

Better(not bigger)Vermont



<https://www.betternotbiggervt.org/>

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Vermont Futures Project

Our apologies that we haven't sent you a newsletter since last March. We've been busy working to counter a massive \$million+ effort by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce to bring 154,000 more people (an almost 25% increase) to

Vermont by 2035. Their Vermont Futures Project has the support of Governor Scott, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Vermont's Treasurer (Mike Pieciak), and many others.

VFP's Executive Director, Kevin Chu, has the polished presence of a well-practiced salesman and has been given airtime by media outlets like Vermont Public Radio, WCAX, the Colchester Sun, and the Boston Globe (real estate section).

FYI, the 154,000 figure was chosen to take Vermont's population to 802,000. Now isn't that so very rational?! VFP's website is at <https://vtfuturesproject.org>.

Our counter-arguments have highlighted facts like...

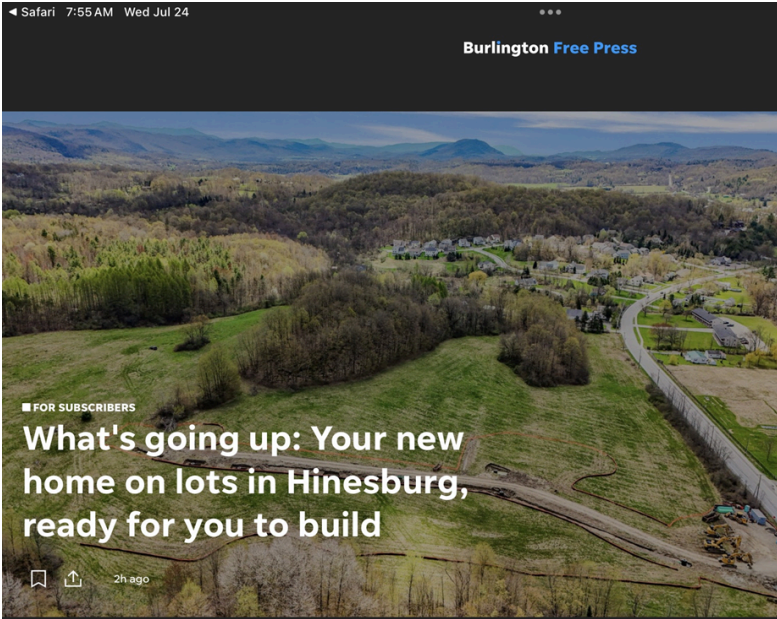
- Vermont's public infrastructure (roads, water & sewer, schools, and other public services) cannot accommodate this rate of growth.
- VFP's plans will make Vermont less sustainable and will make it more difficult for Vermont to reach its climate action goals.
- relevant articles:
 - <https://vtdigger.org/2024/07/19/john-bossange-the-myth-of-sustainable-economic-growth/>
 - <https://vtdigger.org/2024/05/06/john-bossange-the-eclipse-traffic-and-crowds-were-a-warning-for-vermonters/>

- <https://vtdigger.org/2023/11/17/john-bossange-futures-project-fails-to-include-true-cost-of-growth-in-communities/>
- <https://vtdigger.org/2023/04/08/john-bossange-do-we-really-need-40000-new-homes-by-2030/>
- Article by BnbVT's President, Wolfger Schneider, at the end of this newsletter.

Please come and take away our quality of life

An out-of-state developer from Atlanta, GA (Joe Laster, Abraham Properties) will build yet another development in Hinesburg (this one will have 55 units; see below).

“When outside developers read stuff from the Vermont Futures Project (155,000 more people needed by 2035) and the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (40,000 new homes needed by 2030), and the Governor uses these figures in his press conferences, it's no wonder the message outside Vermont is that Vermont is open for development.” - John Bossange



Impact of housing development on school taxes

John Bossange, a BnbVT Board Director and retired school principal, researched and wrote a critical assessment of how large increases in the number of housing units will lead to higher school taxes, at least in South Burlington...

https://www.vtcng.com/otherpapersbvt/opinion/opinion_columns/more-housing-will-mean-higher-taxes-in-south-burlington/article_1ccffcf0-b8b3-11ef-8089-ebb8f83c210a.html

Ethics complaint against Vermont Senator (update)

The Democrat-controlled Senate promoted Sen. Hinsdale, accused in 2024 of conflict-of-interest violations regarding real estate development, to Senate Majority Leader in the 2025 session.

Act 47 uses municipal waste treatment to nullify local zoning control

In 2023, the Vermont Growth Machine's operatives in the State Legislature rammed through Act 47 (aka S.100 or the Home Act). One impact of this Act was to sacrifice some of Vermonters' ability to exercise direct democracy to the God of Growth. We covered this matter in an earlier Newsletter.

Act 47 also mandates 1/5 acre lots and allows at least one quadplex per lot in any zoning district "served by municipal sewer and water infrastructure." So, essentially 20 units per acre, a controversial level even for dense village centers. This amount of density is beyond the potential carrying capacity for infrastructure (stormwater, traffic, lot coverage, sidewalks, etc.) in many non-urban communities.

In addition, Act 47 requires another 40% increase in density (and taller buildings) if the housing is affordable. The Act defines an area served by municipal sewer and water very broadly... "an area where residential connections and expansions are available to municipal water and direct and indirect discharge wastewater systems..."

The bottom-line impact of Act 47 is that a town planning to construct a municipal sewer system will forfeit any ability to control its zoning.

Was the passage of Act 47 connected to the millions of dollars that the Scott Administration is using to seduce towns into building new wastewater treatment facilities? Is the Vermont Futures Project also connected to the passage Act 47?

Danish tool for increasing the housing supply WITHOUT more construction

Denmark uses matching bonds to break the lock-in effect on mortgages when interest rates rise (the lock-in effect reduces the number of home sellers, thereby increasing home prices)...
<https://www.businessinsider.com/denmark-mortgage-rates-lock-in-effect-home-buying-selling-easier-2024-5>. Is this something Vermont can do?

Please support our work

Better(not bigger)Vermont is a registered 501(c)3 with no paid managers or staff; we are a 100% volunteer organization.

But we still have expenses such as our website and special projects that require special expertise we lack.

We very much appreciate your donation, which can be sent to us via PayPal or mailed to us at...

BnbVT
PO Box 70

South Hero, VT 05486

Does Vermont Need the Vermont Futures Project? Wolfger Schneider

Since 2020 the US has experienced a pandemic, continuing drought conditions and water shortages in the West, increasing forest fires, and increasingly hot summers, conditions that motivated many people with means to seek a new home. And Vermont was one of the desirable destinations leading to a surge in immigration, driving up the cost of housing and adding to the housing shortage. A great time for real estate investors to descend upon Vermont promising affordable housing, economic growth, larger tax bases, and good (well paying, of course) jobs.

Thus appears the Vermont Futures Project (vtfuturesproject.org), powered by nearly \$1 million in donations, that is trying to make the case for Vermont's population to grow by 150 000 by 2035 while trying to "scale up our impact on sustainability". They aim for a thriving future where "economic development , environmental sustainability, and social justice intersect". All nice words to sell more growth.

No mention is made of how this population growth of 1.8% growth per year will help us achieve our Vermont climate goals of GHG emissions reductions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030? No mention is made of the new infrastructure needed to support this rapid development. No attempt is made to determine if this increase will exceed our local energy and food supply capability in an energy descent future. And where will these 150 000 new Vermonters work or are they all retirees trying to keep cool?

VFP has not made a good case for rapid or any population increase.