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## **From Murals to Sculpture, Infrastructure Grants Enliven Vermont Communities**

MONTPELIER—Strengthening the connection between people and place, the five award-winning projects of the Vermont Art Council’s 2021 Animating Infrastructure grants promise to bring vibrancy and vitality to their communities through public art.

The 2021 awardees are:

**Albany Community Trust, Inc.:** \$5,000 to design a mural or functional public sculpture for the new Albany General Store

**Catamount Arts, St. Johnsbury:** \$15,000 to support the design and installation of a vibrant light and art-filled passage/tunnel connecting the downtown and the riverfront

**Fairlee Community Arts:** \$15,000 to support the design and installation of public art that will transform an interstate underpass into a welcoming connection between commerce corridor and outdoor recreation assets

**Town of Bennington:** \$15,000 to support the design and integration of public art into a boundary fence and outdoor shelter at the Bennington Recreation Center

**Town of St. Albans:** \$10,000 to support the fabrication and installation of a wood-carved “Champ” sculpture and carved benches with display panels in St. Albans Bay Park

The program supports community art projects in which public art is integrated into existing or proposed infrastructure improvements. Going beyond the ordinary, applicants are encouraged to envision buildings, roads, bridges, and other public spaces that have the potential for artistic enhancement that creates unique places where people want to live, work, visit, and play. The intent is to enhance a sense of community pride and identity, to foster social connections, and to improve the livability and vibrancy of Vermont downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods.

Three to five grants of up to \$15,000 are awarded through the program each year. At least 80% of grant funds must be used to support the artists' involvement in the design, fabrication or installation of the artwork. The remaining amount can be used to support the other aspects of the project, such as project management and community engagement activities.

For this year's grant, the Council received 40 letters of interest with project ideas for communities in every corner of Vermont—from Canaan to Bennington, Swanton to Brattleboro and 25 towns in between. The types of infrastructure projects proposed for integrating public art included everything from wetlands, community gardens, and rainwater catchments, to parks, trails, and bike paths, as well as facilities, alleys, and streetscapes.

After initial review of the letters by an external panel of reviewers comprised of community members, council partners, and public art professionals, a small number were invited to develop full proposals for funding consideration. Nine applicants submitted full proposals, and five were recommended for funding.

“When communities undertake a public art project, they activate the imagination and create experiences that emphasize our shared humanity. After a year of social isolation, these projects help re-connect us to our public spaces, express our shared experiences, and inspire greater connection to the people around us. An investment in public art creates unique places that reflect local story and culture and says to the world that this place and the people that live, work, and visit here matter,” said Vermont Arts Council Senior Programs Manager Michele Bailey.

Established in 2014, the program has awarded projects in 19 towns and 12 counties in Vermont.

For more information about the Animating Infrastructure Program, visit <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/organizations/animating-infrastructure>

***About the Vermont Arts Council***

*The Vermont Arts Council envisions a Vermont where all people have access to the arts and creativity in their lives, education, and communities. Engagement with the arts transforms individuals, connects us more deeply to each other, energizes the economy, and sustains the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to live. Since 1965, the Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont. Learn more at [www.vermontartscouncil.org](http://www.vermontartscouncil.org)*

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