

Community Land Conservation



HOW TO CONSERVE LAND IMPORTANT TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Overview

The Vermont Land Trust (VLT) has prepared this information to support communities and community groups interested in conserving important local lands. Community groups may want to maintain a working farm, create a ball field or public trail, preserve a panoramic vista, protect an historical or cultural

site, or preserve the boundary between the village and countryside.

Collectively, these efforts are called “Community Land Conservation” projects. VLT can work with groups to design a project, negotiate with landowners, fundraise, and, perhaps most helpful to groups, do the legal work involved in conserving land and “holding” the conservation easement.

VLT values this opportunity to partner with communities. Conserved farms and forests support a rural economy and promote local food and wood production. They help maintain

a town’s rural heritage, protect natural communities, and provide recreational opportunities. Additionally, community projects often create new relationships within the community and give people of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints an opportunity to work towards a shared goal.

In the process, the project may link the community’s past with its present needs and future aspirations. By combining the community’s knowledge, energy, and resources with VLT’s conservation expertise, the partners can ensure that the project will benefit the community for generations to come.

The Vermont Land Trust

The Vermont Land Trust is a nonprofit organization founded in 1977 to conserve land for the future of Vermont. It works with individuals to conserve family land, working farms, and forests, as well as with groups to protect land important to local communities. In most cases, landowners retain ownership of the land, continue to pay taxes on it, and either give or sell a conservation easement on it to VLT to hold. Ownership of land in Community Land Conservation Projects may transfer from an individual to a local nonprofit or to the municipality.



Craig Line

Members of Guilford Preservation Incorporated worked with VLT to acquire and conserve a 22-acre scenic gateway to their community.





Definition of a Community Project

VLT actively seeks to serve communities that have identified lands of great community importance and notable natural resources. The most successful community projects involve land that:

- helps preserve a sense of community or local heritage, such as a hay meadow that forms a scenic gateway to a village; or land where community members gather for public events;
- is valuable for recreation, such as ball fields, swimming holes, or trails; or
- connects people to nature, such as a town forest used by school groups or local residents for nature study, wildlife observation, or general enjoyment of the outdoors.

Beyond the land conserved, successful conservation projects:

- generate local enthusiasm for and participation in the conservation effort;
- benefit a broad public;
- include plans for long-term ownership and management of property; and
- support a community's vision of its future.



Peter Miller

The Conservation Society of Southern Vermont worked with VLT in 1999 to protect Pike Falls, which is located on North Branch Brook in Jamaica.

The Role of the Community

The sustaining vision and the motivation for a conservation project must come from the community. VLT joins communities to conserve land only when a local group is an enthusiastic partner in the effort.

A local group may be made up of elected town officials, a local conservation group, or interested volunteers. In addition, a community must confirm that conservation of the land is in accordance with a Town Plan or other community planning efforts. While VLT can lend





significant expertise to the acquisition or protection of the property, the motivation, knowledge, and insight of local residents make community members uniquely suited to contribute to the project's success in the following ways:

- provide first-hand knowledge of the land and its context
- provide access to local sources of information or assistance
- raise awareness about the project
- plan for future ownership, management, or use of the land
- initiate and organize neighborhood or town-wide meetings
- identify supporters and potential donors
- carry out local fundraising
- lead local publicity and celebration efforts

The Role of the Vermont Land Trust

Depending on the needs of the community, VLT can:

- research and inventory natural resources
- develop project design and conservation plans
- coordinate appraisal work and conduct mapping
- negotiate with landowners
- apply for public or foundation funds

- assist with local fundraising
- maintain the accounts, including contributions and costs
- do legal work, for example, draft purchase agreements and assist with title searches and closing procedures
- assist with priority-setting, planning, and publicity strategies
- provide perpetual stewardship for the conservation easement on protected land

Getting Started with VLT

The Vermont Land Trust's involvement often begins when an individual calls VLT concerned about an important piece of land in town. Sometimes the call is prompted by an impending sale or transfer of the property, while other times it follows a community planning process that has identified land that contributes to the town's scenic landscape, local economy, or community life. Through the initial conversation, subsequent discussions, and a site visit, pertinent information is shared and the conservation opportunity is assessed. Often a local group is organized to lead the conservation work. Before the project proceeds, an informal working agreement is prepared that describes the roles and responsibilities of the community group as well as VLT staff.

A Community Project in Your Town?

Community projects are often complex undertakings that take months to complete. However, people who organize to identify their special places and take action to save them realize a great sense of accomplishment, ownership, and peace of mind. If there is a parcel of land in your community that seems particularly important, call the Vermont Land Trust. Your actions may well lead to the conservation of land that will enrich your community for generations to come.

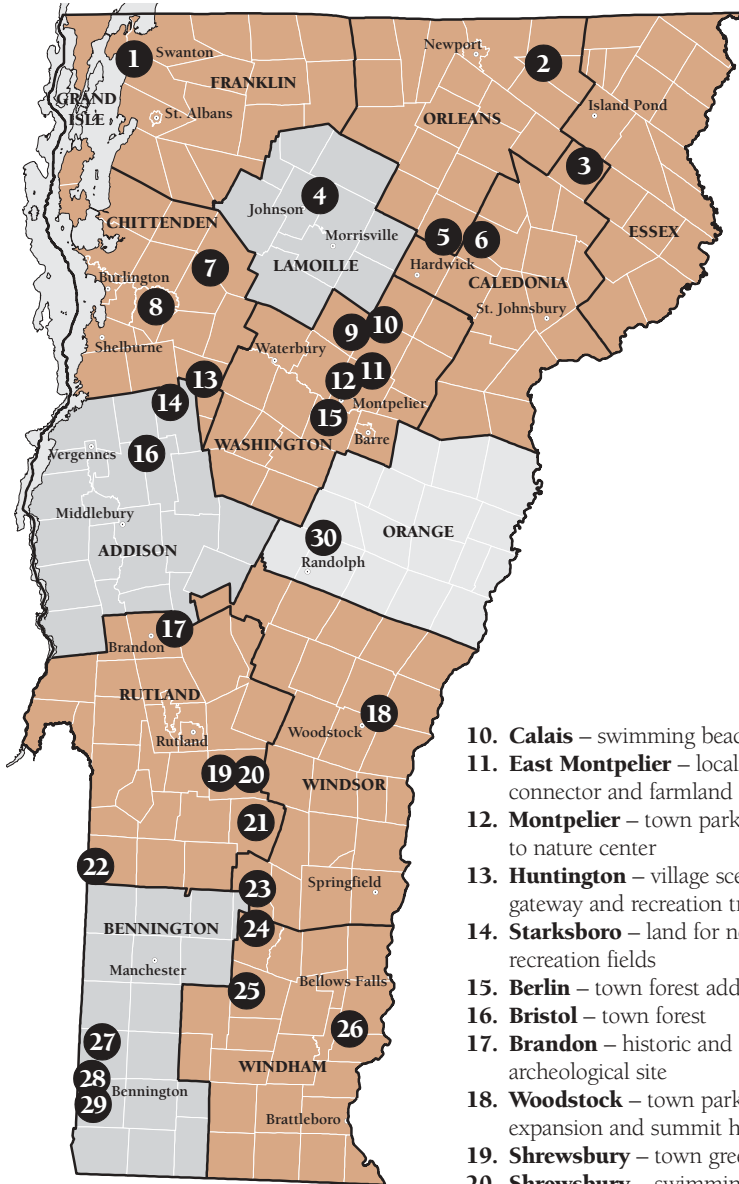
For More Information Contact

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(800) 639-1709
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Montpelier, VT 05602
www.vlt.org

We will put you in touch with the VLT regional director nearest you.

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A Sampling of Community Land Conservation Projects



1. **Swanton** – Native American historical and archaeological site
2. **Morgan** – town park and scenic gateway
3. **Newark** – town beach and shoreline trail
4. **Johnson** – county fair and community events site
5. **Greensboro** – community open space and scenic gateway
6. **Stannard** – town open space
7. **Jericho/Underhill** – two-town park
8. **Williston** – scenic open space with recreation trails
9. **Worcester** – town park and village landscape
10. **Calais** – swimming beach
11. **East Montpelier** – local trail connector and farmland
12. **Montpelier** – town park adjacent to nature center
13. **Huntington** – village scenic gateway and recreation trail
14. **Starksboro** – land for new recreation fields
15. **Berlin** – town forest addition
16. **Bristol** – town forest
17. **Brandon** – historic and archeological site
18. **Woodstock** – town park expansion and summit hiking trail
19. **Shrewsbury** – town green
20. **Shrewsbury** – swimming hole
21. **Mount Holly** – scenic farmland gateway
22. **Pawlet** – public trail
23. **Weston** – scenic gateway and public access
24. **Londonderry** – scenic gateway dairy farm
25. **Jamaica** – swimming hole
26. **Putney/Westminster** – ridgeline trail and wildlife preserve
27. **N. Shaftsbury** – scenic farm
28. **N. Bennington** – public access to historic mansion and walking trail
29. **Bennington** – scenic gateway dairy farm
30. **Randolph** – town park and village water supply



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