



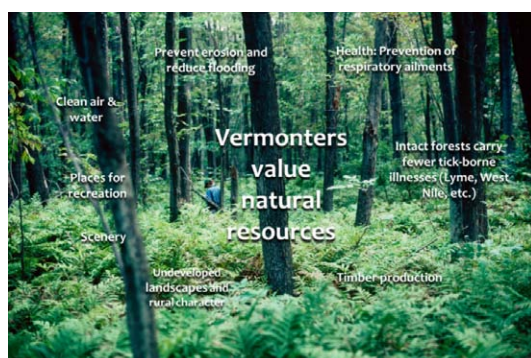
*Bennington County Regional Commission*

## BCRC January Meeting

### ***Forest Resource Planning Using Conservation Design***

*Park House, Manchester Recreation Center, Manchester, VT*

*Thursday, January 18, 5:30 pm*



The regular January meeting of the BCRC will include an important presentation on forest resource planning. Beginning in 2018, Vermont's Act 171 requires that municipalities and regions that are

updating their plans identify areas that are important as "forest blocks" and "habitat connectors" and plan for development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation. Vermont Conservation Design helps identify priority resource areas and produce required maps. The regular January meeting of the BCRC will include an important presentation on forest resource planning. Beginning in 2018, Vermont's Act 171 requires that municipalities and regions that are updating their plans identify areas that are important as "forest blocks" and "habitat connectors" and plan for development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation. Vermont Conservation Design helps identify priority resource areas and

produce required maps.

Monica Przyperhart, with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, will provide important background that will on how these ideas can be incorporated in our planning work, covering:

- Act 171 requirements for municipalities and regional planning commissions;
- Sample town and regional plan language;
- Guidance on finding, interpreting, and creating required maps using the BioFinder website;
- Case studies of policies that maintain and protect forests and connectivity.

The meeting also will include an overview of the soon-to-be unveiled update of the BCRC's website, [www.bcrcvt.org](http://www.bcrcvt.org). The meeting will be held at 5:30 PM on Thursday, January 18, at the Park House at the Manchester Recreation Center on Route 30.

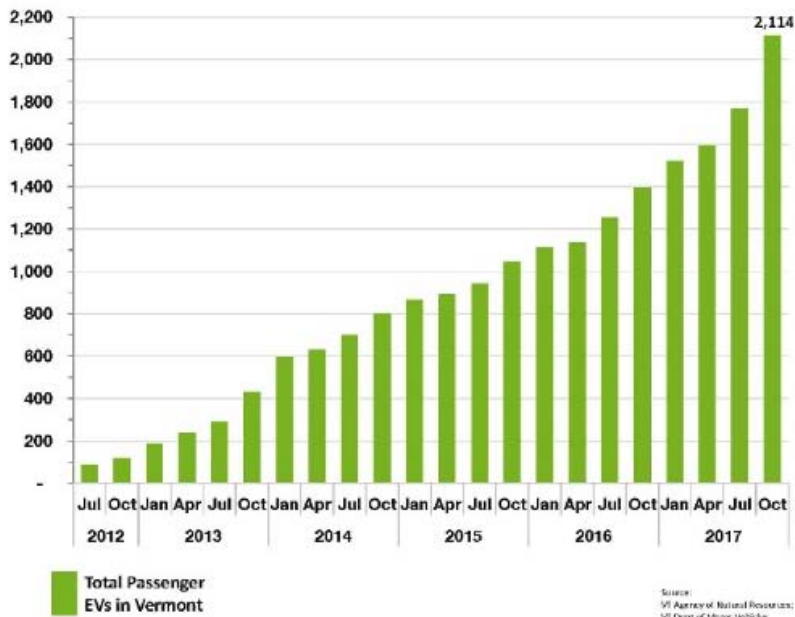
## Municipal Planning Grants Announced

Awarded annually and administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Municipal Planning Grant Program works to strengthen Vermont communities. Since 1998, over \$12 million has been provided to 234 cities and towns across Vermont to help breathe new life into communities, plan for future growth and development, and improve the quality of life.

This year's Municipal Planning Grants, range from \$4,000 to \$35,000 with total requests exceeding \$600,000. Competitively awarded, 50 total applications were reviewed with 37 recipients selected. In our region, Dorset was awarded approximately \$10,000 to develop a plan to create a safer and more inviting pedestrian environment in the village center. A region-wide grant of \$35,000 will be used develop a cultural plan to strengthen, leverage, and coordinate artistic and cultural resources to address community needs and opportunities.

## Electric Vehicle Registrations Continue to Climb

## Vermont Electric Vehicle Registrations



Vermont has seen a steady increase in the number of electric vehicle registrations, with over 2,000 now on the road. There are 19 all-electric and 50 plug-in electric hybrid vehicles on the road in Bennington County (including the BCRC's Chevy Volt). With tax incentives, low-refueling costs, and a growing network of charging stations, it is a good time to consider an EV – talk to your local dealer about plug-ins available! [More info...](#)

## Ridership Growing on the Amtrak Shuttle

The number of people using the *Vermont Shires Connector* – a direct transit link between Manchester, Bennington, and the Rensselaer Amtrak Station – continues to grow. The shuttle also provides continuing service to the Albany Greyhound Terminal and the Albany Airport.

Fares are affordable, and tickets can be purchased for the service and to any Amtrak destination directly

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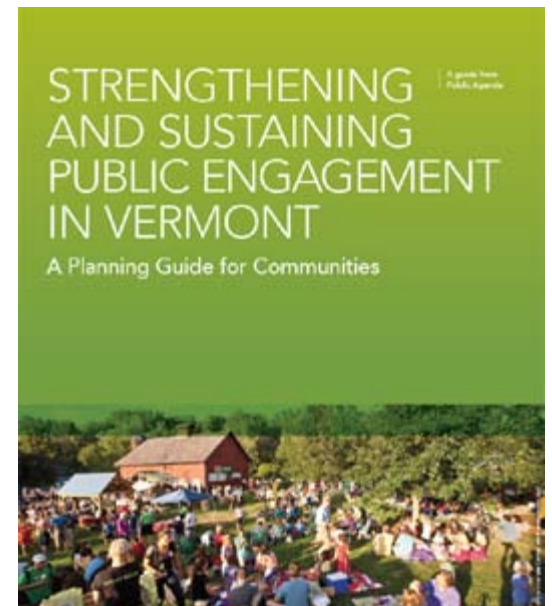
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## Public Engagement Guide for Vermont Communities

Vermont has a long tradition of public engagement, from the centuries-old town meeting to modern day online forums. *Strengthening and Sustaining Public Engagement in Vermont: A Planning Guide for Communities* was created by [Public Agenda](#) with support from the Innovations and Collaborations program at the [Vermont Community Foundation](#). This is a guide for all Vermonters -- including



people working in school systems or local governments, elected officials and all Vermont residents who want to be meaningfully engaged in the public life of their communities. [Learn more.](#)

## New Crime Tip Line

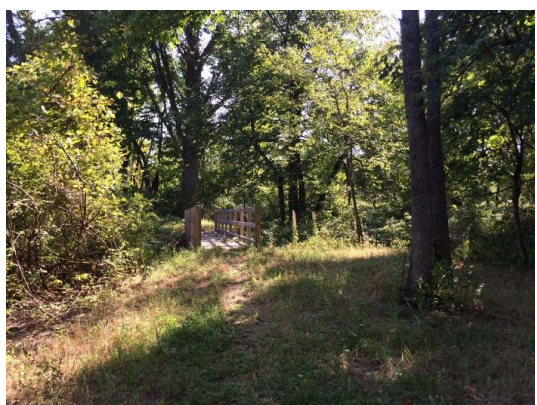
An anonymous tip reporting program, powered by a free smartphone app, has been launched by the Bennington County Sheriff Department and The Collaborative. The app will help residents submit

anonymous tips to law enforcement agencies, as well as receive alerts on their smartphones.

The free smartphone app is available for Android and iPhone mobile devices. The department and The Collaborative are encouraging people to send tips about burglaries, illegal drug activity, parties where underage youth are consuming alcohol, and bullying.

The initiative is one piece of a grant-funded partnership program to combat substance abuse, said Victoria Silsby with The Collaborative's substance prevention program. A video explaining the new tip line is available [HERE](#).

## Ninja Path Phase II Open



*A new timber bridge over a culvert on the interim Ninja Path.*

This December the BCRC and the Town of Bennington completed the Ninja Path Phase II, an interim dirt path that extends the Ninja Path

to Morse Road. In combination with low traffic, low speed side streets it creates an attractive route between North Bennington/ Bennington College and downtown Bennington. The interim path links to the paved Phase I path near the Hampton Inn, travels through the woods behind Hannaford, goes under VT279, through more woods, crosses the Furnace Brook over a new timber bridge, and then connects to Morse Road. The interim dirt path is a low cost way to open parts of the Ninja Path while the final, paved project is designed and permitted, a process that typically takes 5-7 years.

## Manchester Proposes Comprehensive Zoning Revisions

Manchester's Planning Commission has developed a comprehensive proposal for a new zoning ordinance that will affect land use throughout the town. The goal is to use these tools to increase density in downtown Manchester while preserving the rural character of outlying lands. The proposal was developed by the Planning Commission and Town Planning Director (and BCRC Chair), Janet Hurley, with assistance from consultant Brandy Saxon of PlaceSense. Since May, the Planning Commission has held public meetings twice a month to finalize the ordinance and hear feedback from citizens.

Hurley notes that the changes – the first comprehensive rewrite of the town's land use ordinance since



1970 - represent important ideas that reflect the community's goals related to economic development, workforce housing, the need for more diversity in the downtown, and protection of rural open spaces. These objectives are pointed to in the Town Plan and in recent reports such as the Northshire Economic Development Study (NEDS), and zoning represents one important implementation tool.

Before the ordinance is finalized, however, Hurley says that it will be essential to gather community feedback. It is expected that the new ordinance will be submitted to the Select Board for final consideration in February. A GNAT-TV story on the proposal can be viewed [HERE](#).



### Hoosic River Corridor Study

The Bennington County Regional Commission, working with Fitzgerald Environmental Associates and the Town of Pownal, has completed a corridor plan for the Hoosic River with particular focus on Ladd and Tubbs Brooks in the town. Those two streams were previously identified as impaired for sedimentation. The planning process involved assessing these two streams and identifying areas of erosion and sedimentation. Thirty-four projects were identified that could reduce sedimentation and erosion into these streams that flow into the Hoosic River. The results of this study can be used by the Town of Pownal in seeking funding from various state sources. The draft study can be found [HERE](#).



## Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance

### Bulky Waste Collection

The Towns of Arlington, Bennington, Dorset, Manchester, Sandgate, and Sunderland are planning a bulky waste collection in the spring. Residents will be able to dispose of bulky items including tires at the Bennington, Sunderland or Northshire Transfer Stations. Visit [www.bcswavt.org](http://www.bcswavt.org) this spring for more information.

### Transfer Stations Accepting Food Scraps



BCSWA received a grant of \$4,000 from the High Meadows Fund to assist the Towns of Pownal, Searsburg, Shaftsbury and Stamford to accept food scraps from their residents. The Northshire Transfer Station in East Dorset and the Sunderland Transfer Station in Sunderland also accept food scraps and serve the towns of Arlington, Dorset, Manchester, Sandgate, and Sunderland. The Bennington Transfer Station accepts food scraps from residents of Bennington and Woodford. [More info...](#)



## Hazardous Waste Disposal

In 2017 BCSWA held household hazardous waste events in the spring in Bennington and in the fall in Dorset. Over 400 households participated along with three businesses. The next event will be held in May 2018 at the Bennington Transfer Station.

## Business and School Outreach

The Alliance provided outreach to 40 businesses in 2017. This free service provides guidance on methods of recycling, disposing hazardous materials, and properly diverting food scraps and organics from landfills. This past year, the Alliance worked with Pownal Elementary, Stamford Elementary and Burr and Burton on improving their recycling efforts. This included helping Pownal Elementary begin composting all food scraps on site. If your school, business or institution is interested in having someone visit to discuss better ways to handle solid waste, organics, recyclables and other materials, please contact Michael Batcher at 802-442-0713 x 2 or [mbatcher@bcrcvt.org](mailto:mbatcher@bcrcvt.org).



## Economic Development with the Bennington County Industrial Corporation

## Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

BCIC/BCRC staff co-hosted an Open House at Williams Financial for individuals interested in the Ice House Entrepreneurial Program. The program's steering committee, which includes representatives of

BCIC/BCRC, CCV, SVC, and The Lightning Jar, were on hand to introduce themselves to prospective applicants and explain the services their organizations provide to the entrepreneurial community.

Interest in the course has exceeded expectations, and all twelve enrollees are fully engaged as the program enters its third week, hosted by CCV. Attendees range from college students to mid-career professionals, and most have lived in the region for less than five years. All are employed full-time, or part-time in the case of the college students.

## Participants

- Total: 12
- Living in the region less than five years: 9
- Employed full-time: 11

## Business categories

- Services: 5
- Products: 4
- Intellectual: 3

## Business expectations

- Already launched: 5
- Planning to launch new concepts in six months: 8
- Planning to leave full-time position once revenues increase: 8

[Read more...](#)

## BCIC Annual Meeting



*Photo credit: Sarah Lang, Southern Vermont Economy Project*



Staff hosted the BCIC Annual Meeting & Social Hour on November 15. Forty attendees gathered at the Bennington Museum for conversation and refreshments, and to review BCIC's the accomplishments and developments in 2017. In keeping with the prioritization of region-wide activity and the celebration of local community and economic development initiatives, staff invited John O'Keefe, Manchester Town Manager, to provide the evening's keynote address. John's engaging and informative talk detailed how the town is adapting to retail and tourism trends that have affected the bottom lines of many businesses in the community, and how the town expects to build off of its strengths to attract new visitors and residents.

## Another Vermont Training Program Grant for the Region

On December 17, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development approved a Vermont Training Program grant of approximately \$76,000 for Energizer's Bennington plant. VTP grants represent up to fifty percent of the total cost of trainings, and therefore represent a corporate investment of at least an equivalent amount in the local workforce. Energizer applied to the program in response to a significant increase in demand for the miniature batteries the plant produces. The funds will support the training of sixteen incumbent employees, and is expected to lead to the addition of ten new hires in the workplace. With this grant, total VTP funds approved for Bennington County businesses in 2017 now exceeds \$357,000.

## Regional Economic Development Capacity and Coalition Building

The Regional Economic Development (RED) Group, convened and supported by BCIC staff, continues to meet monthly to discuss regional data and directions for Bennington County and



Southern Vermont. The most recent meeting included an overview of several local-level economic development initiatives around the region, demonstrating the extent to which several towns in the region are responding to economic development concerns, and ways to frame the narrative of regional development at the local scale.

In October, the US Economic Development Administration accepted an application for grant funding to support the creation of a Comprehensive Economic Development Zone for Southern Vermont, which was one of the primary recommendations of the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone Committee's 2015 report. The grant will provide a total of \$70,000, split evenly between the Bennington County Regional Commission and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, to match the \$70,000 the two entities will direct towards staffing and consulting capacity for the process. To build familiarity with the CEDS process, two RED Group members have agreed to participate in the project

selection process for the final year of the Windham County CEDS, which is now underway.

At the conclusion of the November meeting, three RED Group members agreed to work with three SeVEDS Board members to review and approve of the Request for Proposals that will be issued to consulting firms for assistance in creating a Comprehensive Economic Development Zone for Southern Vermont. This committee will also evaluate the proposals received, and make recommendations for a selection in early 2018.

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## Events & Opportunities

BCRC Regular Meeting, January 18, 5:30 pm  
Manchester Recreation Center Park House, Rt 30, Manchester, VT

Topics include: Addressing Forest Fragmentation Through Conservation Design and BCRC's new website. Contact [Jim Sullivan](#) (802) 442-0713 x5 for more information.

Southern Vermont Housing Summit, February 9, 1-4 pm  
Shaftsbury Town Offices

The event will be held at the Shaftsbury Town Offices. The summit will cover housing data, housing types, housing programs/assistance and more. Please RSVP [HERE](#).

BCSWA Board Meeting, March 14, 4 pm  
Location TBD

An agenda will be at [www.bcswavt.org](http://www.bcswavt.org) at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

35th Annual Tourism Summit, April 11-12  
Equinox Resort, Manchester Village

The Vermont Tourism Summit draws one of the largest gatherings of tourism professionals in the state including owners, managers and employees of the many businesses connected to this important segment of the economy. This event is held annually in the beginning of April, and rotates around the state. [More info...](#)

Hazardous Waste Disposal, May 12, 8 am- 1 pm  
8 am-1 pm, Bennington Transfer Station

Residents of the 13 Alliance towns are welcome to dispose of substances that are toxic, corrosive, and poisonous or that have similar warnings. These items can NOT be disposed of in normal trash.

## Vermont Walk-Bike Summit, May 14 Barrette Center for the Arts, White River Junction

The Vermont Walk/Bike Summit is an excellent opportunity to connect with community members, employers, planners and researchers from throughout the state for in-depth sharing on current efforts, new ideas, and networking to advance more livable communities. This year's Summit will include interactive mobile workshops, peer exchanges, a highly-acclaimed keynote, and a variety of dynamic presentations and topics including advocacy and education, public safety, economic development, and the built environment. [More info...](#)



## Bennington Comprehensive Internship Program

Is your business interested in developing a special project? How about building capacity or interacting with potential future employees? Your business could benefit from hosting an intern! The Bennington County Industrial Corporation and the Bennington County Regional Commission are excited to announce that recruitment has begun for summer internships in Bennington County. The Bennington Comprehensive Internship Program will support businesses in recruiting, training, and managing their interns. We are currently seeking between five and ten businesses to host paid interns, starting June 2017. If you've considered hosting an intern in the past or are newly interested, we want to talk to you! Please call or email Michelle Marrocco, Internship Coordinator for more details. 802-442-0713 x9, [mmarrocco@bcrcvt.org](mailto:mmarrocco@bcrcvt.org)

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## Grants & Funding

### PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program: Due January 19, 2018

PeopleForBikes accepts grant applications from non-profit organizations with a focus on bicycling, active transportation, or community development, from city or county agencies or departments, and from state or federal agencies working locally. Letters of interest are due January 19, 2018 with applications due by April 6, 2018. Grant guidelines are posted [HERE](#).

### Better Connections Grant Program: Due January 31, 2018

As part of an ongoing partnership to revitalize community centers and increase transportation options, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) are pleased to announce the Better Connections (BC) Grant

Program. Annually, the program grants approximately \$200,000 in planning funds to help municipalities build more livable, walkable, and strong communities. All applicants required to participate in a pre-application meeting with BC Program Managers prior to December 31, 2017. For more information, contact Richard Amore at (802) 828-5229 or Jackie Cassino, at (802) 272-2368 and visit the grant [website](#).

## USDA Value Added Producer Grant:

Due January 31, 2018

Develop new products, increase the value of existing products, and develop new uses for traditional commodities. Eligible applicants include farm, forestry and fishery producers who produce 51 percent of the raw commodity used to produce a final product and mid-tier value chains that represent producers aggregating a raw commodity and marketing a value added product. Up to a \$75,000 grant for planning, marketing and feasibility study and \$250,000 grant for working capital expenses. Requires a 50 percent match. Application information on the USDA Rural Development websites for [Vermont](#). Contact Business Program Specialist [Susan Poland](#) at (802) 828-6002 with questions.

## The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF):

Due February 16, 2018

Low interest loans to municipalities and privately-owned public water systems for planning, final design and construction of water system improvements that protect public health and facilitate compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). All projects seeking funding for construction from 10/1/2018 through 9/30/2020 must be on the adopted priority list to receive funding. Applying to be on the priority list is not applying for a loan and does not guarantee a loan. The [priority list application](#) is to be filled out annually and once completed, emailed to [anr.dwsrfplist@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.dwsrfplist@vermont.gov).

## Renewable Heating Opportunities

The [Clean Energy Development Fund](#) has expanded incentive offerings for local, renewable heating opportunities with efficient wood heat systems. Commercial/industrial buildings in Vermont are now eligible for up to \$70,000 (\$1.25 per heated sq. ft.) in incentives to install central wood-pellet or wood-chip heating systems. Detailed information on the various incentives [HERE](#).

## USDA Water and Environmental Program

This program is aimed at improving the health, safety and reliability of water infrastructure in rural communities across Vermont and New Hampshire. Municipalities and non-profits are eligible to apply for financing to support water, wastewater, and storm water improvements in their communities through the USDA's Water and Environmental Program. Current interest rates range from 2.125% to 3.500% for up to a 40 year repayment term. Grants are available based on community eligibility. Application materials and program information are located on the Vermont Water and Environmental Program [websites](#).

## Assistance to Firefighters Grants

The primary goal of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations. Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and other first responders obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training and other resources necessary for protecting the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards. Begin preparing your application now by utilizing the [application assistance tools](#).



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