



## Protects Mixed-Income Communities



## Protects the State's assets







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# Flood Resilience



Water Street Park, Northfield



Seminary Street, Barre





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# VHCB All-time Results\*

State Investment: \$552M | Leverage: \$2.4B



Camp Dream, Fletcher



**16,335** permanently affordable homes  
(rental & homeownership)



**822 farms conserved**  
across 175,755 acres



**278,741 acres conserved**  
natural areas, forestland & recreational lands



**87 historic preservation projects**



**1,300 working lands businesses served**

\*Since inception through June 30, 2024





Okemo State Forest, Mount Holly



Lily Pond Highlands, Athens

# Capital Construction and State Bonding Act

FY26 proposed support for VHCB programs

**Section 10 Clean Water: \$2.8M**

Agricultural water quality projects: \$800,000

Land Conservation and water quality projects \$2M





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# Clean Water Initiative

## Land Conservation and Water Quality



Maidstone Bends, Brunswick

### **Farmland Retirement Tanguay, Brunswick**

- Former dairy by the Maidstone Bends of the upper Connecticut River
- 183 acres of floodplain
- 15 acres of wetlands
- The Nature Conservancy will restore floodplain forest habitat and wetlands along the river, and some of the upland fields will remain in agricultural production.



# Conservation and Water Quality



## Wolcott Community Forest Project Highlights:

- Lake Champlain Basin
- \$352,000 WQ Bond
- 735 acres conserved
- 109 acres of protected wetlands
- 2 acre ecological protection zone
- 15 flood plain acres
- 29,040 feet of riparian corridor conserved with 50' buffers

- VHCB purchases development rights and places permanent conservation easements on farms and natural areas.
- Conservation areas protect water quality assets through management practices such as riparian buffers and wetland protections
- Bond dollars from the clean water section support projects with enhanced water quality outcomes.



### Project Highlights:

- 10,000 feet of 50' buffers on the Mad River
- 38 acres of Mad River frontage within a River Corridor Easement funded by Vermont DEC
- 8 acres of riparian protections with support from the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- 6 acres of permanently retired cropland

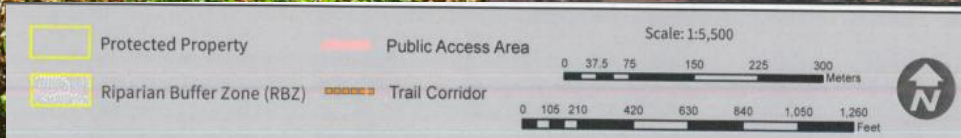


## Water Quality Protections on Conserved Farms

- Conserved farms are 33% forested, 43% pasture/hay, 10% wetlands, 14% annual crops.
- Since 2019, 80 miles of buffers established on conserved farms and 1,400 acres of wetlands protected.



Defreest Farm, Waitsfield



2022 Orthophoto



# Farm Transfers



Old Soul Farm, Barre



Bread & Butter Farm, South Burlington



Boneyard Farm, Fletcher



Lucas Dairy Farm, Orwell



# Farm & Forest Viability Program



The Goat Project, Bennington

- In-depth, individualized business assistance
- Succession planning, financial management, access to capital, land search and access, bookkeeping, improving profitability
- 108 clients in 2024 represented **\$42 million** in economic activity and **over 300 jobs**
- 36% average increase in profitability



# 2024 Business Vitality Metrics



Diggers Mirth, Burlington





# Frost, Flood & Climate Resilience

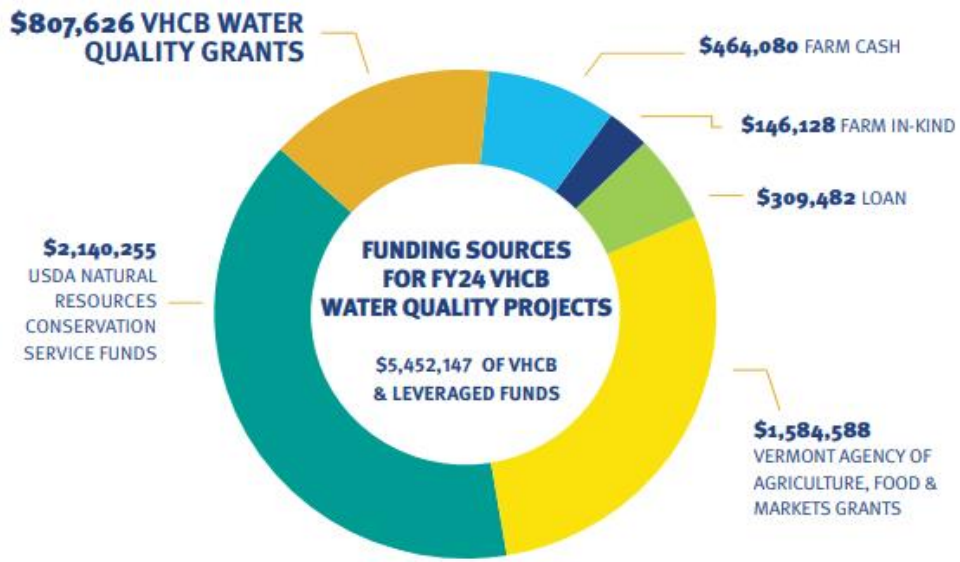
- We continue to see the impacts of 2023 & 2024 frost, flooding, and wet weather
- Profitable farms have more ability to invest in proactive solutions
- Farmers want support integrating climate resilience into their business planning
- Business planning supports adaptation and innovation

Kylie & Sam Rossier  
Sunday Bell Farm, Danville



# Water Quality Grants

- 20 grants in 2024 will reduce runoff, boost soil health, improve manure management, and increase grazing infrastructure
- \$807K in 2024 leveraged an additional \$4.6 million
- \$4.9 million awarded since 2017
- Flexible addition to State's clean water programming



Severy Farm, Cornwall



# Water Quality Grants



Taconic End Farm, Leicester



Four Girls Dairy, Fairfax



# Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

**\$1,086,681** ➔ **\$22,751,701**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES



“In dairy, there’s never a budget for equipment improvements that are forward thinking vs putting out fires. We’ve never applied for a grant, and this would’ve been too daunting without a strong team to help us. This grant will get us to a stage in one year that would’ve taken 5+...the impact is hard to put into words.”

~Alex Englert, Maplebrook Farm

Maplebrook Farm, North Bennington

## REDI impacts:

- Assists small towns and working lands businesses access capital for critically needed economic development projects
- **\$22.7 million** secured for small communities

## Focus areas:

- Community-based economic development and downtown revitalization
- Working lands
- Outdoor recreation

## Maplebrook Farm, Bennington:

- Secured a \$504,000 USDA Dairy Business Innovation Center Grant for their locally made mozzarella



# Supporting Small Towns to Access Big Funding



Alice M. Ward Library, Canaan

- **Canaan:** \$900,000 in ARPA/VT Dept of Libraries funds to expand programs, improve accessibility, and modernize the library
- **North Hero:** \$1 million in federal Northern Border Regional Commission funds for water/wastewater improvements
- **Rupert:** \$43,000 VCDP Planning Grant, then \$120,000 Congressionally Directed Spending award for upgrades to the historic Sheldon General Store



North Hero



Sheldon General Store, Rupert



# THANK YOU

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