



Two Rivers-Ottauquechee
REGIONAL COMMISSION



News & Notes
November 2023



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PROJECT UPDATES AND REMINDERS



The new four-way intersection at Hartland 3 Corners. | *Photo: Rita Seto, TRORC Staff*

Hartland 3 Corners Intersection Project Substantially Complete

The Hartland 3 Corners intersection reconfiguration project is now complete! The intersection of US-5, VT-12, and Quechee Road was redesigned to become a four-way intersection with underground utilities and new sidewalks to improve safety and walkability in the village. TRORC Transportation Manager Rita Seto served as Municipal Project Manager, coordinating with Town officials, VTrans, VHB (design engineering firm), GPI (construction inspection firm) and Notts Excavating to complete the construction project. The Town is working with its utility providers (Green Mountain Power, Comcast, First Light, and VTel) on the final phase of moving electric and telecom service underground before the intersection's two utility poles can finally be removed. A great looking new intersection and gateway to Hartland! For more information [contact Rita Seto](#).





Above: TRORC staffer Kyle Katz and Matt Murawski of Ripple Natural Resources inspect work at the Pinney Hollow Floodplain Restoration site. | Photos: Pete Fellows & Harry Falconer, TRORC staff

TRORC Assists Pinney Hollow Brook Floodplain Restoration Project

TRORC and its partners recently finished the first half of the Pinney Hollow Brook floodplain restoration project in Plymouth. The upper site was a former motel that was bought out and demolished through a FEMA buyout administered by TRORC after Tropical Storm Irene. The project will help reduce the risk of erosion and washouts on adjacent Route-100A during flooding events. Funding was provided by VT Emergency Management through the [Flood Resilient Communities Fund](#). Additional funding and monitoring were provided by VT Fish and Wildlife. Plantings on the site will be completed this spring by the Connecticut River Conservancy and more work will be completed this spring downstream. Stay tuned!

All 30 TRORC Towns Apply for Municipal Building Energy Audits through MERP; First Audits Performed in Topsham and Newbury Village

With assistance from TRORC staffers Harry Falconer and Jeff Grout, all 30 of the region's towns have applied to receive free municipal building energy audits from the state's [Municipal Energy Resilience Program \(MERP\)](#).

Topsham Town Hall and Newbury Village's Bailey Club received the region's first audits on November 1st. More than half of the region's towns have been awarded at least one audit, with more awards still to come.

TRORC is coordinating site visits with with contractors and town officials. The site visits are expected to take place throughout the winter and into late spring of 2024. Several hundred audits will be awarded across the state.

MERP is a multiphase program that will culminate in the awarding of dozens of project implementation grants of up to \$500,000 each. Towns will apply for the Project grants to fund construction of the energy-efficiency retrofits suggested in their audit reports. Roughly 70 to 80 project grants are expected to be awarded statewide.

The MERP program is also offering [\\$4,000 "mini-grants"](#) to help towns fund education and community engagement efforts about energy and climate resilience. The mini-grants are not competitive and thus will be awarded to any town that applies for an eligible use. So far, 19 of the region's towns (plus one incorporated village) have applied to claim their mini-grant funds. The towns that have **not** applied are: Braintree, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Chelsea, Corinth, Newbury, Rochester, Royalton, Stockbridge, Topsham, and Tunbridge. The mini-grant application remains open.

Please contact [Harry Falconer](#) or [Jeff Grout](#) with any questions about the MERP program.



A "blower door" air leakage test underway in Topsham's Town Hall. | *Photo: Harry Falconer, TRORC Staff*

Downtown Board Approves Sharon Village Designation Renewal

On Monday October 23, 2023, the Vermont Downtown Board approved the Town of Sharon's Village Center Designation renewal application. The Village Center Designation process recognizes and encourages local efforts to revitalize Vermont's traditional villages. Once designated, the community receives priority consideration for state grants (Municipal Planning Grants, Vermont Community Development Program) and other resources and support. Commercial property owners are eligible for tax credits to support building improvements.

The Town of Sharon worked with TRORC staff to develop the renewal application for the program.

For more information, including how to apply for Downtown and Village Designation, please visit the [Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Revitalization](#) website.

If your community is interested in applying for Village Designation, please contact [Sarah Wright](#).

Bradford Installs New Electric Vehicle Fast-Charging Stations

The Bradford Energy Committee, with help from TRORC's Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator Jeff Grout, recently completed the first phase of its [EV charging station project at a public parking lot on North Main Street in the village center](#). Two fast-charging stations and a level-2 charging station are now in operation.

The project's second phase will take place in the spring of 2024, when additional stations will be installed. The charging infrastructure was provided by local energy firm Norwich Technologies. A planned grand opening celebration was postponed until spring due to inclement weather.

Opposite: The new Bradford EV chargers in action. | *Photo: Harry Falconer, TRORC Staff*



Important Reminder: Local ARPA Funds

With FY25 municipal budget planning already underway, now is the time to think about obligating your town's ARPA funds. A couple of key considerations:

1. **Local ARPA funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024.** Obligation means an order has been placed for goods or services or you have entered into a contract, subaward, or similar transaction that requires payment. If you are using ARPA funds to pay staff salaries or other internal costs, this needs to be documented with a resolution by the Selectboard.
 2. There is a lot of flexibility in how ARPA funds can be spent **BUT THERE ARE ALSO SOME PROHIBITED EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES.** If you don't feel confident in your knowledge of what's allowed, please contact [Sarah Wright](#) ASAP.
 3. **If you don't think your town can obligate all its funds by December 31, 2024, OR if you can obligate but won't be able to spend the funds by December 31, 2026** (perhaps because of permitting timeframes and the fact that contractors are booking out several years in advance at this point), please contact [Sarah Wright](#) ASAP to discuss your options.
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TRORC Assists Six Towns in Preparing Municipal Planning Grant Applications

TRORC recently assisted six of the region's towns in applying for [Municipal Planning Grants \(MPGs\)](#) and [Bylaw Modernization Grants \(BMGs\)](#) from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. MPGs can be used broadly to support many different types of local planning and revitalization efforts, while BMGs focus specifically on the modernization of local bylaws such as zoning codes. This year, Chelsea and Braintree opted to apply for BMGs, while Barnard, Corinth, Fairlee, and Strafford applied for MPGs. The towns that applied for MPGs ranged broadly in their desired uses of the funds, from capital budgeting to regulation of short-term rentals.

Awards are expected to be announced next month.

Latest News from the Cornerstone Creative Community (3CVT)

Welcome to the [3CVT Creative Sector Zone!](#)

Your zone agent is [Meghan Asbury](#). Meghan helps make connections with creative businesses and nonprofits in Orange and Windsor counties.

Here's the latest from our 3CVT Zone:

- **The Space On Main in Bradford will be hosting its first Small Business Saturday Market On Main on Nov. 25.** This market aims to support for-profit vendors who make, grow, or produce their own products. The event will be free and open to the public. Interested in selling your own products or supporting local entrepreneurs and small businesses at this event? [Find all the details here.](#)
 - **The Woodstock Vermont Film Series has just begun at Billings Farm & Museum.** This season, the Film Series will explore stories that transport audiences around Vermont, the country and the world. From Nov. 4, 2023 through Feb. 18, 2024, Billings Farm will present nine exceptional documentary films and go behind the scenes with special guests including film directors and producers. [Learn more here.](#)
 - **AEP6 Data Announced.** Data from the sixth US Arts & Economic Prosperity Study (AEP6) was released in October. Administered by Americans for the Arts, AEP6 examines the economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry in the United States. The data showed that in Vermont, arts and culture strengthen the visitor economy, contribute to community pride, and support economic well-being. Find the key statistics and more information on our [AEP6 page.](#)
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Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Brownfields

TRORC recently released a [new RFP for environmental consulting services](#) to support our [Regional Brownfields Reuse Program](#). At least four firms will be selected to provide environmental assessments and other planning documents related to brownfields remediation. Firms will be contracted to provide these services on an "on-call" basis through September 30th, 2027.

Proposals are due **November 30th, 2023 at 4:00 pm** via email.

For more information, [visit our website](#) or contact [Sarah Wraight](#).

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

VTRANS Better Roads Grant

"The Vermont Better Roads Program provides technical support and grant funding to municipalities to promote the use of erosion control and maintenance techniques that save money while protecting and enhancing water quality around the State."

Applications for the grant are **due on December 20, 2023**. For more information, please [visit the VTRANS website](#) or contact [Rita Seto](#).

VOREC Community Grant Program

The VOREC Community Grant Program from the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) will award up to \$6 million to communities around the state for outdoor recreation projects in four categories: Implementation, Project Development, Outdoor Equity and Flood Recovery.

Applications are due on December 15, 2023. For full details and project examples, please [visit the VOREC website](#).

Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants

"The Preservation Trust of Vermont is pleased to announce the opening of the 2024 [Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant](#) round. PTV has \$625,000 available to preserve and restore buildings and community gathering spaces of economic and social significance in rural communities. Examples of work we support are roof repair or replacement, structural repairs, facade, window and door restoration or repair, code compliance work, and climate resiliency improvements. Grants will be made in increments of \$50,000-\$100,000."

Applications are due on December 21, 2023. Please note that properties must determine their National Register listing status in order to determine eligibility for the grant. [Visit PTV's website](#) for full details.

TRORC Brownfields Assessment Funding

As a reminder, TRORC has funding from the EPA to assess brownfield sites in the TRORC region, and has received \$1,600,000 over the past decade to perform petroleum and hazardous waste assessments. TRORC works closely with Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation staff to promote redevelopment of brownfields properties, including enrolling properties in Vermont's Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Act ([BRELLA](#)) program.

For more information, please see our [brownfields webpage](#) or contact [Sarah Wraight](#).
