**Creative Economy Inventory and Action Plan**

Along with funding from TRORC, partial funding through the U.S. Economic Development Administration is allowing us to move forward with a study that looks at the importance of the Creative Economy’s impact on our overall East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD). At the end of the six-month project, we’ll have an action plan in hand designed to support our local craftsmen and help realize our vision of creating a vibrant, healthy, and equitable region.

Economic development consultants, Michael Kane Consulting, who has extensive experience working on Creative Economy projects nationwide, will be working with TRORC and a group of project advisors.

For more information about this project, as well as other economic development work, go to ECVEDD.org.

*Implementing CEDS Goal #2: An Innovative Business Environment and East Central Vermont: What We Want Goal H: Economic growth that supports and enhances our working landscapes and craftspeople.*

**Pittsfield Obtains Village Designation Renewal**

On November 23, 2015, the Vermont Downtown Development Board approved Pittsfield’s renewal request for Village Designation. Pittsfield’s Village Center, which epitomizes the compact, cohesive core that the program seeks to benefit, has been part of the program since 2005. The Village Center Designation program is a non-regulatory state program that provides benefits to communities for the purposes of revitalizing and sustaining villages and downtowns. Income producing properties can receive tax credits for revitalization projects in these designated areas. Municipalities with designations receive priority consideration on some state grant programs as well. TRORC was pleased to assist Pittsfield with their renewal, and as always, we continue to offer our assistance to other communities seeking to enter the program.

For more information about the Village Designation program, contact Loralee Morrow at lmorrow@trorc.org or Chris Sargent at csargent@trorc.org.

*Implementing ECV:What We Want Goal D: Ensure downtowns throughout the region are vibrant, accessible, and economically successful.*
TRORC Culvert Inventory Project 2015

Tropical Storm Irene made it painfully clear that many of our culverts are in poor condition and unable to handle our ever increasing and powerful rain events.

In partnership with our towns and with Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG DR) funding, TRORC wrote a grant to complete 12 town culvert inventories in two years—the usual transportation planning budget only allows for three inventories per year. These inventories will allow towns to invest in priorities that improve safety, protect the roads and improve water quality.

Check out the full report here: http://www.trorc.org/special-studies/.

Implementing East Central Vermont: What We Want Goal E: Ensure public infrastructure supports and sustains a viable economy and environment.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP)

The towns of Topsham, Newbury, Barnard, and Bradford recently began work on creating Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP) for their communities. Although hazards cannot be stopped, proper planning can reduce damages to important infrastructure and threats to the health of community members. When Towns complete these plans, they will receive a larger share of state funding towards damages that occur in the case of a federally declared disaster, such as Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 or the 2013 flooding that occurred throughout Windsor County. LHMPs are part of the criteria included in the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF), which helps lessen the local costs incurred by municipalities when hazards happen. Resiliency towards large storm events and higher levels of precipitation is crucial for many in the TRORC region that live near rivers and in valleys that are susceptible to frequent flooding.

In these LHMPs, members of mitigation teams for each town, which are composed of community members, Selectboard members, and emergency management members, determine which hazards pose risks to their towns. With help from TRORC, the hazard mitigation committee prioritizes mitigation strategies to reduce risk to people and property from these hazards.

With our help, the towns of Brookfield, Sharon, and Bethel have completed work on their LHMPs and have recently submitted final drafts for approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Once FEMA approves of each plan, it will need to be adopted by the selectboards of each town, and will then be returned to FEMA for final approval.

The towns of Corinth, Norwich, Bridgewater, Chelsea, and Fairlee received FEMA final approval for their Hazard Mitigation Plans in November. Congratulations to these towns and their community members for the hard work and time committed to crafting these plans!

For more information, contact Michael Storace at mstorace@trorc.org.
Highway Projects with TRORC Assistance

TRORC applied for and received a grant in the amount of $187,766 to assist the Town of Rochester in administering and managing a Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG DR) grant to lower Bean’s Bridge Road allowing floodwaters to pass and to add riprap to a bank bend in the White River. During heavy rains, this bend forces the water to enter the field adjacent to Bean’s Bridge Road and repeatedly floods the field and road. The project is 80% completed.

TRORC also applied for and received a grant in the amount of $776,709 to assist the Town of Royalton in administering and managing a CDBG DR grant to relocate Gilman Road and stabilize the bank adjacent to the White River. This stream bank was heavily eroded during Tropical Storm Irene and threatened the road foundation. The project is 95% complete.

For more information, contact Rita Seto at rseto@trorc.org.

Implementing East Central Vermont: What We Want Goal E: Ensure public infrastructure supports and sustains a viable economy and environment.

Congratulations to Royalton for a Beautiful Re-use Project!

The Town of Royalton finished renovations at the old Crawford Auto Land building off Route 14 in South Royalton and has moved into the space as their new town office. Town officials were using three separate buildings to house town offices and the police department, and now they are all under one roof.

TRORC was pleased to provide $130,000 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) brownfield assessment funding during the early phases of the project and worked with the town of Royalton throughout the process to ensure the project went as smoothly as possible.

In addition, as part of TRORC’s national work on the federal Farm Bill reauthorization, TRORC and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) ensured Congress authorized a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding set-aside for investments that are consistent with Regional Plans. This USDA investment in Royalton was able to take advantage of this new provision and received a grant to reduce the amount needed from local tax sources.

Join the Royalton Selectboard, other elected officials, and town staff for an open house.

Royalton Town Office Open House
December 14, 2015 - 2:00 to 5:00 PM
2460 Vermont Route 14, South Royalton, Vermont

If you have a site needing assessment or want to learn more about the Brownfields program, contact Kevin Geiger at kgeiger@trorc.org.
Happy Holidays to You from Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission!

“What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.”

- John Steinbeck