



For Immediate Release

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Vermont Planners Association Announces 2022 Planning Awards

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Montpelier, VT: The Vermont Planners Association is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2022 planning awards. For 30 years, these awards have recognized outstanding achievements in community planning in Vermont. Nominees come from all corners of the state and represent the best in local, regional, and state planning by citizen and professional planners over the last year. According to Catherine Bryars, Chair of the Award Committee of the Vermont Planners Association, "The annual Planning Awards highlight the best in community plans and planning projects in Vermont, as well as the essential contributions of both citizen and professional planners. As an organization, the Vermont Planners Association is very proud of the efforts and accomplishments of its members and community partners in making Vermont a better place to live." The Vermont Planners Association will present the awards at a hybrid in-person and virtual ceremony on June 16, 2022, at 2:45 p.m. at the [Little Theater](#) at the Woodstock Recreation Center in Woodstock, Vermont. The awards ceremony will be hosted in conjunction with the Vermont Planner Association's summer workshop; more information on that event is available [here](#).

Mark Blucher Professional Planner of the Year Award

On an annual basis, the Vermont Planners Association celebrates the important work that professional planners do to make Vermont a better place. This year, the Vermont Planners Association is proud to honor **Tom Kennedy**. This award memorializes Mark Blucher, long-time Executive Director of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, who was an esteemed colleague and friend and an enduring reminder of the difference planners can make in the lives of the people they serve.



A section of the
**Northern New England Chapter
American Planning Association**
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The Vermont Planners Association (VPA) is a non-profit advocacy and educational organization of planners and related professionals. We are dedicated to advancing community planning in Vermont at the local, regional, and state levels, to foster vibrant communities and a healthy environment.



Tom Kennedy is Director of Community Development of the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (formerly Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission), which serves ten member municipalities. Prior to 2022, Tom served as the organization’s Executive Director for more than thirty years. Under Tom’s leadership, the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission expanded the scope and size of its regional services immensely, most notably in the program areas of brownfields and solid waste. Under Tom’s leadership, the Commission’s brownfields remediation program became one of the largest in the state. Over the years, the Commission secured over \$3M in funding for the cleanup of twenty brownfields sites throughout the region, which has attracted more than \$25M in leveraged funding for transformational commercial redevelopment, housing projects, energy projects, and a number of community initiatives providing health and recreation benefits, all of which helped to create over two hundred jobs. Additionally, Tom oversees the Commission’s unique role as manager of two solid waste management districts in the region.

Tom’s dedication to planning for the Mount Ascutney region and his long tenure in the role of Executive Director have fostered very strong, collaborative relationships between the Commission and its member towns. Tom has contributed to the planning field more generally as a professional mentor to countless young planners, and he has directly shaped Vermont planning legislation as a member of the Government Relations Committee, which he presently chairs, of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies. Tom’s experience and commitment to implementation projects continues to advance the field of planning in the Mount Ascutney region and statewide.

Plan of the Year

The **CreateVT: Action Plan for Vermont’s Creative Sector** is recognized as the Vermont Planners Association’s 2022 Plan of the Year. Developed by the Vermont Creative Network over three years with broad community input, [CreateVT](#) is Vermont’s first comprehensive action plan for the state’s creative economy. It is a



roadmap for critical investment in Vermont artists, creative entrepreneurs, and businesses, and for building a Vermont arts economy that thrives through creativity, inclusivity, and innovation. CreateVT includes nine goals, twenty-eight strategies, and [three “action agendas”](#) spanning statewide advocacy, local community building, and support for creative enterprises. These actions will be implemented by the Vermont Creative Network, a broad collective of

organizations, businesses, and individuals working to advance Vermont's creative sector since 2016. Special recognition goes to the Vermont Arts Council for its leadership and to Shanta Lee Gander and Community Workshop, LLC, for their expertise in developing the plan with an equity-conscious public input process implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The plan represents a groundbreaking balance of art and analytics by featuring artists as co-designers of the document. Vermont's first [statewide economic study](#) of the arts sector in 2020 provided groundwork data for the plan. Planning consultants designed a multifaceted public engagement approach to reach people during Covid-19 and to elevate underrepresented voices; strategies included virtual gatherings, online tools, and arts-based engagement. The resulting execution strategy is clear in delineating goals and action steps for various levels of engagement. With implementation by the Vermont Creative Network well underway, the CreateVT Action Plan is an innovative and practicable tool to guide the growth of Vermont's creative economy.

Citizen Planner of the Year

Steve Kraft of Springfield, Vermont is the recipient of the Vermont Planners Association's 2022 Citizen Planner of the Year award. As a volunteer on Springfield's Planning Commission and Development Review Board for over twenty-five years, Steve has made unparalleled contributions to Springfield's planning process and built environment. Steve currently chairs the Springfield Development Review Board, serves as vice-chair of Planning Commission, and volunteers on the E911 public safety subcommittee. Over his considerable tenure, Steve has been involved in countless town plan rewrites, zoning ordinance revisions, and development review decisions. Steve provided support on the most recent rewrite of the Town's Zoning Bylaws, adopted in 2019, which took Springfield nearly five years to complete in two phases.

The Springfield community treasures Steve for his dedication to good planning and for the professional demeanor he brings to his roles. A former Springfield Planning Commission member commented: "The work [of updating the zoning ordinance] can be tedious, lengthy and occasionally contentious. However, Steve... knows how important the work is, so he sticks with it over the long haul." Another said, "When Steve talks, people listen because he is a wealth of knowledge and very respected in the Town of Springfield." Letters in support of his nomination lauded Steve's commitment to the integrity of the development review process, highlighted his steadfast and calming leadership during difficult discussions, and praised his ability to orient new members to citizen planning boards. The Executive Director of Springfield on the Move said that Steve's "behind-the-scenes contributions to the planning and zoning of Springfield are unsurpassed." This recognition brings Steve's impressive volunteer work from "behind-the-scenes" to the forefront. Without conscientious citizen planners like Steve Kraft, Vermont planning could not happen.

Project of the Year

The **Williston Taft Corners Vision and Form-Based Code Project** is the Vermont Planners Association's 2022 Project of the Year. Since at least 1990, the Williston Comprehensive Plan has sounded a steady drumbeat: to make the Taft Corners intersection a "vibrant, mixed-use downtown area with a strong pedestrian orientation." Yet an interstate connection to downtown Burlington has channeled a wave of big box stores and suburban-style residential, retail, and office developments to the formerly rural area. Numerous planning strategies deployed over decades addressed a tide of scattered and vehicle-oriented development, and yet new development has continued to fall short of the community's vision for this area.



In 2020, the Town of Williston partnered with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and planning consultants at Geoffrey Ferrell Associates to develop a Vision Plan and Form-Based Code for Taft Corners. The initiative has been citizen-focused despite the public dialogue challenges presented by

the Covid-19 pandemic. An initial area analysis involved over twenty-four meetings and interviews with key stakeholders including citizen board members, property owners, VTrans, and VELCO. A broad [public engagement](#) process involved a well-attended Kick-Off Event, an Online Strengths and Weaknesses Mapping activity, a Visual Preferences Survey, a Hands-On Design Workshop, and an Open Design Studio Week. On-going technical reviews and public discussions have continued to refine the resulting [Vision Plan](#) and the proposed [Form-Based Code](#), which is expected to be adopted in spring 2022. This project has applied innovative planning tools and virtual technologies to address the most perennial of planning challenges through comprehensive visioning and citizen input. It serves as an inspiring model to other communities throughout Vermont and beyond.

The Vermont Planners Association also takes this opportunity to recognize the following nominees for its 2022 planning awards:

Arabella Holzapfel of Ferrisburgh

Northfield Ride + River Routes Master Plan

Shoreham Village Future Housing Project

Vermont Better Places Program

Working Parent Planners of Vermont