

# 2002 Poultney Community Visit

## Introduction

Fred Schmidt, the Director of the Center for Rural Studies at UVM says, “when you know one Vermont community, you...know one Vermont community.” To the Visiting Team working with the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), the Poultney Community Visit was full of surprises—it is truly a unique town, with exceptional and enviable strengths and opportunities.

The first thing one notes is the beautiful layout of the town and the wonderful character of the land surrounding it. The most impressive thing one learns over time is the capacity of the community: the strength and diversity of community leadership; the general sophistication about community development; and the dedication of community members to build on success and make Poultney stronger and better.

Like any rural community in Vermont, Poultney has challenges connected to its size, resources, organization and communications. Many of these issues are detailed in this report. For the Community Visit Team, however, each challenge seemed to be met by a deep set of skills and a number of practical means to move forward.

## Priority Challenges

Identified By Residents at Community Meeting – November 6, 2002

- **Youth Activities/Recreation/Community Center:**

High School-aged youth lack creative outlets and activities. This gap in recreation resources could be addressed with support of the tremendous untapped resource of outdoor recreation and arts students and curriculum at Green Mountain College. Community members are concerned over a disconnection between youth, adults and elders and the lack of opportunities for youth in community service, community leadership, and joint activities with adults, elders, and school children. In addition, Poultney youth have no place to go; there is no one place that serves as a center for community activities for youth, teens, and adults. The community lacks public facilities, parks, skating rinks, a skate park, or appropriate places for youth to hang out. A community center could provide recreational activities, arts and drama, and outlets for community service to all ages.

- **Education:**

**Academic Performance/Educational Perception:** It is critically important for Poultney schools to raise test scores from Reading, Writing and Math Evaluations in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade to

SAT scores for high school students anticipating college attendance. Because of negative perceptions about educational results and discipline, taxpayers, including many elders on fixed incomes, have difficulty making the sacrifices required to improve the schools. The community as a whole needs to see and participate in developing forward momentum for the schools. Then, by celebrating and publicizing that momentum, the community may build upon it.

**Poultney School Facilities/High School Plan:** Poultney School buildings need to be upgraded. The Elementary School needs a new roof; science labs should be modernized; and space issues must be addressed. To build the momentum needed to obtain taxpayer support, a facilities plan must be conjoined with a practical plan for school improvement, community service activities by students, and the systematic encouragement of community and college partnerships in the education system. In addition, Poultney needs to build a process to evaluate the long-term viability of the high school. This evaluation should include a cost/benefit analysis and review of potential alternatives. If the town determines to maintain its high school, it should develop an improvement plan, consider essential enhancements including, for example, distance-learning options, and provide other supports necessary for Poultney students to be successful. If the town decides to pursue options other than maintaining its local high school, then it needs to plan and provide for alternative educational opportunities.

- **Poultney Community Vision:**

Poultney residents should build a vision of the future of the community that would help to guide decisions on everything from town planning and zoning to educational funding, and economic development strategies.

- **Economic Development:**

Poultney should build an economic development team to support economic diversification including value-added agricultural products; marketing slate slag and other slate industry issues including regulatory barriers; attracting and developing retail, banking, lodging and restaurant services downtown; attracting knowledge-based industry; encouraging entrepreneurs; and attracting businesses to the community. In this area, internet and high-speed telecommunications access should be improved by an analysis of existing needs and a community-wide pooling of demand to attract a provider who can develop a positive local solution. The issue of cell phone coverage also needs to be addressed. Poultney should also develop a coordinated tourism and marketing plan that includes improved signage, gateways at each end of the town, public access to the lake, agro-tourism opportunities, development (or attraction) of overnight accommodations, trail signage and improvement, and tourist information services.

- **Community/College Partnership:**

The Town of Poultney and full community need to build a systematic relationship with Green Mountain College. Community members seek access to College resources, and the community could be a tremendous educational asset for student involvement, education and leadership activities across the board. Residents would also like to support the college and pool resources. The College, its

students and staff, could be a tremendous asset in confronting any established priorities of the community.

## VCRD Resource Team Members

### Community Visit Day Focus Group Team

This team met with community members in nine focus sessions on September 26, 2002

<p><b>Kiersten Bourgeois</b>  Economic Development Director  VT Agency of Commerce &amp; Community  Dept. of Economic Development  National Life Building, Drawer 20  Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  802-828-5238 802-828-3258 (fax)  Email – <a href="mailto:kiersten@thinkvermont.com">kiersten@thinkvermont.com</a></p>	<p><b>Allen (Chip) Evans</b>  Executive Director  Human Resources Investment Council  5 Green Mt. Drive  PO Box 488  Montpelier, VT 05601-0488  802-828-4156 802-828-4022 (fax)  Email - <a href="mailto:aevans@pop.det.state.vt.us">aevans@pop.det.state.vt.us</a></p>
<p><b>Greg Brown</b>  Commissioner  Housing and Community Affairs  National Life Building Drawer 20  Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  802 - 828-5216 802-828-2928 (fax)  Email - <a href="mailto:gbrown@dca.state.vt.us">gbrown@dca.state.vt.us</a></p>	<p><b>Wayne Fawbush</b>  Executive Director  Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund  61 Elm Street  Montpelier, VT 05602  802-828-5320 802-223-2336 (fax)  Email – <a href="mailto:wayne@vsjf.org">wayne@vsjf.org</a></p>
<p><b>Paul Costello</b>  Executive Director  Vermont Council on Rural Development  PO Box 1384  Montpelier, VT 05601-1384  802-828-6024 802-828-6014 (fax)  Email – <a href="mailto:vcrd@sover.net">vcrd@sover.net</a></p>	<p><b>Patrick Flood</b>  Commissioner  Department of Aging and Disabilities  103 South Main Street  Waterbury, VT 05671-2301  802-241-2401 802-241-2325  Email – <a href="mailto:patrick@dad.state.vt.us">patrick@dad.state.vt.us</a></p>
<p><b>Erin Croom</b>  Center for Rural Studies  UVM – 207 Morrill Hall  Burlington, VT 05405  802-656-3021 802-656-0776 (fax)  Email – <a href="mailto:ecroom@zoo.uvm.edu">ecroom@zoo.uvm.edu</a></p>	<p><b>Jeffrey D. Francis</b>  Executive Director  Vermont Superintendents Association  2 Prospect Street  Montpelier, VT 05602  802-229-5834 802-229-4739 (fax)  Email - <a href="mailto:jfrancis@vsa.k12.vt.us">jfrancis@vsa.k12.vt.us</a></p>
<p><b>Michael Dolce</b>  Rural Development Specialist  USDA- Rural Development  170 South Main Street  Rutland, VT 05701  802-775-7014 802-773-4177 (fax)  Email – <a href="mailto:michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov">michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Joseph Fusco</b>  Vice President  Casella Waste Systems, Inc.  25 Greens Hill Lane  Rutland, VT 05701  802-775-0325 802-775-6198 (fax)  Email – <a href="mailto:joe.fusco@casella.com">joe.fusco@casella.com</a></p>
<p><b>Doug Dows</b></p>	<p><b>Cynthia Gubb</b></p>

<p>Director of Safe &amp; Healthy Schools VT Dept of Education 120 State St. Montpelier, VT 05620 802-828-5109 802-828-3140 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:ddows@doe.st.vt.us">ddows@doe.st.vt.us</a></p>	<p>Director of Community Services Chittenden Bank 2 Burlington Square Burlington, VT 05401 802-660-1367 802-660-1577 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:cgubb@chittenden.com">cgubb@chittenden.com</a></p>
<p>Deborah Doyle-Schechtman Cultural Heritage Tourism Coordinator Vermont Arts Council 136 State Street, Drawer 33 Montpelier, VT 05633-6001 802-828-5547 802-828-3363 (fax) Email - <a href="mailto:ddoyle@arts.vca.state.vt.us">ddoyle@arts.vca.state.vt.us</a></p>	<p><b>Hans Johnson</b> Regional Director of Development VT Dept of Corrections 9 Merchants Row Rutland, VT 05701 802-786-5034 802-786-5898 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:hansj@doc.state.vt.us">hansj@doc.state.vt.us</a></p>
<p><b>Anne Jones-Weinstock</b> VP for Donor Relations &amp; Communications The Vermont Community Foundation PO Box 30 Three Court St. Middlebury, VT 05753 802-388-3355 802-388-3398 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:ajones-weinstock@vermontcf.org">ajones-weinstock@vermontcf.org</a></p>	<p><b>David O'Brien</b> Rutland Economic Development Corp 110 Merchants Row, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 3 Rutland, VT 05701 802-773-9147 802-773-2772 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:dobrien@rutlandeconomy.com">dobrien@rutlandeconomy.com</a></p>
<p><b>Candy Koenemann</b> Executive Assistant Vermont Council on Rural Development PO Box 1384 Montpelier, VT 05601-1384 802-828-6022 802-828-6014 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:vcrd2@sover.net">vcrd2@sover.net</a></p>	<p><b>Spence Putnam</b> Executive Director VT Businesses for Social Responsibility 30 Community Drive So. Burlington, VT 05403 802-862-8347 802-863-1535 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:spencep@vbsr.org">spencep@vbsr.org</a></p>
<p><b>Bill Kurtz</b> State Director U.S. Senator James Jeffords 453 Stone Cutters Way Montpelier, VT 05602 802-223-5273 802-223-0416 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:bill_kurtz@jeffords.senate.gov">bill_kurtz@jeffords.senate.gov</a></p>	<p><b>David G. Rahr</b> President The Vermont Community Foundation PO Box 30, Three Court St. Middlebury, VT 05753 802-388-3355 (voice) 802-388-3398 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:drahr@vermontcf.org">drahr@vermontcf.org</a></p>
<p><b>James P. Mongeon</b> States Attorney State of Vermont 400 Asa Bloomer State Office Bldg Rutland, VT 05701 802-786-8893 802-786-5851 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:jmongeon@sas.state.vt.us">jmongeon@sas.state.vt.us</a></p>	<p><b>Mike Reilly</b> Development Director Snelling Center for Government 130 S. Willard St. Burlington, VT 05401 802-859-3091 802-859-3094 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:mpreilly@zoo.uvm.edu">mpreilly@zoo.uvm.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Fred Schmidt</b> Director Center for Rural Studies 207 Morrill Hall UVM Burlington, VT 05405 802-656-8404 802-656-0776 (fax) Email -- <a href="mailto:fschmidt@zoo.uvm.edu">fschmidt@zoo.uvm.edu</a></p>	<p><b>Chuck Ross</b> State Director US Senator Patrick J. Leahy 199 Main St. Courthouse Plaza Burlington, VT 05401 802-863-2525 802-658-1009 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:Chuck_Ross@Leahy.Senate.gov">Chuck_Ross@Leahy.Senate.gov</a></p>

## Resource Day Visitors

This team met with Task Force Members to build action steps and review potential resources on December 2, 2002

<p><b>Kiersten Bourgeois</b> Economic Development Director VT Agency of Commerce &amp; Community Dept. of Economic Development National Life Building, Drawer 20 Montpelier, VT 05620-0501 802-828-5238 802-828-3258 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:kiersten@thinkvermont.com">kiersten@thinkvermont.com</a></p>	<p><b>Allen (Chip) Evans</b> Executive Director Human Resources Investment Council 5 Green Mt. Drive, PO Box 488 Montpelier, VT 05601-0488 802-828-4156 802-828-4022 (fax) Email -- <a href="mailto:aevans@pop.det.state.vt.us">aevans@pop.det.state.vt.us</a></p>
<p><b>Paul Connor</b> Regional Planner II Rutland Regional Planning Commission PO Box 965 Rutland, VT 05702 802-775-0871 802-775-1766 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:pconner@rutlandrpc.org">pconner@rutlandrpc.org</a></p>	<p><b>Candy Koenemann</b> Executive Assistant Vermont Council on Rural Development PO Box 1384 Montpelier, VT 05601-1384 802-828-6022 802-828-6014 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:vcrd2@sover.net">vcrd2@sover.net</a></p>
<p><b>Paul Costello</b> Executive Director Vermont Council on Rural Development PO Box 1384 Montpelier, VT 05601-1384 802-828-6024 802-828-6014 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:vcrd@sover.net">vcrd@sover.net</a></p>	<p><b>David O'Brien</b> Executive Director Rutland Economic Development Corp 110 Merchants Row, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 3 Rutland, VT 05701 802-773-9147 802-773-2772 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:dobrien@rutlandeconomy.com">dobrien@rutlandeconomy.com</a></p>
<p><b>Michael Dolce</b> Rural Development Specialist USDA- Rural Development 170 South Main Street Rutland, VT 05701 802-775-7014 802-773-4177 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov">michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov</a></p>	<p><b>David Peebles</b> Community &amp; Restorative Justice Director VT Dept of Corrections 103 South Main Street Waterbury, VT 05671-1001 802-241-2261 802-241-2565 Email – <a href="mailto:dpeebles@doc.state.vt.us">dpeebles@doc.state.vt.us</a></p>
<p><b>Doug Dows</b> Director of Safe &amp; Healthy Schools VT Dept of Education 120 State St. Montpelier, VT 05620 802-828-5109 802-828-3140 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:ddows@doe.st.vt.us">ddows@doe.st.vt.us</a></p>	<p><b>Mike Reilly</b> Development Director Snelling Center for Government 130 S. Willard St. Burlington, VT 05401 802-859-3090 802-859-3094 (fax) Email – <a href="mailto:mpreilly@zoo.uvm.edu">mpreilly@zoo.uvm.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Deborah Doyle-Schechtman</b> Cultural Heritage Tourism Coordinator Vermont Arts Council 136 State Street, Drawer 33 Montpelier, VT 05633-6001 802-828-5547 802-828-3363 (fax)</p>	

Email - [ddoyle@arts.vca.state.vt.us](mailto:ddoyle@arts.vca.state.vt.us)