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Vermont Planners Association Announces 2018 Planning Awards & FAICP Recipients

Montpelier, VT: The Vermont Planners Association is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2018 planning awards. For 26 years, these awards have recognized outstanding achievements in community planning in Vermont. Nominees come from all corners of Vermont and represent the best in local, regional, and state planning by citizen and professional planners over the last year.

According to Mark Kane, President of the Vermont Planners Association, “Each year, the Vermont Planner’s Association (VPA) seeks out the best in community plans and projects and notable contributions from both citizen and professional planners. Through our annual awards program, VPA recognizes the challenging work and commitment that communities undertake to advance important local, regional and state planning policies and priorities. This year’s recipients inspire us and reflect the mission of VPA to advance community planning in Vermont at all levels and foster vibrant communities and a healthy environment. VPA is proud to help highlight community planning efforts worthy of such recognition and praise.” The awards will be presented on April 19, 2018, at 4:00 p.m. in the Vermont Statehouse’s Cedar Creek Room.

With more than 30 years of his life dedicated to planning in the State of Vermont, Jim Sullivan, Executive Director of the Bennington County Regional Commission, is the 2018 Mark Blucher Professional Planner of the Year. Described as the epitome of a public servant, Jim has been at the forefront of energy planning both within his region and across the state. Linda McGinnis of Energy Action Network said, “He has, perhaps more than any single individual in Vermont, helped planners and citizens alike grasp the concept of how each of us has a critical role to play in transforming our energy sector... He believes deeply in the power of information, transparency, and stakeholder input. Thanks to his efforts, every RPC now has energy as a core part of its planning process, and nearly half of Vermont's towns are on their way to doing the same.” Jim’s humble and lighthearted demeanor and passion have also benefited many issues from food systems planning, brownfields, trail and recreational development, to community and economic development during his tenure with the RPC. His ability to mobilize colleagues and community members to implement projects in partnership has furthered the role and perception of planning in communities throughout the region. His work has created a lasting contribution to planning both within his region and throughout the state as demonstrated by many letters of support for his nomination as Professional Planner of the Year from the towns he serves, not-for-profits, and conservation and housing development organizations.

The Irene Flood Buyouts Project was a partnership between the Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC). This project was an innovative blend of three funding sources and a coordinated effort from the state to the town level to meet the immediate needs of people statewide whose properties were destroyed during Tropical Storm Irene. Too often people choose to rebuild in flood zones as they feel they have no other practical choice. But rebuilding simply repeats the cycle of flood damage. The project directed more than 19 million dollars to buying and demolishing 140 flood-damaged properties, creating improved flood storage, and revegetating stream buffers. The project also remediated three brownfield sites and created 17 riverside parks or public water access points. All sites are precluded from future structural development by easement. Ten additional sites are still in the process of being bought

or cleaned up. Combining HMGP with CDBG funding provided the 100% pre-flood purchase price that many owners needed. CDBG and VHCB funding also enabled a handful of buyouts that could not access FEMA funding to come to fruition. The program was aimed at not just helping flooded property owners, but at transforming those properties to function as flood storage in order to attenuate future flooding and to serve as public amenities for the community. For these reasons, the Irene Flood Buyout Project is the 2018 Project of the Year.

The Rediscovering Chester Master Plan is recognized as VPA's Plan of the Year. It is a plan built on engaging the community in a planning process to create a unified vision for village revitalization and established a clear implementation plan to further this vision. The Rediscovering Chester Master Plan places a high emphasis on building upon what works, fixing what needs to be fixed and assuring the results enrich the lives of residents and visitors. The plan sets forth a comprehensive implementation strategy with ideas for phasing and funding to help the community move forward. Recently, the Town of Chester has been able to leverage the plan to obtain a \$1 million TAP grant for sidewalk and streetscape improvements. The town also recently secured a municipal planning grant for rezoning assistance to help align local policies to historic preservation goals.

Andrew Montroll, Citizen Planner of the Year, has served Burlington for 25 years as a City Councilor, Planning Commissioner and in community-wide initiatives. Andy's involvement has resulted in dozens of adopted amendments to the Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance, including most notably the adoption of planBTV: Downtown Code. An attorney by day (with an undergraduate degree in engineering), Andy brings his strengths of attention to detail and ability to clearly interpret complex information to his work as a citizen planner. His patience and diligence have aided his fellow councilors and commissioners in both staying on task over the course of very long, complex projects, and in finding middle ground when considering contentious issues. Andy's leadership style is described by former Burlington City Council President Jane Knodell as "quiet, but strong and respectful to all, all the time."

The Town of Cambridge has been one of the fastest growing communities outside of Chittenden County at a time that many other rural communities are experiencing declining populations. The Cambridge Selectboard and Town Clerk have navigated varying visions and expectations by different groups within the community and demonstrated a dedication to a willingness to learn, to engage with the community and many other partners. The Cambridge Greenway Bridge project is an example of the town's work and resulted in the replacement of the bridge to decrease future flooding. The Selectboard also took on updating local flood hazard regulations balancing the practical needs of having its historic village located in the floodplain, such as redevelopment, with minimizing risks to downstream properties by providing compensatory storage and two-foot freeboard requirements for buildings. In recognition of these collective efforts for flood resiliency, The Cambridge Selectboard and Town Clerk are the Citizen Board of the Year.

Known as the embodiment of the Vermont notion of reliance, Peg Elmer Hough, AICP, is this year's recipient of the VPA Career Achievement Award for Excellence in Planning. Throughout her varied and distinguished career as a land use planner, Peg has helped Vermont navigate through periods of change with an unfailing commitment to protecting critical land and water resources, energy efficiency and reinforcing the social networks that make communities vital and safe. As Planning Director of the Vermont DHCA Planning Division, she led the Growth Center Pilot project and a task force that successfully proposed legislation to close the 10-acre loophole in regulation of on-site septic systems. She founded the Vermont Land Use Education and Training Collaborative and served as Assistant Professor of Land Use Policy and Associate

Director of the Land Use Clinic at the Vermont Law School. She has served in leadership roles in the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association. In 2011, Tropical Storm Irene devastated Vermont and destroyed Peg's home. Ever the planner, she rebuilt her home to the highest standards for flood resilience, created a publication to help other homeowners do the same, and went on to found the Community Resilience Organization (CRO) program to help neighbors build the connections needed to face challenging circumstances. Peg's tenacity, humor and firm grounding in planning principles enabled her to achieve successes that would have eluded others and continues on even in her ostensible "retirement."

For more information about the Vermont Planners Association Awards, you can visit their web site at <http://www.vermontplanners.org/awards.html>. You can also follow up on Twitter @VT_Planning. The Vermont Planners Association is a statewide, non-profit, membership-based organization of professional and citizen planners, and other related professionals, dedicated to advancing the art and science of planning in Vermont. VPA supports the planning profession through outreach, professional development opportunities and encourages all members to maintain an open dialogue on contemporary planning issues. Special thanks go to the New Hampshire Planners Association for its help in judging the Vermont Planners Association Awards this year.

The Vermont Planners Association is also pleased to announce that Sharron L. Murray, AICP, of Bolton, Vermont, and David E. White, AICP, of Jericho, Vermont have achieved the planning profession's highest honor by being named to the prestigious American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) College of Fellows for their outstanding achievements in planning. Fellowship is granted to planners who have achieved certification through the American Planning Association's (APA) professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, and have achieved excellence in professional practice, teaching and mentoring, research, public and community service, and leadership. Invitations to join the College of Fellows come after a thorough nomination and review process, ensuring the candidate has had a positive, long-lasting impact on the planning profession.

"Individuals who make up the College of Fellows are the true leaders of the planning profession," said past AICP President Valerie Hubbard, FAICP. "These individuals have made lasting contributions to the profession and have inspired generations of new planners. They are truly awe-inspiring."

Murray is the Principal of Front Porch Community Planning & Design, with 30 years of planning practice both in the public and private sectors in Vermont. Her contributions to planning in Vermont and to the planning profession, have earned her the reputation as the credible expert in land use law and policy across Northern New England for both professional planners and lay audiences. Notably, her long-time leadership as a legislative liaison and advisor have provided Vermont planners with a trusted voice in working with and educating state and federal legislators on the methods and values of sound planning.

White is the Director of Planning & Zoning in Burlington, Vermont with 30 years of planning practice at the local and regional levels. His contributions to planning in the communities he has worked is characterized by his creativity and innovation in his approach to planning, community engagement, and policy-making. In particular, David's advocacy elevated the Planning & Zoning Department's and the Burlington community's attention to long-range planning efforts, most notably through the creation of *planBTV: Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan*. The plan and planning process has laid the foundation for reinvestment taking place in the City's downtown

core, and has been used as a model for many communities in New England and around the country.

Murray and White are among the 64 inductees into this year's College of Fellows. This year's formal induction will take place during APA's National Planning Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Sunday, April 22.