



For Immediate Release

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Vermont Planners Association Announces 2020 Planning Awards

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Montpelier, VT: The Vermont Planners Association is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2020 planning awards. For 28 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 Meagan Tuttle, President of the Vermont Planners Association, "The Vermont Planners Association's annual Planning Awards highlight the best in community plans and planning projects, as well as the important contributions of both citizen and professional planners to Vermont's landscape and environment. Through this program, the Vermont Planners Association acknowledges the dedication and hard work of community members to advance important state, regional and local planning policies and priorities. As an organization, the Vermont Planners Association is very proud of the efforts and accomplishments of its members and community partners in making Vermont the best place to live in the country." Although the Vermont Planners Association is unable to present the awards at an in-person ceremony this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the achievements of this year's winners deserve to be celebrated.

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 two individuals for their significant, and distinct, contributions to planning: **Brandy Saxton, AICP**, and **Seth Jensen**. 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
nneplanning.org/sections/Vermont

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.

Brandy Saxton, AICP, is uniquely and positively changing community and regional planning in Vermont. Through her consultancy, PlaceSense, Ms. Saxton's exemplary work with towns – large and small – and regional commissions in all corners of the state has elevated the endeavors of citizen and professional planners at both the local and regional levels.



For over fifteen years through PlaceSense, Ms. Saxton has helped diverse municipalities produce clear and effective land use regulations, well-organized, action-oriented comprehensive plans and other plans and studies that serve as models throughout Vermont. She is known for her ability to engage community members in planning efforts, designing public outreach processes that not only solicit information but move

communities closer to their common goals. In addition to her work through PlaceSense, Ms. Saxton has served her profession as a board member for both the Vermont Planners Association and the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (NNECAPA). The volume, scope, effective and innovative nature of the work she has undertaken statewide, particularly in growing communities, makes Ms. Saxton one of the most influential planners shaping land use in the state.

Seth Jensen's dedication and commitment to the planning profession is obvious to anyone who has worked with him. Over the last nine years, as the Principal Planner with the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC), Mr. Jensen has spearheaded numerous landmark projects for LCPC: from finding growth solutions and pushing for the installation of the new Greenway Bridge in the Town of Cambridge, to guiding the completion of the Barnes Camp Visitor Center in Stowe and the Smuggler's Notch Boardwalk. Mr. Jensen is also well-known for his tireless effort and expertise finding solutions to the challenges for wastewater treatment to enhance growth in Vermont's small towns and villages, where his work is



gradually shifting long-held cultural and public perceptions towards coordinated use of finite land and other resources. Mr. Jensen's dedication to the frequently overlooked challenge of developing and siting wastewater infrastructure is critical to the state's goal of maintaining the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside. In addition to his contributions to planning in Lamoille County, Mr. Jensen serves his community as a member of the Town of Westford Planning Commission and is an Executive Committee member of the Vermont Planners Association where he is leading contributor to the group's advisory committee on Act 250 reform. Seth's dedication and contributions to planning are incredible assets and are appreciated not only by the northern Vermont communities he serves, but also by all of Vermont's citizens and visitors.

Plan of the Year

The **Enosburg Falls Vital Village Master Plan** is recognized as the Vermont Planners Association's 2020 Plan of the Year. Developed by a local steering committee and community planners, **Mark Kane, ALSA**, and **Drew Pollak-Bruce, CPRP**, at **SE Group**,

the
Enosburg
Falls Vital
Village
Master Plan
was created
through a
robust
public
engagement
process,
including
numerous
public fora,
meetings
and



workshops. The plan includes engagement tools, graphic communications and photographic renderings that were produced at a high level of quality to encourage community members to focus on implementation. The plan's most significant aspect may be its [Vital Village Story Map](#) that uses technology provided by ESRI's ArcGIS to distribute project information in an engaging and compelling on-line "story." Since the completion of this project, the former Vital Village Steering Committee has transitioned into an Implementation Committee to build on the branding and identity work that the Vital Village Master Plan development process started. Through the implementation of Vital Village Master Plan, Enosburg Falls is constructing and maintaining new amenities and facilities critical to promoting the Village as a desirable destination to live, work and play.

Citizen Planner of the Year

Sally Miller of Woodstock and **Shannon Haggett** of Vergennes are the recipients of the Vermont Planners Association's 2020 Citizen Planner of the Year award. For almost twenty-five years, **Sally Miller** has been a member of Woodstock's Planning Commission where she has been a strong advocate for Woodstock. During her tenure, Ms. Miller has been known to lead with an unbiased hand that allows for a full and fair resolution, which has enabled Woodstock to enact cutting-edge regulations pertaining to scenic ridgelines, short-term rentals, Class III wetlands, vernal pools, amphibian corridors and more. She is well-known for spearheading community forums that lead to the creation of Sustainable Woodstock in 2009. Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 proved to be a fruitful training ground for the new non-profit, and Ms. Miller was at the forefront setting up water stations and information centers. More recently, Ms. Miller has guided the newly formed Woodstock Economic Development Commission in determining funding priorities to encourage and assist new and existing businesses, thereby creating more job opportunities and making Woodstock a more livable and welcoming community for a diverse, multi-generational population.

As a citizen volunteer serving as Chair of the Vergennes Planning Commission and a member of the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC), **Shannon Haggett** has been directly involved in almost every betterment project in the City of Vergennes over the last decade. During Mr. Haggett's tenure, he has assisted in two re-writes of the City plan and two sets of zoning ordinance revisions. He is a strong advocate for the planning process and is a firm believer in encouraging local participation. Mr. Haggett has been lauded for his patience, respect and kindness while leading the Planning Commission, and he has spearheaded Vergennes' participation as one of six communities in the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Zoning for Great Neighborhoods project. Through this effort, the City has focused on the mismatch between available housing and the needs of the community, leading to the promotion of more affordable housing. In addition to the many hours volunteering for the City, Mr. Haggett also keeps regional concerns in mind through his service on the ACRPC Executive and Local Government Committees. Former City Manager and former Mayor Renny Perry has called Mr. Haggett "the template for excellence in planning."

Project of the Year

The City of South Burlington's **Market Street Reconstruction Project** is the Vermont Planners Association's 2020 Project of the Year. Realizing almost seventeen years of planning and leveraging over \$9 million in federal grants, impact fees and TIF District financing, the City turned a former dirt road into a new, and in fact the first, downtown street in its long-planned City Center. As part of the roadway's reconstruction, the City converted a former wetland into a public recreation area that serves as a stormwater treatment and detention basin, and the project created a new shared use bicycle and

pedestrian path in lieu of a typical sidewalk. Further, the entire street is landscaped as appropriate for adjacent development, including trees for shade and shrubs and perennials at the higher density retail section of the street and adding grassy swaths close to the more residential section of the roadway. With the Market Street project as a catalyst, the City has seen construction of seven new multi-story buildings; a new City Hall, library and senior center; and a new public park, all constructed within two years of the road's reconstruction. The project serves as the centerpiece of, and the catalyst for, a new downtown in the heart of Vermont's second-most populous community.

