



# The Preservation Trust of Vermont

*Continuing Support for Vermont Communities Since 1980*

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## HISTORIC VERMONT

*An on-line news journal about the Preservation of Vermont's Historic Architecture and Landscape*

Number 2, March 2001

Published by the Preservation Trust of Vermont, 104 Church Street, Burlington, VT 05401 (802) 658-6647

<http://www.ptvermont.org>

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### *Annual Preservation Conference*

Richard Moe, President of the National Trust, has agreed to give the keynote address at the annual preservation conference entitled "**Preservation Tools: The Cutting Edge**" on May 11th on Brattleboro. If you would like a room at the Latchis Hotel please call 254-6300 and ask for the conference rate.

#### *Workshop Notice*

The **Vermont Forum on Sprawl** has recently published a handbook as part of its Way to Grow series of community planning tools. The handbook - **Growing Smarter: Best Site Planning for Residential, Commercial & Industrial Development** specific, practical examples and techniques for applying smart growth principles to the siting, design and layout of development projects. It also provides information on how to make the regulatory review process faster, easier and more predictable for projects which incorporate best development practices.

Workshops will be hosted by the **Vermont Forum on Sprawl**, the **Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission**, and the **Champlain Initiative** in various locations around Chittenden County to train volunteer and professional planners, developers, landscape architects, municipal officials, interested citizens, etc. The workshop dates and locations are listed below. All workshops will be from **7:00 PM - 9:00 PM** and will include refreshments.

**May 2: Essex Town Hall, 81 Main Street**

**May 8: Hinesburg Town Hall, VT Route 116**

**May 14: Milton Town Hall, 43 Bombardier Road**

**May 23: Burlington, Fletcher Free Library, 235 College Street**

The workshops will be conducted by landscape architect **Julie Campoli** and land use consultant **Dana Farley**. The workshops are free of charge and all participants will be provided with a copy of the handbook.

Anyone wishing to attend a workshop should notify Dana Farley at 425-2124 or [mail to: dfarley@sover.net](mailto:dfarley@sover.net) no later than **April 25, 2001**. Please provide your name, address, and phone number.

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## VERMONT NEWS

### *Brattleboro, Latchis Hotel*

The Brattleboro Arts Initiative and the Preservation Trust of Vermont hope to buy the Latchis Hotel from Spero and Elizabeth Latchis for \$1.4 million. The 1938 Art Deco building includes three theaters as well as a hotel, restaurant and brew pub. BAI and PTV believe this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Brattleboro to acquire the theaters for use as a movie and performing arts complex.

### *Bristol, Bristol Downtown Building*

Keep your eyes on the Italianate, three-story, clapboard building on the south side of Main Street at east end of Bristol's downtown. Jeffrey Glassberg and Amy Johnston have been working on a project to create limited liability corporation with 17 local investors to rehabilitate this commercial and residential building. Work is already underway.

### *Colchester, Spaulding Bay Schoolhouse*

In process of demolishing a camp last summer, property owners in Colchester discovered a log cabin that further investigation revealed was likely the c.1800 Spaulding Bay Schoolhouse. The building was in the process of being dismantled and sold out of the community by a historic building broker, Scott Morrison. Town officials and PTV have been working together to keep this building, a well-preserved and rare example of precise log cabin construction, in the community. The schoolhouse has since been temporarily moved to behind the town offices while the community forms plans for its siting, rehabilitation, and future uses.

### *East Burke, Fairbanks Museum-Mt. View Creamery Barn Restoration*

With help from a Vermont Division for Historic Preservation barn grant and PTV Preservation Grant, this threshing barn at Mountain View Creamery is being rehabbed for an agri-tourism interpretive center that will direct visitors to various farms in the region open for visitors.

### *Richmond, Monitor Barns*

The Monitor Barns project began in earnest this early winter with the dismantling of the "West Monitor Barn". This barn was in extraordinarily poor shape with extensive rotting of the interior framing system and extensive deterioration of the roof. The contractor hired to do the restoration work, Jan Lewandoski of Restoration and Traditional Building, dismantled the structure from the top down using cranes due to the dangerous condition of the interior. Large sections of the barn were removed and completely dismantled on the ground, the salvageable parts then stored for reconstruction in the spring and summer of 2001. The plan is to have the foundation completed by mid-June and the frame reassembled by December.

### *Vergennes Becomes State's Thirteenth Designated Downtown*

Montpelier - The Vermont Downtown Development Board voted on February 26 to award downtown designation to Vergennes under the 1998 Downtown Development Act.

Molly Lambert, Chair of the Downtown Development Board and Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development recognized Vergennes's efforts, saying, "We are really pleased to be able to recognize the energy and commitment of this community. The Vergennes Partnership, the City, and many others have completed a number of major projects in the downtown, and the difference is striking. As a result of their vision, downtown is once again becoming a source of great pride to the community."

In order to obtain downtown designation, a community must demonstrate a lasting commitment to revitalization through planning, capital improvements, economic

development, and preservation of historic resources. The community must also have an established downtown organization devoted to managing the revitalization effort - from setting work priorities to organizing volunteers and raising the funds necessary to support its work. As a designated downtown, Vergennes is now eligible to apply for a variety of programs to assist revitalization projects, including over \$4 million in state funds for transportation improvements, public infrastructure, and the rehabilitation of older and historic buildings.

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**FEATURE COMMENTARY:**

***When a giant retailer moves on, it leaves its 'big box' behind***

Stacy Mitchell Monday, January 8, 2001

Most people are familiar with the damage Wal-Mart, Target and other "big box" retailers have done to local economies. Across the country, these giant stores have gutted downtowns and decimated locally owned businesses.

Now the national chains are dealing communities a second blow. They are vacating their existing stores, sometimes to build bigger outlets, sometimes just closing up shop, in both cases leaving huge empty shells and acres of asphalt behind.

Southern states, where big box retailers expanded early and multiplied rapidly, have been hardest hit. But the problem is beginning to surface in Minnesota. Wal-Mart intends to close stores in Owatonna and Albert Lea later this year and open larger outlets nearby. The 80,000-square-foot Albert Lea store is just 11 years old.

What can a city do with the shell of an old Wal-Mart store? Not much. It's a problem plaguing planners and local officials, who are struggling to contain the spread of this new retail blight. It's also a warning to communities considering new big box developments.

The roots of the retail vacancy problem are twofold. Chain stores are multiplying at a staggering pace. They've created a glut of retail space. In the last 12 years, per capita retail space has increased 34 percent, from 15 to 20 square feet. Many towns now have more retail space than residents can support.

The second part of the problem is that corporate chains reinvent themselves every 10 years or so, abandoning existing outlets in favor of new formats. First there were the strip malls, which gave way to the enclosed malls. These in turn failed as developers built ever-larger regional malls. Hundreds of malls weakened and died following the arrival of the first big box stores in the 1980s.

Then in the 1990s the big boxes themselves began to shed their skins, vacating existing stores only to build larger outlets across the street or across town.

Wal-Mart is one of the worst offenders. According to Sprawl-Busters, an organization that helps communities fight superstore sprawl, the United States is home to 380 empty Wal-Mart stores. Wal-Mart plans to "relocate" up to 110 more stores in the next year.

Most abandoned stores remain vacant for many years. An abandoned Wal-Mart in Bards town, Ky., sat empty for nearly a decade. Some cities are burdened with more than one empty box. West Columbia, S.C., is home to almost a dozen empty or soon to be vacated big box stores, including Wal-Mart, Target and Circuit City.

Leapfrogging across the landscape costs these companies less than recycling

existing properties. But it's cheap only because the rest of us are paying the price. The new stores are chewing up valuable farmland and open space, exacerbating traffic and air pollution, burdening public services and morphing our communities into placeless blobs of sprawl.

A growing number of cities and towns are taking a different approach. Many have barred the construction of new big box stores and prohibited retail expansion into undeveloped areas. Tax dollars are no longer spent on building roads and sewers to service sprawling developments, but instead on strengthening Main Street.

It's a strategy that pays off. Main Streets have been around for hundreds of years. Individual businesses may come and go -- yesterday's dry goods store becomes today's Internet cafe -- but the district itself retains its utility, serving as the center of both economic and social life.

Most important, Main Street businesses, unlike global companies, are owned by people who live in the community and are committed to its well-being.

-- Stacy Mitchell is a researcher with the New Rules Project (<http://www.newrules.org>) of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. She is the author of *The Home Town Advantage: How to Defend Your Main Street Against Chain Stores and Why It Matters* (ILSR, 2000) and edits a bimonthly email newsletter (<http://www.newrules.org/hta/index.htm>) on efforts nationwide to keep chain stores out and protect locally owned businesses.

## PEOPLE

### *Shrewsbury Icon Marjorie Pierce dies at 97 February 22, 2001*

Marjorie Pierce was a remarkable woman as you will read in the Rutland Herald story below. Marjorie donate her house and store to the Preservation Trust several years ago in the hope that a sense of rural history might be preserved for future generations by having the Pierce Homestead become a self-sustaining historic place. <http://rutlandherald.nybor.com/Archive/Articles/Article/20810>

**Cristina Prochilo**, a graduate of Cornell's Master's program in historic preservation, is the new field representative for Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. She succeeds Jeffrey Harris, who joined the Portland, ME planning department as preservation compliance coordinator.

### *Up on Downtowns*

Preservationist Paul Bruhn has no "edifice complex." He loves historic buildings, all right, but mostly he wants to enhance communities. By Mark Bushnell for the Vermont Sunday Magazine of the Sunday Rutland Herald and the Sunday Times Argus, March 18, 2001. [http://rutlandherald.nybor.com/To\\_Print/22454.html](http://rutlandherald.nybor.com/To_Print/22454.html)

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Station Foundation Announces 2001 Grant Program*

The Great American Station Foundation is accepting applications for its 2001 cycle of grants for train station revitalization projects until 4/13. The grants are intended to help jump-start a community's effort to restore its rail station as an active inter-modal transportation facility and ensure that it contributes to community economic development. For more details, visit <http://www.stationfoundation.org>.

***HISTORIC DAM SURVEYOR: Summer Job in Vermont***

The State of Vermont is undertaking an interdisciplinary inventory and evaluation of dams in a collaborative project between the Agency of Natural Resources and the State Historic Preservation Office. The Water Quality Division seeks a motivated and enthusiastic professional to work as the architectural historian/industrial archeologist in a two-person team conducting an assessment of all known dams in 3 watersheds (Lamoille, White, Mettawee, and Poultney rivers), including the physical characteristics and condition of the dam, its history, characteristics of the river reaches and riparian zones above and below the dam, and the historic context of the site. Interested individuals should contact Brian T. Fitzgerald, Water Quality Division, Agency of Natural Resources, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-0408, 802.241.3468, e-mail <mailto:briantf@dec.anr.state.vt.us> for additional application information.

**NATIONAL NEWS*****Historic Preservation Fund***

The federal historic preservation program offers a balanced partnership that includes the National Park Service and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Funds through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) support the States and Tribes and special grants programs. Since its creation in 1976, Congress has historically provided only a quarter, sometimes a third, of the \$150 million amount authorized under the HPF. Preservation Action and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers have made full funding from the Historic Preservation Fund a priority legislative objective.

During his February address to the nation, President Bush delivered his "Blueprint for New Beginnings" to Congress. Though details of the fiscal 2002 budget are not finalized the blueprint indicates a drastic \$57 million reduction of the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). It would zero out funding for the Millennium Initiative to Save America's Treasures and end grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). The HBCU cuts were expected, as the program has reached its total authorized spending limit. It also appears that the Bush budget reduces States and Tribal programs by \$15 million. This reduction may reflect the elimination of the increase secured as part of Title VIII of fiscal 2001 Interior Appropriation bill.

For more information on the status of the Historic Preservation Fund and what you can do, check out Preservation Actions Web Site:

[http://www.preservationaction.org/approps\\_issue\\_paper2001.htm](http://www.preservationaction.org/approps_issue_paper2001.htm)

***Historic Homeownership Assistance Act***

The Historic Homeownership Assistance Act (HHAA) would create an incentive in the federal tax code for the rehabilitation of historic, owner-occupied residences. This incentive would reverse disinvestment and blight in historic neighborhoods through homeownership. HHAA is attractive to current homeowners as well as families on the cusp of homeownership. Rehabilitation activity provides jobs, bolsters the tax base, and utilizes existing infrastructure therefore mitigating "sprawl" and saving taxpayers' dollars.

For more information and the status of the HHAA visit Preservation Actions Web Site: [http://www.preservationaction.org/hhaa\\_issue\\_paper\\_2001.htm](http://www.preservationaction.org/hhaa_issue_paper_2001.htm)

***Does Sprawl Make you Fat?***

A recent article in the Washington Post echoes the findings of STPP's report Mean Streets 200 and other research in connecting transportation policy to obesity rates. Data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) shows that adult obesity rates have increased by sixty percent in the last ten years, though Americans are

consuming only 100 additional calories per day. According to Mean Streets 200, and several other recent studies, this huge leap in obesity rates results in part from the decline of walking and bicycling in America's sprawling suburbs. The CDC's Active Community Environments program, as well as several other organizations are working to determine if there is a causal relationship between sprawl and obesity (Washington Post 1/21). For more information about sprawl and obesity, see the Active Community Environments program at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm> and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking at <http://www.bikefed.org>.

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