

Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board
Priority Objectives – Working Draft

The Vermont Generally Assembly created the Land Access and Opportunity Board (or *the Board*) under Act 182 of 2022 in order to:

[A]cknowledge structural racism and prevalent wealth disparities by creating new opportunities and improving access to woodlands, farmland, and land and home ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities who continue to face barriers to land and home ownership. (Act 182 at p. 35)

The Board exists because these historical barriers continue to exist within systems of legal oppression and exclusion, economic domination, and exploitation of land, creating ongoing, pervasive challenges for historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities,¹ and all those living at the intersections of marginalization, to access land, home security and welcoming communities. Our mission is the programmatic and systematic dismantling of these systems of oppression. In their place, we will seek out, create, fund, and build alternative models for land access, finding home, and mobilizing a network of safe, welcoming communities. We will create the economic and social conditions to make Vermont a haven for individuals, families, and collectives of historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities to live, grow and thrive.

It is therefore crucial the Board establish and pursue the following priority objectives:

- That the Board advocate for and manage public *and* private funding to support access to land, housing, opportunity and enterprise for individuals, families, and cooperatives from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities, in order to create a living and working environment in Vermont that provides a model for the rest of the nation to envy and emulate;
- That the Board focus efforts and investments in areas of Vermont where such land and housing acquisition will be most welcomed, appreciated, and supported, and where individuals, families, and cooperatives from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities will not be demographically isolated or unwelcome;

¹ In Act 182, the LAOB enabling statute, this term means: a community that has historically suffered from discrimination and has not had equal access to public or private economic benefits due to the race, ethnicity, gender, geography, language preference, immigrant or citizen status, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or disability status of its members.

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- That the Board structure its investments so that the land uses it supports are not in conflict with the Board’s environmental quality goals,² in order to build a future of food and land sovereignty around principles of organic and regenerative farming, sustainable human habitat, ceremony, native ecosystem restoration, climate healing, and cultural preservation;
- That the Board advocate for offices and positions to be established within Vermont’s housing and real estate finance sector, as well as to strengthen services within Vermont’s five homeownership centers, in order to help first-time buyers from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities navigate the often intimidating process of purchasing property and housing;
- That such navigators not only assist individuals, families, and cooperatives from historically marginalized communities to acquire property and housing, but provide ongoing support and technical assistance for the sustainability of those communities, enterprises, and ventures through permanent and secure land tenure, resource management, and economic security;
- That ongoing legal counsel and advocacy be obtained to familiarize and guide the Board through the various means by which investments in property can be made for the purposes set forth herein—and to represent the Board when such investments are contested;
- That the Board utilize resources within its representative body, along with state agencies and instrumentalities that compliment and share its objectives, in supporting and promoting its intentions throughout the state;
- That the Board establish a workgroup to examine state laws, guidelines, programs and policies related to housing and land access, equity and inclusion, and finance and taxation, and meet routinely with representatives of Vermont state government and its instrumentalities, including the Land Access and Opportunity Board, to provide recommendations and opportunities to redress cultural and other forms of marginalization, the impacts of structural racism, and intergenerational poverty;
- That the Board be permanently constituted with ongoing representation to reflect the diverse group of appointing authorities named in Act 182, and that the Board adopt and operate a vision plan for the next ten years, including the governance structure, means, and personnel needed to realize this vision and assess its progress; and

² The Board will adopt environmental quality goals as part of the long term planning and strategy work called out in this document.

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- That the Board create and implement a mechanism to solicit and incorporate ongoing community feedback regarding the needs of individuals, families and collectives from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities.