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Editorial: Working landscape for past and present

We Vermonters like our beautiful state, but think it is getting harder to afford to live here.

The Council on the Future of Vermont asked hundreds of Vermonters about their values and concerns and that's what they said. Among values, "I value the working landscape and its heritage" was tops with 97.2 percent of respondents saying they agree with the statement. For concerns, "The increasing costs of living, such as transportation, heating and electricity" came in first with 96.1 percent.

The survey confirms again that we clearly hold dear the rural landscape built on farming and timbering that is one of the images that define this state. But what's the use of having bucolic countryside if heating our homes or getting to work is beyond the reach of more and more Vermonters?

As the saying goes, you can't eat scenery.

But there's really no conflict between people's economic concerns and their embracing the state's rural heritage. One way to read the survey results is that Vermonters are saying they love more than just pretty scenery.

A working landscape bears the unmistakable marks of human activity -- the cultivated fields, grazing cows, stacks of firewood. Farms represent a living. In its time, agriculture was a hallmark of development.

Again, the answer is balance, balance that preserves what we can of our working landscape and heritage, but also encourages economic growth to accommodate the needs of the people who live here.
