

# TOGETHER FOR BURKE'S FUTURE

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## New Initiative Launched to Preserve Town's Rural Character

When the Ginn Corporation bought Burke Mountain in 2002, the Town of Burke was suddenly faced with the opportunities and the challenges of managing large-scale development.

The Select Board and Planning Commission are committed to ensuring that the change that is coming contributes to Burke's long-term prosperity and quality of life.

With this goal in mind, a range of strategies for protecting Burke's rural character, scenic beauty, and ecological value are being explored.

Smart Growth Vermont and Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) were selected to assist with this project. The



Burke town offices in West Burke

Select Board and Planning Commission will be working over

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This newsletter will be published every other month for the next year to help Burke residents stay up to date on the Town's efforts to plan for Burke's future.

The goal of the project is to develop strategies for protecting Burke's rural character and enhancing its historic villages as the town continues to grow.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Planning Commission at 467-3717 or at [burkePC@burkevermont.org](mailto:burkePC@burkevermont.org).



## Twenty-First Century Villages:

How "Village Center Designation" Can Help Burke Prosper

For most of Vermont's history, villages have been at the heart of rural life. Villages are where all of the civic and commercial functions of a rural community come together, from the post office to the town hall to the general store. Villages in Vermont also have a characteristic layout, with homes,

businesses, and civic buildings built close to one another, often around a village green. There are as many kinds of villages as there are villages themselves, but we all know a Vermont village when we see one.

Over the last few decades, though, many of Vermont's villages have struggled to

adapt to the demands of modern times. Businesses in village centers have suffered as spending has moved to bigger stores in regional hubs or in newer strip developments. At the same time, many village properties are significantly underused due to the high cost of bringing them up to modern safety standards.

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## ...Planning Commission Launches Project for Burke's Future



Bailey's and Burke in East Burke

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the coming months to ensure that everyone has a voice in shaping the town's future.

The first step in the process was a survey that was distributed to all town residents. The survey asked a different set of questions from the one conducted a couple of years ago, focusing instead on an in-depth exploration of strategies for managing growth and protecting rural character. These issues were among those identified by respondents to the first survey as most important for the town.

Following the survey, about four dozen Burke

residents participated in moderated small-group discussions designed to give the project team a deeper understanding of the most important issues facing the community. The groups focused on what residents love about Burke and what they see as the likely secondary impacts of large-scale development on the town.

Input from the surveys and the focus groups will help guide the recommended options that the project team will present at future public meetings. A summary of focus group findings is available at <http://tinyurl.com/burkefocusgroups> or at the town clerk's office.

## Why Another Planning Project?

The community has invested a great deal of time over the last few years in updating the town plan and revising the zoning bylaws. But there is still a lot of work to be done. This project will help community residents develop strategies for addressing four major issues that Burke will face over the next few years:

1. How to manage rural residential development in a way that balances protection of rural character with respect for private property rights
2. How to work with large developers to ensure that their development plans benefit the community as a whole
3. How to concentrate new development in and around the villages in a way that is compatible with the unique character of each
4. How to plan ahead and budget for major town projects such as road improvements and equipment purchases to help stabilize taxes



The road to Burke Mountain

*"Change is*

*inevitable.*

*Progress is*

*optional."*

*Anonymous*

## ...Benefits of Village Center Designation

*(Continued from page 1)*

In recognition of the importance of Vermont's villages, the State of Vermont has created a voluntary program that offers substantial tax credits to private owners of certain income-generating village properties built before 1983 who wish to upgrade their buildings. For example, a general store whose second floor sits vacant because it does not meet code requirements can apply for a tax credit for up to 50% of the cost of health and safety upgrades needed to turn it into a rental unit.

For many village property owners, these credits can make the difference

between staying profitable and going under. And for many villages, having property owners invest in historic buildings and bring in new uses is what it takes to turn slow decline into new life.

The key to gaining access to these voluntary incentives is Village Center Designation. Once a town goes through the application process and its villages are officially designated, all income-generating properties (that is, anything but a private residence) that were built before 1983 and that are located within the designated village boundary are eligible to apply. Applications are

then ranked competitively based on cost-effectiveness, community impact, and other criteria, and top-scoring applications are first in line for available funding.

Over the next year or so, the Town of Burke will be applying for village center designation for East Burke Village and West Burke Village. There will be a public workshop on October 16 to present the draft application, including a discussion of preliminary maps of the designated village areas. Please come and lend your thoughts!

*For more information about the Village Center Designation program, contact Chris Cochran at 828-3047 or at [chris.cochran@state.vt.us](mailto:chris.cochran@state.vt.us), or visit [www.HistoricVermont.org](http://www.HistoricVermont.org).*

## How Can Burke Residents Help?

Input and direction from community members is essential to the success of this process. Development around Burke Mountain and potential large-scale growth across the town over the next decade or so has the potential to change the community in many ways. What form this change takes depends on all of the town coming together to set a course that works for Burke.

### MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

- Participate in community forums and workshops – first one is scheduled for October 16
- Contact your Planning Commission at [burkePC@burkevermont.org](mailto:burkePC@burkevermont.org)



The Burke Mountain Club House in East Burke

## Town of Burke, VT

Town Office:  
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burkePC@burkevermont.org

Funding provided in part by a Municipal  
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**Additional information  
about this project is  
available online at:**

<http://tinyurl.com/burkeplanning>



West Burke Village along Route 5

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

# October 16

6:30 to 8:30 PM Burke Town Hall

**A Community Meeting to learn  
and share your thoughts about...**

*...the places your neighbors  
feel are special in Burke*

*...the results of the town-wide  
survey and how others feel*

*...growth projections and impacts  
of the Ginn development*

*...village designation for  
East and West Burke*

## Making Sense of Capital Budgets

Capital budgets are not the world's most exciting topic. But in a community that is undergoing rapid growth and change, they are essential. That is why the Burke Select Board has initiated the development of a capital budget and plan for the town.

A capital budget is a segregated portion of a town's finances that covers all the town's expenditures not related to operations. It includes purchase of equipment, major road projects, building construction, sewer extensions, and so on.

Though capital projects are not necessarily expensive, they are often the big-ticket items in a town's budget. Therefore, capital expenditures are often spread out across a number of years so as to reduce the impact on any one year's budget.

This is where capital plans come in. A capital plan helps a community look into the future and assess

what their upcoming capital needs are likely to be. Based on the plan, the community can then budget for those needs so as to be in a position to fund capital expenditures as they arise.

This is especially important in a community that is anticipating significantly more development in the near future than it has experienced historically. Without a capital plan, communities that suddenly begin to grow very fast can be caught short when new growth requires investments that had not been anticipated and budgeted for.

Knowing in advance what capital expenditures are likely to be needed and how much those projects will cost will put Burke in an excellent position to ensure that those costs are paid for in a way that is fair and reasonable. A draft capital plan will be presented to the Select Board for review later this year.