

Community Updates

As shown below, our communities are pursuing many smart growth strategies encouraged by the Valley Vision 2 plan including:

- 40R Smart Growth Zoning;
- Infill and redevelopment of buildings for affordable housing;
- Brownfield projects;
- Master Planning & zoning updates; &
- Open Space Residential Design bylaws

We applaud their efforts and will support them in any way possible.

Holyoke- moving forward with adopting a 40R Smart Growth Zoning district. Received a \$100,000 43D grant from the state and designated a Priority Development Site. Working on zoning ordinance revisions and have completed a citywide assessment of brownfield sites.

Ware- Undertaking the redevelopment of a former school building into 29 units of affordable senior housing under a friendly 40B. Also pursuing a brownfield project.

Southwick- Currently has a flexible residential development bylaw with a 40% open space requirement and a phased growth bylaw which is set to expire. PVPC is presenting 40R smart growth zoning to the Planning Board next week.

Chicopee- also moving forward with a 40R Smart Growth district in their downtown and completing an application for 43D Priority Development Site designation and technical assistance grant.

West Springfield- Kicking off their master plan update process and will consider VV2 strategies during this process. Also pursuing ordinance revisions to facilitate infill development and redevelopment of damaged structures with a focus on encouraging the creation of affordable housing.

Northampton- just adopted their "Sustainable Northampton" plan. Their 40R smart growth district project, Village at Hospital Hill is due to begin construction soon.

Belchertown- finishing up their Master Plan which incorporated VV2 strategies and an energy policy. PVPC staff is presenting 43D to the Select Board next week.

Shutesbury- working on zoning revisions including provisions for accessory apartments and multi-family housing, and creating four zoning districts (currently only one zoning district) including a forest conservation zone in which Open Space Residential Development will be allowable by-right while conventional subdivision will require a special permit.

Southampton- working on a Master Plan and a long list of zoning bylaw revisions. A common driveway bylaw and an accessory apartment bylaw have been recently adopted. CPA funds are mostly being used for open space projects currently, looking into establishing a housing trust.

Pilot Projects & Partnerships

Wisdom Way Solar Village (Greenfield)- Rural Development, Inc. is now constructing 20 near zero net energy condominiums. Some units will be completed and on display this summer.

Open Square & Canal Walk (downtown Holyoke)- The Canal Walk project is making progress and Open Square, a mixed use mill redevelopment located along the canal, has begun construction on The Shops at Open Square with its first retail tenant, Pearl Bridal Boutique, opening in May.

Neighborhood revitalization- HAP, Inc is working on neighborhood revitalization projects in Springfield and South Holyoke. They have also made progress on a senior housing project in Ware and a mixed income housing project in Amherst.

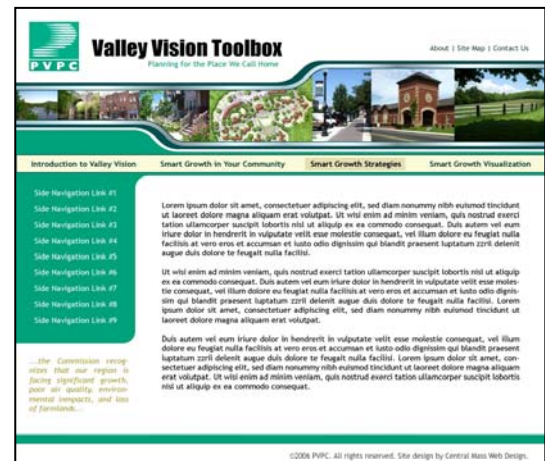
Green standard for lumber- A standardized green label for wood products is being pursued by the National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Assoc. They have petitioned the American Lumber Standards Committee (ALSC) for the green labeling of lumber products. A consolidated label would make it simpler to identify sustainably harvested wood products.

RE-USE IDEAS COMPETITION

VDC members discussed a holding building re-use ideas competition. Sites for redevelopment would be identified and an ideas competition would be held to come up with “smart” and “green” ideas for how the buildings could be re-used. More details and partnering opportunities to come!

VV2 Toolbox- Coming Soon! Look for by a release of the Toolbox by the end of March. The toolbox will contain tools for implementing each strategy described in VV2. We anticipate sending a copy to each community and asking them to pick a strategy to work on over the next year so that we may assist them in any way we can (PVPC will be providing free technical assistance and VDC members will volunteer to share their expertise).

We will also have a VV2 Toolbox release event in April with an inspirational speaker and staff on hand to answer questions from communities on how they can use the toolbox to meet their community’s smart growth goals.



Advocacy

Zoning Reform- Greg Bialecki, Assistant Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development came to the February 21st PVPC Commission meeting to discuss the zoning reforms currently being proposed. The Zoning Reform Working group has proposed an alternative framework to the state’s current proposal. These proposals include a significant role for regional coordination and could help in the implementation of VV2. PVPC is developing a white paper to provide input on the Zoning reform proposals and will look for VDC member input.

Outreach & Education

VV2 video- VDC members briefly discussed the creation of a video about Valley Vision 2 which would be distributed to local cable channels to be aired to the public. We will work on a proposal for what will be in the video and how we can best use it to reach the public on these important issues and then look for sponsors.



Mixed-use in downtown Palmer, MA