



For Immediate Release

For Questions, please contact Catherine Bryars, Chair of Vermont Planners Association Awards Committee, 802-442-0713 x310, cbryars@bcrvt.org.

Vermont Planners Association Announces 2021 Planning Awards

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802-865-7193
president@vermontplanners.org

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Montpelier, VT: The Vermont Planners Association is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2021 planning awards. For 29 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 Catherine Bryars, Chair of the Award Committee 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, which was especially difficult in the past year as we all navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. 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." The Vermont Planners Association will present the awards at an in-person ceremony to be scheduled later this year once COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

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 **Meagan Tuttle, AICP**. 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
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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.

Meagan Tuttle, AICP, is universally regarded by planners and non-planners alike as a highly valued project partner, skilled planning practitioner, and accomplished leader in planning and policy initiatives across the state and region. As Principal Planner for



Comprehensive Planning in the City of Burlington's Office of City Planning, where she has been since 2015, she is responsible for a variety of collaborative efforts that involve the creation and implementation of planBTV: a collection of plans that outline Burlington's long-range vision for land use and development. Meagan has been involved in, and often led, some of Burlington's

most collaborative, complex, and high-profile projects over the past six years. A few notable projects and accomplishments include: facilitating the 2019 Mayor's [Housing Summit](#) and resulting policy initiatives; authoring a significant revision to [Burlington's Comprehensive Plan](#) in 2019; ushering to completion Burlington's second major neighborhood plan in the [South End Master Plan](#); and leading an inter-departmental team to create the city's first-ever [Downtown Street Design and Construction Standards](#), which rendered a re-design of Burlington's [City Hall Park](#) and of two downtown blocks of [St. Paul Street](#).

Meagan's contributions to the Vermont planning community extend well beyond her day-to-day responsibilities. She currently serves as President of the Vermont Planners Association and is former Vermont State Director for the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (NNECAPA). 2020 was one of the most challenging years in history for Vermont's citizens and its leaders, but Meagan adapted and worked tirelessly to ensure that her peers were still able to grow in the profession. The 2020 NNECAPA conference – the organization's first remote conference, with multiple presenters, hundreds of attendees, and nationally acclaimed panels of guest speakers – was a shining result of her efforts as co-chair. To promote the planning profession, Meagan gives generously of her time to work with high school and university course projects as a guest lecturer and one-on-one mentor for aspiring planners. Meagan brings an admirable level of professionalism, empathy, and thoughtfulness to her many roles.

Plan of the Year

The **Walkable Middlesex Village Study** is recognized as the Vermont Planners Association's 2021 Plan of the Year. The [Walkable Middlesex Village Study](#) envisions alternate scenarios for redeveloping the town's main street, which is also a state highway. State management of the central roadway presents challenges for village

center placemaking – a challenge common to towns throughout Vermont. The study presents two scenarios for collaboration between the town and state government, integrating the needs of the community with the policies and priorities of the Vermont Agency of Transportation. By envisioning walkable and bikeable village solutions with



and without state management of the highway, the report points the way towards a variety of walkable futures for Middlesex's village center. These visions are presented in an engaging graphic style to illustrate the

value walkability would have on community safety and placemaking. The study emerged from a [2018 community visioning process](#), a 2019 Town Plan rewrite, and designation of the Village Center area in 2019. These previous efforts are reflected in the plan's design for multiple walking and bicycling connections among businesses, homes, and community centers.

The planning process is also notable for the amount of public outreach that was undertaken during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, outreach was conducted with social distancing requirements in place, and extra efforts were required to assure a broad array of community voices were incorporated into the plan. Individual interviews with land and businesses owners, multiple walking tours with key stakeholder groups, a series of virtual public meetings, and direct mailers to all town residents bridged the void created by the unprecedented pandemic circumstances. An additional strength of the plan is how clearly and succinctly it states the steps the Town and its partners must take to move beyond the plan and build a walkable Middlesex Village. At just 38 pages, the plan is direct and does not suffer from bloat due to boilerplate or floral language. The plan walks the reader through a process of vision, research, analysis, recommendations and specific implementation steps.

Citizen Board of the Year

The Town of Middlesex Planning Commission is the recipient of the Vermont Planners Association's 2021 Citizen Board of the Year award. Since 2018, the Middlesex Planning Commission has dedicated extraordinary volunteer time, meeting at least twice per month, to develop and implement Middlesex's municipal plan and pursue special planning projects. Planning Commissioners' efforts to educate town residents about planning, map out strategies for achieving specific goals, and enhance the capacity of the community to realize its vision by supporting a capital improvement

planning program have rallied residents and attracted funding for specialized studies and implementation actions.

The Middlesex Planning Commission has engaged with local residents through planning processes for the “[What’s Next Middlesex?](#)” community visioning program in 2018, a successful village center designation application, a [Municipal Plan](#) update with an Enhanced Energy element, and the Walkable Middlesex Bike and Pedestrian Plan. Specific outreach strategies have involved education events to solicit public input on the municipal plan and resident surveys to determine aspects of the Town’s zoning that needed revision. Through consistent engagement over several years, Middlesex residents and local businesses have gained a better understanding of the Planning Commission’s role in the town, which has allowed for beneficial dialogue and consensus on community issues and solutions. The Commission’s partnerships with local business owners, “What’s Next, Middlesex” action groups, and a revitalized Middlesex Energy Committee have been key to recent planning achievements.

Project of the Year

The **Rupert Village Revitalization Project** is the Vermont Planners Association’s 2021 Project of the Year. Since 2015, Rupert residents have undertaken a series of initiatives and investments to implement the town’s vision for a vital, walkable, mixed-use village



center in historic Rupert Village. Accomplishments since 2015 include being awarded a State Village Center designation, establishment of a town green, redevelopment of a number of historic properties for public and commercial use including the beloved Sheldon General Store as a community center, and facilitation of public events to bring the community together. The [Rupert Village Trust](#) initiated public programming at the

community center in the summer of 2019. Roughly 5-8 programs per week attracted 70-100 attendees. [Events](#) have included classes, markets, game nights, live music sessions, the annual Old Home Days Parade, and in 2020 the first annual Rupert Mountain Theatre Festival on the town green. To date, the project has raised over \$480,000 in community donations and grant funds to support village revitalization efforts in this rural town of about 700 residents.

Even through the challenges presented by the pandemic in 2020, Rupert’s revitalization efforts persevered in the form of a series of outdoor ‘Grab and Gab’ gatherings at the Sheldon General Store community center, work days at the community garden, hosting

a virtual Boston Marathon, tree planting on the Town Green, and progress on historic building redevelopment. Efforts to attract a café operator to establish a small eatery and market at the recently re-opened [Sheldon General Store and Community Center](#) on Main Street are on-going, and more improvements for sidewalks and a small shared wastewater system are planned in the coming year. The Rupert Village Revitalization Project exemplifies what can be accomplished by citizen planners who adhere to core planning principles of smart growth, historic preservation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, land conservation, and diverse community engagement through public events and the documentation and celebration of local history and residents.

Special Recognition: Career Achievement Award

From time to time, the Vermont Planners Association recognizes individuals for unparalleled contributions to Vermont planning over the course of their career. This year, the Vermont Planners Association is thrilled to bestow its Career Achievement Award for Excellence in Planning to **Dean Pierce, AICP**.

Dean has devoted more than thirty years to professional planning at the local, regional, and state level. Throughout his career, he has advocated at all levels for pragmatic, smart growth planning principles that reinforce Vermont's historic settlement pattern and protect Vermont's environment. He has been a continual innovator in the field and a dogged advocate for professional development for his planning colleagues and citizen planners. Since 2002, Dean has served as Director of Planning and Zoning for the Town of Shelburne, where he leads by identifying community issues, educating the public, building consensus, and collaborating to create solutions. He has guided two overhauls of the Town's [Comprehensive Plan](#), implemented multiple bike/ped transportation projects, and developed natural resource policies as well as the Town's [form-based zoning code](#).

Dean began his planning career at Addison County Regional Planning Commission in 1987, where he oversaw creation of an in-house GIS system – one of the first in Vermont. Dean helped establish VPA as one of its first members, and with the organization he assisted the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in its anti-sprawl campaign in the late-1980s. He collaborated with others to provide input on federal takings legislation and has helped craft state policy and provide testimony to the Vermont Legislature on a number of issues including the regulation of telecommunication facilities, home occupations, and farm-based businesses. Dean is a brilliant planner, ardent to the communities he serves. He is sharp, has a wide breadth of knowledge, is quick on his feet, and gives context-specific, precise solutions to complex issues. While steadfast to the planning practices and ethics he adheres to, Dean remains curious and actively listens to new ideas and perspectives, which is why he has remained vital to the planning community's development and growth over several decades. The Vermont Planners Association congratulates Dean on his many years of service to the profession statewide.