



## The Vermont Council on Rural Development 2003 Annual Report

From the release last January of the final report of the Vermont Agriculture Viability Council to the roll out this winter of the Vermont Forest Products Council Blueprint for Action, this has been a year of exciting initiatives and developing partnerships for the Vermont Council on Rural Development!

### 2003 VCRD Accomplishments

- ❖ Facilitated the **Vermont Forest Products Council** and produced its “Blueprint for Action,” a Final Report to the Governor, Legislature and industry
- ❖ Conducted a successful **Community Visit in Enosburg** and provided follow-up visits to **Troy, Rockingham, and Poultney**
- ❖ Produced and facilitated the **Governor’s Summit** on “Strengthening Rural Communities”
- ❖ Produced the **Vermont Rural Needs Assessment**; a compendium of statistics around eight priority challenges identified by rural communities
- ❖ Produced and facilitated the statewide “**Vermont Rural Roundtable: Beyond the Postcard; Envisioning the Future of Rural Vermont**”
- ❖ Produced the “Assessment, Vision, and Action for Vermont Rural Development,” the **Roundtable Report**
- ❖ Completed facilitation for the **Vermont Agricultural Viability Council** and championed its recommendations in the media, Legislature, and in subsequent policy discussions
- ❖ Coordinated dialogue around **rural broadband**; built recommendations resulting in legislation to use the State’s broadband contract as a means to leverage further deployments
- ❖ Founded and produced the **Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation (VCCI)** to evaluate the role and potential for development of the “creative economy” in Vermont
- ❖ Conducted six **VCCI forums** throughout Vermont to gather public input on the role and potential of culture and innovation in community and economic development
- ❖ Provided facilitation, assessment, **aggregation**, and negotiation services to 7 Vermont communities working to draw new broadband services
- ❖ Built new ties to the Vermont **Legislature** where VCRD’s perspective on rural issues was sought by Committees in Agriculture, Institutions, Finance, Education, and Natural Resources
- ❖ Greatly expanded VCRD **visibility** with press, radio and TV coverage of Community Visits, the Rural Roundtable, telecom aggregation efforts, the VAVC, and the new VCCI
- ❖ Built a VCRD **Membership** system and recruited 66 new VCRD members

VCRD is proud of its successes this year, but recognizes that each accomplishment is not ours alone, but a step in partnership—building from and relying on the work of our allies and friends. VCRD partners in federal, state, regional, non-profit, and private sectors lead our

work to success—they also make the road traveled every day a pleasure. Vermont makes it special!

### **Vermont Forest Products Council Work Complete**

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, Governor Douglas joined VCRD in the Cedar Creek Room of the Vermont Statehouse to receive the recommendations of the Vermont Forest Products Council and celebrate the importance and vitality of the industry. The Governor recognized the new Vermont brand: “We have much to celebrate. We have a history of strong and distinctive design in furniture, milling, toys, and other wood products. We have large and small-scale mills and value-added producers throughout the state who play significant roles as anchors of economic development in many rural communities. Vermont’s wood manufacturer’s reputations for innovative design, quality workmanship, customer service, and environmental sensitivity are foundations to the new branding effort for Vermont Quality Wood Products.”

As we close the year and the Forest Products Council concludes its work and passes the torch to the Vermont Wood Products Marketing Council, VCRD would like to thank the VFPC for its dedication, hard work, and results! **Susan Bartlett**, State Senator, **Tim Copeland**, Copeland Furniture, **Paul Costello**, VCRD, **Bill Johnson**, State Representative, **Mark Lorenzo**, National Wildlife Federation, **Conrad Motyka** (through 2002) Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, **Mary Jeanne Packer**, VT Wood Manufacturers Assn., **Jeff Parsons** (Chair), Beeken/Parsons, Inc., **Albert Perry**, State Representative, **Charles Shackleton**, Charles Shackleton Furniture, **Richard Smith**, Department of Economic Development, **Jonathan Wood**, Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and **Brenda Hausauer**, the VFPC Coordinator.

### **Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation; Advancing the Creative Economy**

In May, VCRD convened a dynamic 22-member task force (the Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation) to explore how new partnerships between federal and state agencies, private business, and Vermont’s cultural organizations can stimulate economic activity, strengthen community identity, and encourage innovation. Its final report, including specific actionable recommendations to advance the “creative economy”, will be presented this summer to the Governor, our state legislators and Congressional delegation, and leaders of the state’s businesses and organizations. A great deal of public interest was generated by the six statewide discussion forums VCRD produced this past fall in cooperation with 90 local hosts from the business and cultural community. In all, over 300 people attended these sessions. VCCI will continue its research, taking testimony about places where the cultural life has played a key role in community and economic development, as it hones its conclusions. For regular updates, contact VCCI Project Director Michael Levine (levine@together.net) and ask to be added to the list, or visit <[www.creative-economy.org/cne/vt.html](http://www.creative-economy.org/cne/vt.html)>.

### **VCRD 2003 Members**

All of us at VCRD are sincerely grateful for the leadership and commitment of our partners in support of Vermont communities! To become a member of VCRD, send contact information (or copy the application on the VCRD website) and a check for \$25 (individual),

\$100 (organization) or \$500 (leadership) to VCRD, PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601 or call 828-6022.

**Individual**

Alex Aldrich

Robin Barone

Bill Botzow

Vaughn Collins

Gregory Epler-Wood

Don Faulkner

Barbara Grimes

Ward Heneveld

Jack Isselhardt

Tom Johnson

Robert Justis

Garrett Kimberly

Bill Kurtz

Jolinda LaClair

Stephanie Lahar

Sidney Lea

Allen Matthews

John McClaughry

Marcia Merrill

Charlie Morse

Susan Murray

Jennifer Nelson

Sally Rice

Ina Smith

Tim Smith

Richard White

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Orton Family Foundation

Preservation Trust of Vermont

Rutland Regional Planning Commission

Rutland West NHS Inc.

Snelling Center for Government

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional

Commission

UVM Center for Rural Studies

Vermont Community Foundation

Vermont Department of Economic Development

Vermont Economic Development Authority

Vermont Farm Bureau

Vermont Housing Conservation Board

Vermont Human Resources Investment

Council

Vermont Land Trust

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association

Waterbury Community Development

Committee

Woodstock Foundation

Yankee Farm Credit, ACA

Yellow Wood Associates, Inc.

**Organization**

Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council

Central Vermont Community Action

Council

Central Vermont Public Service Corp.

Chittenden Bank

East Haven Windfarm

Green Mountain National Forest

Housing Vermont

Lamoille County Planning Commission

Montgomery and Merrill CPA

National Wildlife Federation-

Northeast Natural Resource Center

**Leadership Contributors**

Cabot Creamery

Casella Waste Systems

Chittenden Bank

Community National Bank

National Life of Vermont

Northfield Savings Bank

Peoples Trust Company

Smugglers Notch Resort

USDA Rural Development

Vermont Community Foundation

Vermont Council on the Arts

Verizon

## **The View Ahead**

VCRD's 2004 Workplan holds fast to our commitment to community development and policy coordination. VCRD plans to produce two **Community Visits** to help rural communities build momentum this year. The **Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation** will complete its plan for the creative economy in Vermont and build partnerships towards its realization. VCRD intends to expand **telecom aggregation** assistance to additional communities throughout the state this year, and support the Administration in its attempts to leverage further deployment.

As we move into a new year, VCRD is also planning for the development of a new policy initiative, one that will build a policy council to respond to issues raised in rural communities, past Summits, and last year's Rural Roundtable: the issue of the **planning system** in Vermont. VCRD will develop a neutral, year-long process to evaluate the system of planning in Vermont and then report to the Legislature, Administration, and people of the state.

## **The VCRD Board of Directors**

### **FEDERAL**

**Roger Allbee, Farm Service Agency**  
**Jolinda LaClair, USDA-Rural Development**  
**Paul Brewster, USDA-Forest Service**  
**Bill Kurtz, Senator Jeffords' Office**  
**Jenny Nelson, Congressman Sanders' Office**  
**Chuck Ross, Senator Leahy's Office**

### **NON-PROFIT**

**Alexander Aldrich, Vermont Arts Council**  
**Hal Cohen, Central VT Community Action Council**  
**Barbara L. Grimes, Burlington Electric Company**  
**Fred Schmidt, Center for Rural Studies, UVM**

### **STATE**

**Allen Evans, Human Resources Investment Council**  
**Steve Kerr, VT Agency of Agriculture**  
**Patricia McDonald, VT Agency of Transportation**  
**Jonathan Wood, VT Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation**

### **LOCAL**

**Jeffrey D. Francis, VT Superintendents Association**  
**Catherine Dimitruk, Northwest Regional Planning Commission**  
**Duncan Hastings, Town of Johnson**  
**Steve Patterson, Northeastern VT Development Association**

### **PRIVATE**

**Joe Fusco, Casella Waste Systems, Inc.**  
**Cynthia Gubb, Chittenden Bank**  
**Marcia Merrill, Montgomery and Merrill**  
**Richard White, Community National Bank**

## **The Vermont Council on Rural Development**

A proud member of the National Rural Development Partnership, the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support of the locally-defined progress of Vermont's rural communities. VCRD is a dynamic partnership of federal, state, local, non-profit, and private partners. Actively non-partisan with an established reputation for community-based facilitation, VCRD is uniquely positioned to sponsor and coordinate collaborative efforts across governmental and organizational categories concerned with policy questions of rural import.

Since its inception in 1992 VCRD has built a profile of rural policy leadership that is grounded by work in local communities and extends to collaborative partnerships with the highest levels of state and federal programs. VCRD's Community Visits build bridges between local needs and state, federal, non-profit, and private resources. The annual VCRD-led "Governor's Rural Summit" provides a structured process for state and federal leaders to work together to build cooperative resource strategies that will best meet the needs of rural Vermont communities. Because of its neutrality and ability to bring diverse interests together, VCRD has a unique public policy role and a responsibility to raise questions that span organizational sectors and have broad import for the future of the state. VCRD is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome your comments, suggestions, membership, and support. For membership information or to review recent reports visit [www.sver.net/~vcrd](http://www.sver.net/~vcrd) or contact Paul Costello, Executive Director, at [vcrd@sver.net](mailto:vcrd@sver.net).

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