

Summer 2021 Edition

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NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND PLANNING CONFERENCE

DON'T MISS NNECAPA 2021! In Burlington, Vermont October 13-15.

FMI: <https://nne.planning.org/meetings/conference/>

## New Ruralism Initiative Update:

### Recognized by APA Divisions Council and Online Presentations

Lynne Seeley, Community Planning Consultant

Chad Nabity, AICP, Hall County Regional Planning Commission Planning Director,  
Grand Island, Nebraska



June 10, 2021 was a banner day for the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (NNECAPA) and APA's Small Town and Rural Planning Division (STaR). This was the day that the National Planning Awards were announced. As part of that celebration the Divisions Council Awards were announced and celebrated. The 2021 award winner for the category "Division Contribution to the Profession" was NNECAPA and STaR for their Divisions Council sponsored research project, [Lessons in New Ruralism](#).

You may recall the *New Ruralism Initiative*, a project which started by featuring rural case studies in Northern New England and expanded to feature grassroots initiatives to strengthen rural communities from Alaska to New York to Alabama, all available in an [online collection of "New Ruralism" initiatives](#). In 2017 the NNECAPA team began collaborating with STaR volunteers for the National Planning Conference (NPC) in New York City. "New Ruralism Working for Us!" was a STaR sponsored session at the NPC on May 8, 2017. The research and case studies collected by the NNECAPA project team were highlighted during this session. Following the conference, the expanded team envisioned finding more examples that fell into the New Ruralism model and wanted to discover if the characteristics of the model held true across the country or if they were a uniquely New England construct.

In 2018, STaR received a research grant from the Divisions Council to hire an intern to identify rural stories, research them and record them along with the case studies from NNECAPA into a single document that defines the characteristics of New Ruralism and showcases how it can benefit small towns, rural areas and their residents. Jennifer Whittaker, a Doctoral Student from the School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania, was hired to conduct the research. Jennifer worked with the team of NNECAPA and STaR volunteers to research and produce the [Lessons in New Ruralism](#) report that was released in the Fall of 2020.

### Recent Online Presentations

In addition to the online report and compilation of case studies, presentations of the initiatives have been made through the Radically Rural Conference in 2020, and this past June, as part of the Ohio Chapter Webinar series ([view recording](#)). These sessions featured presentations from community members involved in the grassroots projects striving to improve livability in a small town or rural area.

### Upcoming Presentation

Coming up in September, members of the team will be presenting virtually at the APA Nebraska Chapter's [Nebraska Planning Conference](#) on September 16, 2021.

Even as the research has wrapped up we are still interested in learning about other rural initiatives tackling environmental, social, or economic challenges in a unique way. **Do you have a project you'd like to share? Nominate your people and projects by clicking [here](#) and telling us a few details about the efforts happening in your community. We would like to learn about your story!**

We are excited about the future of small towns and rural communities across America, and our excitement is rooted in the belief that people are our best assets. Each of the case studies emphasizes residents uniting to invest in their place and drive change. Help us cross-pollinate the ingredients of successful rural innovation across diverse rural communities by sharing the power of your rural story.



*Quimper Village, a senior co-housing community in Port Townsend, WA is demonstrating that walkable, inclusive, high-quality housing can be designed within a larger community to allow residents to age in place surrounded by peers.  
Photo: The New Ruralism Initiative*

## Investing in Bellows Falls Through an Alternative Development Model

Duane Case, Rockingham Incremental Development Working Group member

When we mention "development," many people tend to think of large new construction: the business park, the office complex, large clusters of homes or apartments. In this model, a few big players make the plans, provide the investment, and reap much of the benefits. What happens if we instead focus on a lot of individuals "micro-developers," each pursuing their own tiny development interests and goals. What is the effect on those individuals and their community? Are there advantages to this approach, and is it worth pursuing?

### The Incremental Approach

Incremental development is a conceptual alternative to typical large-scale development projects and takes a small-scale approach. While large projects can run to tens of thousands of square feet, incremental development promotes many micro-sized "developments." It encourages low-investment low-barrier solutions. Because investments are so much lower, the number of individuals and businesses that can participate is much greater. The approach encourages unique projects, individual opportunity, and diversity.



### The Analysis

The Incremental Development Alliance (IncDev) is a non-profit organization which has been working with the Town of Rockingham (with support from Brattleboro Development

Credit Corporation and others) over several months to study how the concepts of incremental development might be applied to improving the community.

Bellows Falls (in particular) possesses some unique challenges and opportunities. The history of the Village has resulted in many small properties. There are relatively few opportunities for large-scale projects within the Village, even if big developers were otherwise incentivized to consider construction here. The fact that there are many small properties with unique structures full of character makes the area ripe for micro investment, one property, one building, at a time. There are barriers and challenges however, some perceived, some real, that have limited this sort of development for years.

### **Moving Forward**

The Rockingham Incremental Development Working Group (RIDWG), made of up residents and stakeholders, has committed to taking the lessons learned from the IncDev process and carrying the momentum into the future to create an evolution that all residents can be proud of.



RIDWG has taken many steps since it first met in June 2021. Some of the ideas and actions this group is focusing on are a carriage house survey for potential ADU opportunities, working with the Planning Commission on their Zoning Bylaw updates based on incremental development principles, sharing the target market analysis with realtors and bankers, sharing educational materials and documents with residents from the IncDev work, and creating some educational workshops such as a pro forma training and multifamily homeownership class. A core principle of incremental development is community evolution. It asks us to identify what is most valued in town, and to encourage us to maintain and restore those features. That is what RIDWG is hoping to achieve!



## Building a Better Future with Placemaking and Public Spaces

Richard Amore

From <https://vnrc.org/people-places-transportation/building-a-better-future-with-placemaking-and-public-spaces/>

Almost overnight the COVID-19 crisis turned our dining rooms into offices, parking spaces became places to eat, and our parks and public spaces served as safe places to reconnect during an isolating year. The realities of our homes, our communities, and our workplaces shifted rapidly, and the pandemic brought forth opportunities that we never thought possible before. As we emerge from the pandemic and transition to the new normal, we have an opportunity to reflect on the changes brought by COVID and take more enduring steps to improve quality of life, local economies, and social capital in Vermont communities.

Many communities are eager to restart and rebuild and are asking, “How do we build back better?” Many are feeling the impacts to downtowns from the transition to online shopping; the inequities in income, race, and place exposed by the pandemic; and the need to build social capital by strengthening the connections between [people and places](#). Will state and local leaders make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make Vermont’s cities and towns more walkable, more economically resilient, more vibrant, and more welcoming? I sure hope so and want to share a few thoughts and reflections on how we can build back better for all Vermonters.

### It Starts with the Sidewalks

*“Sidewalks are like rivers where lives of people come together.”*  
– William H. Whyte; American Urbanist and Author



[Halloween bike ride](#) on Church Street in Burlington, a pedestrian plaza that is closed off to motorized vehicles. Photo: Richard Amore.

There are [many great reasons to have walkable streets](#), but during the pandemic, they proved all the more valuable. Montpelier's sidewalks provided me opportunities for social interaction, physical activity, and respite from a deluge of Zoom meetings. I took profound joy in walking my sons to school, connecting with friends and neighbors, even at a distance and briefly. This common space provided me a sense of community and social interaction [desperately needed during isolating times](#).

We often think of transportation infrastructure in terms of mobility and access, but it is [so much more](#). As the pandemic has illustrated, [our sidewalks serve as essential social and economic infrastructure](#) to help businesses expand their showrooms, restaurants expand their dining rooms, and for Vermonters to expand their living rooms to connect with one another in public life. Sidewalks are the first step in building walkable, equitable, and welcoming communities.

### **The Places We Gather Strengthen Connections to Place and to Each Other**

*“Convincing people to “live life in public” is one of the greatest services you and I can perform for our cities. Because parks are not just places to unwind or recreate, just like downtowns are not simply places to conduct business. They are deeply necessary platforms for equity.” – Carol Coletta; President and CEO at Memphis River Parks Partnership*

Across Vermont and the globe, the pandemic highlighted the importance of a robust, connected, and inclusive public realm and [civic common](#). This past year demonstrated that accessible public spaces and social infrastructure are critical to our health, economy, and social lives. Social infrastructure is comprised of the physical places and activities where community-building occurs, like libraries, schools, [playgrounds](#), recreation centers, art centers, grange halls, farmers markets, public swimming pools, and parks as well as our village [general stores](#) and neighborhood [corner stores](#). These [“third places”](#) are often found in walkable places and our critical in strengthening social cohesion, building relationships that can create opportunity, and helping us reconnect with one another and heal from the collective trauma of this past year.





*The State House Lawn, local parks, and main streets provide venues to peacefully protest and provide a public forum to advance social justice and racial equity. Photo by Richard Amore.*

We need physical and social places in our communities where it is possible to [make connections](#) with other people. To discuss and exchange ideas face to face, participate in the [civic life](#), engage in peaceful protest, and enjoy [cultural events to celebrate and build collective memories](#). Why does this matter? Being around others, including those who don't look or act like us, breeds empathy and understanding ([Colletta](#)), which is essential to building community, overcoming barriers, developing communal solutions, and equitably rebuilding our civic life, our economy, and democracy.

*“Equitable growth for a community means that residents grow alongside it, and that the community continues to grow because of its residents. The growth comes from within the community, and the residents who have participated in its history and culture not only benefit from that growth but help to make it happen.” – Eureka Gilkey; Executive Director, Project Row Houses*

## **We Can Build Better Places for Everyone**

Vermont's and our country's success in fighting for equality, overcoming civic distrust, and preparing for future pandemics and [climate change](#) depends upon more trust, more empathy, more local empowerment, more civic participation, more communal problem solving, and more economic opportunity —not less ([Marquis](#)). To face these challenges and opportunities, we need investments that provide more opportunities for all members of the community to engage in social life and economic opportunity.



*Morrisville, Vermont is among the many communities that created new gathering areas through sidewalk seating, parklets, and open streets initiatives. Photo by Richard Amore.*

For all these reasons and more, I am excited about the new [Better Places program piloted in December](#), and currently making its way through the [legislature](#). The Better Places program is a new tool to inspire local action, supporting small but impactful improvements to downtown and village gathering spaces that build community, celebrate local culture, and create better places for all. What excites me most about the Better Places program is not only its focus on creating and activating public spaces in Vermont's walkable downtowns and villages – but its commitment to [community engagement](#) through its [crowdfunding approach](#) and by broadening the conversation to include residents in meaningful engagement and co-creation of their own community gathering areas.

We can't [achieve true economic revival without bridging social divides](#) and creating more opportunities for residents to come together. These investments in places matter—because people matter, and [place determines people's health, wealth, and happiness more than anything else](#).

## What We Invest in Post-Pandemic will Define the Future of Vermont



*The City of Rutland transformed Center Street with outdoor seating, landscaping, and public art. Photo provided with permission by the [Downtown Rutland Partnership](#).*

We need to treat our public spaces and community gathering areas as essential infrastructure, not luxuries. As more federal dollars come to Vermont, we need to capitalize on this opportunity to build welcoming places for Vermonters to gather and connect with one another – whether that means [including public spaces and parks in affordable housing](#), building [inclusive streets](#) with widened sidewalks, adding colorful murals and performing arts to our public spaces, or addressing climate change by equipping more public spaces to absorb stormwater or serve as a place of respite on hot summer days.

If the hardships of the past year taught us anything, it is that we urgently [need investments in people, public spaces, and social infrastructure](#) that rebuild our trust and build hope for a better future for every Vermonter and our Brave Little State. Investing in Better Places is a start in the right direction to enable more Vermonters to co-invest and co-build welcoming, prosperous, and equitable communities. With this and other investments – and the creativity and spirit of the people in our communities – the opportunity lies ahead of us to make transformational change and leverage the power of [public spaces](#) to build better and more equitable places that makes us proud to be Vermonters.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training through APA!

APA has recently updated online information and resources on equity, diversity and inclusion, at [www.planning.org/equity](http://www.planning.org/equity).

This update is part of APA's EDI work plan goal to raise awareness and motivation for planners to act, and to increase the visibility of EDI policy, goals, and outcomes in our communications.

These pages include practical, actionable resources to help planners be more effective in advancing equity, and will remain dynamic and continue to evolve. Some new elements include:

- Acknowledgment of past planning practices that contributed to racism and discrimination, [www.planning.org/equity/commitment](http://www.planning.org/equity/commitment); as well as specific, actionable commitments by APA and its professional Institute.
- Our first centralized repository of EDI resources across all of APA, including educational events across national, chapter and division programming (both live and online) [www.planning.org/equity/get-involved](http://www.planning.org/equity/get-involved).
- Clear attribution to the volunteers on the EDI Committee and Advisory Group, [www.planning.org/equity/commitment](http://www.planning.org/equity/commitment) the Social Equity Task Force, [www.planning.org/equity/voices-of-equity](http://www.planning.org/equity/voices-of-equity) as well as the Planning for Equity Policy Guide Task Force.

Check out all the great resources at [www.planning.org/equity](http://www.planning.org/equity) !

## SOME PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SENATE INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

### Courtesy of APA

#### **A greater share of funding for communities and regions**

- A 32% increase in funding for MPOs over 2020 levels.
- Larger metropolitan regions will receive a new direct funding stream for plan implementation through a \$50 million per year grant program focused on congestion relief.

#### **Incorporating climate and resilience planning into transportation**

- The first-ever climate change provisions for a surface transportation bill, with a new \$6.4 billion formula and grant funding program for carbon reduction. 65% of program funding would go to regions and localities.
- A new PROTECT program for resilience projects includes \$1.4 billion in competitive grant funding, with a dedicated \$140m set aside specifically for planning. A \$7.3 billion formula funding program for resilience and hazard mitigation will also be created.

#### **Expanding and reforming support for biking, walking, transit, and safety programs**

- A \$1 billion Reconnecting Communities program will be created to tackle transportation equity issues and address past infrastructure that has segregated neighborhoods. This program will include dedicated funding of \$150 million specifically for planning.
- Reform and expansion of the Transportation Alternatives Program that funds biking and walking projects. TAP will receive more funding and provide greater local control to Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
- The Safety program will receive additional funding and will use planning to target vulnerable populations and areas of greatest need. The Safe Routes to School program will be codified.
- A new complete streets program and a \$5 billion Safe Streets and Roads for All safety planning program, created with \$400 million per year set aside for local vision zero planning.
- A new \$2 billion rural competitive grant program will be aimed at increasing connectivity; improving the safety and reliability of moving people and freight; generating economic growth; and improving quality of life.
- Micromobility projects - from bike share to scooters and other last mile connectivity - will be eligible under the CMAQ program.
- An eleven-fold increase in rail funding with \$66 billion, including \$12 billion for non-Amtrak intercity rail projects.
- Increased transit funding, including annual funding levels of roughly \$14 billion, \$7 billion annual increase for Capital Investment Grants and one-time supplement funding of \$10.3 billion for transit grants and \$8 billion for CIG.
- Increased funding for RAISE and INFRA grants.

### **Planning for emerging needs and technologies**

- Planning and implementation of smart cities technologies will be supported with a new \$500 million SMART grant program for regions and localities.
- \$65 billion for broadband, including \$60 million specifically for digital equity plans.
- MPOs will be eligible for a new pilot program focused on using data and public engagement innovations in project prioritization and improving travel demand data and modeling.
- States will be encouraged to develop "human capital" workforce development plans through MPOs and connected to the transportation planning process.
- The bill authorizes \$2.5 billion from the Highway Trust Fund over five years for a new competitive grant program to build out alternative fuel corridors and electric vehicle charging.
- The bill appropriates \$5 billion for a new Electric Vehicle Formula Program to provide money to build electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Electric vehicle charging will be eligible for funding through the existing Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and allows for the purchase of zero-emission vehicles in the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.
- New housing coordination plans will help MPOs and local governments improve the connection between transportation and land use planning.

## DON'T LET YOUR ZONING KEEP YOU FROM CHARGING INTO THE FUTURE

Tom Morgan, AICP

Heads up municipal planners! As the Biden administration starts to roll out an ambitious program to transition to electric vehicles, it's your job to ensure that your 1930's zoning provisions do not unwittingly impede the installation of the requisite charging stations.

Fast chargers (those that will charge your vehicle in 25 minutes) require quite a bit of electricity to do their job in a timely manner. Stepping down a 34 kV line to voltage that is appropriate for a bank of fast chargers usually requires a transformer that would occupy a couple of parking spaces if the installation is in the middle of a parking lot. This is actually a typical location for fast chargers because Walmart, Target, and several supermarket chains welcome such infrastructure.

The problem? Municipalities have been prohibiting the conversion of those two parking spaces in order to maintain the property's conformance with minimum off-street parking requirements. Alas, code enforcement officers tend toward a literal interpretation of the ordinance.

Don't be a troglodyte! Adjust your community's minimum parking regs so as to accommodate EV charging stations. Or better yet, replace your minimum requirements with maximums.

## GRAPEVINE



*Anja Collette* is the new Planning Analyst for the City of Bangor, ME. She started in July 2021. She has a graduate degree in Geospatial Information Science and Technology from North Carolina State and an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science and Natural Resource Conservation & Management from West Carolina University. She was the GIS Director at Jackson County Government in Sylva, North Carolina and a GIS Specialist at Carteret County Government in Beaufort, North Carolina. Anja also experienced great internships in Soil Conservation and at NASA. Her work for Bangor includes furthering her experience in GIS analysis and assisting with regulatory boards, as well as working on our Climate Action Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. She grew up in North Carolina and just relocated to Maine, so please give Anja a warm welcome when you see her at planning events!

*Sarah Hadd* left her position as Director of Planning and Zoning in Colchester, VT in June to take the Town Manager post in Fairfax, VT. *Zach Maia* joined the Colchester Planning & Zoning Department as Development Planner this spring leaving his post at Central VT Regional Planning.

*Steve Hayes* joined the Brattleboro Planning Department as a Planning Technician this summer. Steve is originally from New England, although he most recently lived in Texas where he attended graduate school at Texas A&M.

*Katherine Trapani*, an Aviation Planner at Stantec Consulting Services in Portland, has been appointed to a two-year term on the Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board.

Old timer *Jack Kartez* left VT for Oregon in 1974 (few jobs back east) and worked for Oregon's revolutionary statewide planning commission as well as a rural planner in Idaho and Eastern Washington before becoming a full-time planning educator in 1981. Retired six years from the Muskie School, he continues staff projects at the New England Environmental Finance Center housed at Muskie, an EPA service program.



*Ericka Amador, MCP*, has joined the Greater Portland Council of Governments as their newest Regional Transportation Planner. Before moving to Maine, she worked as a Transit Planner for BC Transit in Canada where she led strategic and service planning for transit systems on Vancouver Island. She also studied microtransit on rural, remote island communities during her Master of Community Planning at Vancouver Island University.

Town of Salem, NH, Planning Director *Ross Moldoff* is enjoying his first grandchild, *Sonny*, born last November. Assistant Planner *Jacob LaFontaine* and his wife *Shay* had a healthy baby boy, *Gage*, in April.

*Tara Kelly*, an executive with the Municipal Art Society of New York, has been named executive director of Maine Preservation. She takes over from Greg Paxton, who retires next month.

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND PLANNERS WHO PASSED THE AICP EXAM RECENTLY**

Christopher Damiani, AICP  
Cymone Haiju  
Emily Heymann, AICP  
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