



VCC Honors Best Development Projects in the Region

The Valley Conservation Council (VCC) announced the recipients of its 2004 Better Models awards at an awards ceremony February 22 in Staunton. Also honored were those named Valley Conservators for their outstanding land conservation efforts (see p. 7).

Better Models awards recognize development projects that protect local character and natural features and add to the region's quality of life. Winners were chosen from a select group of nominated entries. VCC has made these awards since 2000. Congratulations to this year's winners!

Hill Top Master Plan & Zoning District *Best Community Planning* City of Buena Vista

Buena Vista has proactively set the pattern and quality of development it wants for its most important open land, a tract originally slated for an industrial park. The first step was the Hill Top-Glen Maury Park Master Plan, which calls for a compact, walkable, mixed-use development with access to prime open space. Buena Vista incorporated this master plan into the city's Comprehensive Plan and adopted the Hill Top Zoning District to



*Hill Top Area of the
Glen Maury Park
Master Plan*

implement the master plan. These regulations, in the form of design guidelines, will govern development of the residential and mixed-use area. The city is currently reviewing development proposals. "Stay tuned," said Amanda Huffman, the city's economic development official, "We're excited to see how this model develops over time."

South Main Street Biofiltration & Bioretention Project *Outstanding Resource Protection Project* City of Lexington



Lexington enhanced its southern gateway with expanded plantings and more attractive signs. The result: a clearly delineated entrance to the City and improved appearance of the commercial enterprises. The landscaping, designed according to low-impact development (LID) principles, reduces stormwater runoff from roads and parking lots and filters out pollutants. This creative solution integrated Lexington's economic development and environmental goals. Says Planning Director Bill Blatter, "It says something about the community I'm privileged to work in... that we are treating peripheral areas with the same care and respect as our downtown."

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Valley Conservators Named



Valley Conservators Lead by Impressive Example. *The Grist farm in Botetourt County has a conservation easement on it, thanks not only to the owners, but to realtor Jim Brown, named a 2004 Valley Conservator.*

Read more about the winners on p. 7

More Better Models Awards

Alicia Group Showroom & Studio *Best Adaptive Reuse* **Town of Woodstock**



In a dramatic reclamation of one of Woodstock's key retail buildings, Alicia and Robert Brewin turned a 1940s auto parts and service store into a beautiful mixed-use building. The ground floor contains Alicia Group Showroom and Studios, an interior design firm. The large storefront windows have been preserved and now display a variety of art, furniture, and design accessories. The upstairs was renovated into apartments, which have attracted young professionals to live downtown. Local historic renovator Bill Wine was the designer and contractor. The building has since changed hands, with the current owner, Pat Koch, keeping the name and the vision. "Any thought of buyer's remorse was erased when I heard about this award," said Koch.

Mount Jackson Town Hall *Best Public Building* **Town of Mount Jackson**



The Town of Mount Jackson sets the standard with public buildings with its attractive and functional Town Hall. The building uses a design reminiscent of the old railway station that once stood nearby. It houses town offices, the town library, a visitors center, and the Mount Jackson museum. It also has meeting space available to the

public. By its central location and the integration of a full range of community facilities, the building reinforces the principle of growing in, not out. Mather-Barras of Harrisonburg served as the architects. Mayor Joseph Williams noted with pride the huge community support for the building and invited all to "come see our town hall."

Cobble Hill Farm *Best Historic Preservation Project* **City of Staunton**

By placing an historic easement on Cobble Hill, a 196-acre sheep and hay farm on the outskirts of the City of Staunton, Harriet Hanger has preserved a unique and historic farm while also retaining extensive natural and scenic assets in the city. The farm, featuring a 1936 Tudor Revival manor house and other buildings designed by noted architect Sam Collins, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other historic elements are two tenant farmhouses, a dairy barn, and numerous agricultural outbuildings. By the terms of the easement, which is held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, these structures cannot be demolished and any changes must be in keeping with the historic character of the property. Staunton City Council unanimously supported the easement. Ms. Hanger acknowledged that it had been "a long and exciting process and I've met wonderful people along the way, including those at VCC."

Market Place ~ Court Square Theater *Outstanding Public-Private Development Project* **City of Harrisonburg**



The renovation of the Rockingham Motor Company and Woolworth's buildings into a prosperous mixed-use complex with aesthetic appeal and respect for Harrisonburg's unique history is a success story on many levels. The Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority worked with two private developers, Dan and Tom Brubaker and David Turner, to reuse these two large, vacant buildings in the core of downtown. The buildings were joined to form a large interconnected mixed-use space with shared entrances. The Market Place (the former Woolworth's) houses Calhoun's restaurant and microbrewery, government offices, conference rooms, and outdoor dining. The Rockingham Motor Company has been converted into Court Square Theater on one side and businesses on the other. All of the businesses are locally owned and operated. Said Tom Brubaker, "This is something Harrisonburg needed and is supporting."

Valley Conservation Council Annual Report - 2004

Thank you! Your generous support enables VCC to help protect Valley land.

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\$1,000 and more

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The Year in Review - 2004

As we enter our 15th year at VCC, the demand for land protection in the Valley continues to grow. We are working hard to do our share and appreciate all of you who are doing yours. Here is a brief report on some of our activities last year.

In 2004, VCC

- Took on legal co-holding responsibility for an additional 1,084 acres of land (now 3,336 total acres)
- Joined our partners to monitor eased properties around the Valley
- Distributed almost 2,000 copies of the *State of the Valley* report
- Spoke to over 1,100 Valley people about land conservation issues
- Established our first County Steward position in Botetourt County
- Responded to requests for easement information from over 60 landowners and handed out materials to hundreds more
- Brought together 9 county governments to explore rural zoning options
- Provided 8 presentations and 4 longer work sessions to local and regional government bodies
- Presented 26 additional programs, to farm bureau boards, Ruritan Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, private parties, and other groups
- Worked with other regional and state groups on land conservation issues
- Brought these lessons home to Valley residents in dozens of one-on-one consultations about family lands throughout the Valley

Thanks to all of our members, supporters, and partners for a great year.

—John Eckman, Executive Director, VCC



These board members do more than attend meetings. James Flory, an accomplished stone mason, and Faye Cooper repoint bricks on VCC's historic office building.

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Many thanks to these organizations for their support in 2004

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Many Thanks to Melanie

Many thanks to Melanie Griffis Tillison for her dedicated service as VCC's development director. Her capable and professional approach was a great boost to our conservation efforts. Best wishes to Melanie.

New Members - Winter 2005

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 Philip Hyre & Daphne Raz

Rockingham Area

Douglas L. Guynn
 Ms. Jean Hornberg

From Afar

Elizabeth Eggleston
 Maynard Sipe

Rural Zoning Compared

Nearly all of the region's counties were represented December 9th at VCC's Rural Zoning Seminar. The workshop gave planners and related professionals as well as elected officials the chance to compare notes with other counties on how to structure zoning codes to manage growth. Sara Hollberg of VCC presented material from the State of the Valley report illustrating the current policies in each of the 11 counties. Guest speakers Wayne Cilimberg, Planning Director of Albemarle County, and Todd Benson of Fauquier County followed with descriptions of the programs in their high-growth counties.

Participants then shared their own successes and challenges. It was a busy and constructive morning. VCC plans to follow through with more such events to help localities explore options for effective growth management. For example, VCC will join with the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council to put on a conference on how to finance purchase of development programs.

Many thanks to Rockingham County for hosting the event. Co-sponsors were the Rural Planning Caucus and the Shenandoah Valley Section of the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association.



VCC's Rural Zoning Seminar brought together planners and related professionals from the region.

Realtor, Friends Earn VCC's 'Valley Conservator' Awards

This year's major conservation awards went to a realtor and to a 'team' that has done much to save the landscape in their neighborhood. These "Valley Conservators" are honored for their outstanding efforts in land protection.

James F. Brown

Jim Brown, a Rockbridge County realtor, has been a strong advocate for land protection, selling the concept of easements as he markets properties for sale. Jim also has encouraged friends and family to consider easements. Over the past 15 years, he has been responsible for initiating easements on numerous properties, including Chapel Hill, his ancestral home in Augusta County, a 500-acre farm near Goshen, properties on and around Jump Mountain totaling more than 1,000 acres, and most recently, a 500-acre farm on the James River in Botetourt County. Jim and his wife Toni also eased a portion of their Rockbridge County farm. Jim's acceptance speech shows why he is so effective: "I'm just glad I have the opportunity through my profession to let people know these options are out there."



Frederick & Christine Andreae and John B. Rice, Jr.

The Andreaes and Mr. Rice have worked tirelessly, and successfully, to protect the Milford Civil War Battlefield and the Overall area that lies on the border of Warren and Page counties. Set on a dramatic bend of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River at the narrowest part of the



John Rice, Christine and Fred Andreae

valley separating Shenandoah National Park from the Massanutten range, the area was the site of two battles in 1864. The landscape ranges from

river bottom to steep forest. Rice placed a conservation easement on his property and the Andreaes placed easements on three properties. They then teamed up to encourage neighbors to donate six additional easements, bringing the total land protected to 1,064 acres. These easements protect the scenic value of the area for users of the park and U.S. 340 and provide significant watershed protection. Mr. Rice has written a book about the Milford Battlefield, which was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Says Fred Andreae, "This has been a community project... and we hope to do a good bit more before we're finished."

More Than 9,000 Acres Put Under Easement in 2004

Last year was a banner one for conservation easements. In 2004, a total of 30 easements were recorded in the VCC region, protecting 9,140 acres. Faye Cooper, Virginia Outdoors Foundation Easement Specialist based in Staunton, says "Many landowners are increasingly concerned about the future impacts of growth in their rural communities and easements have provided one remedy. In addition, tax benefits have become more attractive. Added to the excellent efforts of VCC and other organizations to spread the word, these factors led to an extraordinary year for land protection in the Valley."

A whopping 23 of these easements were recorded just before year end. Particularly noteworthy are two large easements in Alleghany County.

Recent Conservation Easements

Alleghany County

Richard Huttinger, 219 acres

Middle Mountain LLC, 3,114 acres

Augusta County

Wendy Higginson, 50 acres

Bath County

Warm Springs Investment Co., 935 acres (5 easements)

Asher Brand, Rich Evans, & Charles Lunsford, 230 acres

Buxton Farms LLC, 85 acres

Botetourt County

J. Steven & Frances Grist, 503 acres

Highland County

Wesley and Melanie Woods, 198 acres

Rockbridge County

Ronald and Doris Mosocco, 76 acres

James and Julia Crothers, 40 acres

David and Marsha Dowler, 40 acres

Keith and Penny Holland, 140 acres

Keith and Norval Holland, 178 acres

Anne Zimmermann, 204 acres

Robert Wicklund and Gerri Wenz, 463 acres

Shenandoah County

Alvin and Emily Henry, 104 acres

Double Your Dollars

The Agua Fund will match, dollar for dollar, any new memberships to VCC and any increases in giving over last year's gifts. To be matched, gifts must be made by November 1, 2005.

If you believe in VCC's mission, please take this wonderful opportunity to double the difference you can make. To encourage friends or contacts to join VCC, pass on a newsletter or call the office (886-3541 or toll free 877/216-1782) to have an informational packet sent.



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Find Out How to Fund PDRs

VCC is joining with the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) to hold a workshop on financing local purchase of development rights (PDR) programs. Many local governments in the region have expressed interest in PDR as a way to preserve farmland, but funding is usually the biggest obstacle.

The workshop will be held April 19, from 8:30 to 1:30 at the Augusta County Government Center. It will feature expert speakers from some of the best-known and best-financed PDR programs in the country. Call VCC or the Shenandoah RC&D (540/248-4528) for more information.

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar for these free educational sessions:

- **April 19 - How to Fund Local Purchase of Development Rights Programs**, Verona
- **April 28 and May 12 - Water Workshops**, Alleghany County (Genevieve Goss, 540/966-4606)
- **May 19 - Best Practices for Mitigating Stormwater Runoff**, Botetourt County (Genevieve Goss, 540/966-4606)

Join Online

You can join VCC or make a donation online. Visit www.valleyconservation.org.

VCC Better Models Award Winners (more inside)



Cobble Hill Farm, Staunton
Best Historic Preservation Project

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17 Barristers Row
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