

**Opinion/Editorial**  
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It's helpful to stop now and again to get a sense of where we are in order to figure out where we want to go. That's especially true in this state because our sense of who we are as Vermonters plays such a central role in public debates.

The Council on the Future of Vermont is in the midst of a yearlong effort to take such a reckoning to, in the words of the council, "consider where we are, where we are going, and the realities and trends that will influence our common future."

Of course "where we are" includes the question of who we are. This is an [exercise](#) Vermont has conducted every generation or so, the last being the Commission on Vermont's Future in 1988. Given the rapid pace of change, this is a conversation well worth having again. The trick will be to make sure the council's work ends up being more than another thick report gathering dust on the bookshelf. The exercise is centered around five broad questions:

What does Vermont mean to you?

What common values do Vermonters share?

What [challenges](#) and opportunities do we see for our communities and state?  
What should our priorities be as we work together to prepare Vermont for the future?

How do your thoughts about Vermont's values, future challenges and priority issues apply to your community?

The council's project includes telephone and online surveys, a Web-based questionnaire and a series of community forums to be held around the state. The meetings for Chittenden County are scheduled for today in Burlington.

The forums include the traditional open meetings to which the public is invited, and meetings with specific groups within a community whose members might be less inclined or able to attend public meetings, or speak before a large audience. For example, today's public forum will be preceded by smaller gatherings that include youths; seniors; a lesbian, gay, bi and transgender group; and members of the Association of Africans Living in Vermont. The council is making an effort to hear many voices.