

# 2001-02 Northfield Community Visit

## Introduction

Democracy is always a work in progress. Lincoln called it an experiment, one tested on the grand scale of the nation and in each local community decision arrived at through debate and common consideration. It's the test of our ability to act together for the general good and toward our best common vision of the future.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit Team came to Northfield late in 2001 and early 2002 with the goal of providing a structured format for local visioning, mutual consideration of issues and goals, the prioritization of the challenges before the community, and the beginning of implementation plans toward the resolution of these challenges.

Visitors to Northfield were charged to listen to community members as they enumerated the issues and challenges before the community, but they also observed an enviable and impressive set of community strengths and assets.

Foremost of these advantages, by all accounts, is Northfield's strong-minded, committed citizenry. VCRD and the Visiting Team are grateful for the energy and dedication of participants at the focus forums on November 6th, the Community Meeting on December 3rd, and the Resource Day meeting for the new Task Forces on January 3rd. We appreciate the organizational help and advice of the ad hoc local steering committee and other supporters of the Community Visit process early on, and are particularly thankful for the leadership of the Community Visit Chairs, Steven Jeffrey and Angie Fernandez. Charlie Morse's energy, enthusiasm and hard work were also indispensable. We recognize the critically important leadership that the Business and Professional Association, and especially Rick Van Arnam, their chair, contributed early on and will continue to provide for the betterment of life in Northfield. Finally, we thank the Village Trustees and the Town Selectboard, and appreciate the advice and support that Brad Denny has provided throughout the Visit process.

## Northfield - Priority Challenges

Established in Northfield Community Meeting, December 3, 2001

- **Downtown Issue:** Northfield needs a Downtown Planning Committee to review issues, establish priorities, attract new businesses, develop strategic parking, and, especially, to pick the Downtown Plan off the shelf, review and revise it, and put it into action.

- **Police Department/Emergency Services Issue:** The Police Department needs additional staff and increased resources to provide more competitive salaries. Police and Ambulance services need a new municipal facility
- **Academic Excellence Issue:** Northfield should develop and enact an action plan to expand curricular opportunities, and improve academic atmosphere and performance in the school.
- **Town/Village Issue:** The Town and Village of Northfield should merge to simplify community and municipal communications, raise the image of Northfield, and promote a common identity among Northfield residents as members of a unified community.
- **Water/Wastewater Issue:** Northfield needs to follow through with its water system expansion and build systemic responses to wastewater needs in Town and Village, and especially to protect its well field.

## VCRD Resource Teams

### Community Visit Day Focus Group Team

This team met with community members in nine focus sessions on November 6, 2001

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### **Resource Day Visitors**

This team met with Task Force Members to build action steps and review potential resources on January 3, 2001

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