

**BRISTOL COMMUNITY VISIT
REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

**VERMONT COUNCIL ON RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

JANUARY 2005

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Introduction

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is pleased to release this summary report from the Community Visit process to the residents and friends of the Bristol community.

What a dynamic community!

Bristol has enviable talents, diversity, and an energy per capita that is equal to that of any community in the state of Vermont today. Distinct. Geographically and geologically unique. Gateway to mountains and plains. Regional downtown hub. Center of a working landscape with a unique heritage and future. Surely, Bristol's assets make it one of the most beautiful and attractive communities in the state of Vermont.

To VCRD, the Bristol Community Visit was a great success. People from all walks of life and diverse points of view agreed that the community should look to its future and together craft a vision—then work on four fundamental priorities: youth, economic development, trails and conservation, and water/sewer infrastructure. Valuing Bristol's heritage and looking to the future, and having come to a working consensus on key priorities, Bristol residents are in a position to put their skills and experience on the table together, listen to one another, and set next steps to support the progress of the community. We wish the new task forces all success and will do what we can to lend support to their efforts!

The Community Visit had three major parts:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on October 12th, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Bristol residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part V. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the Major Challenges before the community (Part II).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the Bristol **Community Meeting** on November 16th, when VCRD presented the Major Challenges list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Prioritized Challenges** (in Part I) were then the focus for the formation of five Task Forces established to build plans that would address them.
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on December 9th, the Task Forces met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Action Steps** are listed in Part IV.

Resource Team Members (listed in Part VI) signed on with a commitment to serve in an on-going way as sounding boards and referral agents for the Bristol Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees, others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources; *call on them for help*.

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Bristol's efforts in each challenge area. Their **Recommendations** (Part III) are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies. Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the task forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the task forces make their way forward.

We need to thank each of the Community Visitors listed at the end of this report for putting themselves on the line for Bristol. We appreciate your help! Thanks especially to Wayne Fawbush for his cover photo of downtown Bristol.

When it comes down to it, success for rural communities comes from **local** leadership. VCRD and its partners were impressed by the great team of Bristol residents who signed up to work on task forces, to chair these new groups, and to lead them to success. We appreciated the strong start that the Local Steering Committee gave to the event as a whole, and the openness and dedication of the Town Selectboard to taking such a broad look at the challenges ahead and building community engagement. We also appreciate the work that Bob Hall and the municipal staff put in to this effort, especially all that Gerrie Heuts did to get the word out! Bristol has a new public access TV channel—we are grateful to Mary Arbuckle of Channel 17 for helping spread news of the process; the station offers committees a great way to reach out to the public in future! Finally, I think everyone involved in the process is grateful to Fred Baser for taking on the Community Visit Chair role—both for these events and for coordinating the work of the committees over the next year. His support and diplomacy will mean a great deal to the task forces as they move forward.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. VCRD appreciates the challenges Bristol and the new task force face but also sees the tremendous capacity that residents have to achieve real results if they work together. We hope that the Community Visit process has provided a useful framework and we are eager to support the progress of the Bristol task forces in the work ahead!

Bristol – Priority Challenges and Opportunities

Identified by the Community Meeting—November 16, 2004

- ❖ **Building a Bristol Vision:** The Bristol community does not have a consensually defined vision of its future. Many residents see a need to find a balance between what businesses need to be viable and sustainable and what residents need to maintain the wonderful quality of life in the town. There is a critical need to address the divisiveness between long-term residents and relative newcomers and between town and village dwellers. There's a huge interest in working to find common ground, show mutual respect, unite the community and encourage cooperation and good relations. Part of the vision may include potential resource sharing with the five-town area.
- ❖ **Building Walking/Hiking/Biking Trails/ Expanding Bristol Conservation:** Better walking and biking lanes should be built on existing streets and a bike path should be built to connect "Tin City" to Bartlett Falls. A path could be built to connect the town property from the north end to the south end of town. A multipurpose trail would be a real attraction for residents and visitors alike. Right-of-ways and liability challenges should be overcome with a partnership of landowners and municipal leadership. A Bristol Land Trust should be created that would allow people a direct and easy way to make both time and money contributions for land conservation, protection of agricultural lands, and trail development.
- ❖ **Developing Water and Sewer Infrastructure:** **A. Sewage Treatment.** Septic systems have worked for small businesses and residences in Bristol; their success has prevented creative solutions around the issue of wastewater treatment needed for future village and business development. The sewer system on Merchants Road does not serve the rest of the community; this limits economic development opportunities in the village, especially for businesses that incubate here but grow out of their small shops. New technologies and potential systems should be explored. **B. Water System.** The town water facility has abundant water but the system lacks significant capacity to deliver it. **C. Stormwater System.** A stormwater system should be designed and built to prevent run off from damaging private property, especially near Mountain Street, and from flowing unimpeded into the New Haven River.
- ❖ **Enhancing Economic Development:** Jobs that provide a livable wage are crucial to the retention and attraction of youth, and to the future prosperity of Bristol. A business space or industrial park for non-retail business incubation and growth should be established. Incentives should be developed to attract businesses that fit with the vision of the community. The current process for starting a business can confuse entrepreneurs who must present their ideas to two different boards; the town's permitting system should be streamlined. Bristol should build a pro-active leadership group to encourage entrepreneurs and help to retain growing businesses. This group should also work to ensure that Bristol businesses have access to competitively affordable broadband access. This committee should also explore Bristol's opportunity to develop a strong vertically and horizontally integrated **forest products economy**, one that adds value to the material, works with local landowners and produces products that meet market demands.
- ❖ **Supporting the Success of Youth/Developing Recreation Facilities:** **A. Activities.** Bristol could build three significant volunteer-led efforts in support of the success of its young people: A Mentoring/Apprenticeship program would promote job skills and provide positive role models to Bristol

youth. Mentoring efforts could also include recreational activities like hiking and camping, and involve Middlebury College, which has expressed interest in developing a big brother/big sister-type mentoring program. A Community Service program could involve students in positive and productive work that benefits the community and builds skills and experience that will be useful when they seek employment. A Speakers Program in the High School could invite adults to share their stories of vocations, hobbies or life experiences and build another bridge between generations in the community. These projects could expand opportunities for adults and young people to engage in positive ways. **B. Facilities.** Bristol should develop a plan to prioritize and address recreation facilities needs including: studio and classroom space for the recreation program, gym and banquet space, indoor plumbing at the youth center, picnic shelter near the playground, the development of the pavilion project, and other recreation facilities needs. This discussion could include building a new multipurpose municipal services building.

Bristol – Challenges & Opportunities

Identified by Focus Groups – October 12, 2004

- ❖ **Developing Water and Sewer Infrastructure:** **A. Sewage Treatment** Septic systems have worked for small businesses and residential in Bristol; their success has prevented creative solutions around the issue of wastewater treatment needed for future village and business development. The sewer system on Merchants Road does not serve the rest of the community; this limits economic development opportunities in the village, especially for businesses that incubate here but grow out of their small shops. New technologies and potential systems should be explored. **B. Water System.** The town water facility has abundant water but the system lacks significant capacity to deliver it. **C. Stormwater System.** A stormwater system should be designed and built to prevent run off from damaging private property, especially near Mountain Street, and from flowing unimpeded into the New Haven River.
- ❖ **Enhancing Economic Development:** Jobs that provide a livable wage are crucial to the retention and attraction of youth, and to the future prosperity of Bristol. A business space or industrial park for non-retail business incubation and growth should be established. Incentives should be developed to attract businesses that fit with the vision of the community. The current process for starting a business can confuse entrepreneurs who must present their ideas to two different boards; the town's permitting system should be streamlined. Bristol should build a pro-active leadership group to encourage entrepreneurs and help to retain growing businesses. This group should also work to ensure that Bristol businesses have access to competitively affordable broadband access.
- ❖ **Building Walking/Hiking/Biking Trails:** Better walking and biking lanes should be built on existing streets and a bike path should be built to connect "Tin City" to Bartlett Falls. A path could be built to connect the town property from the north end to the south end of town. A multipurpose trail would be a real attraction for residents and visitors alike. Right-of-ways and liability challenges should be overcome with a partnership of landowners and municipal leadership.
- ❖ **Expanding Bristol Conservation:** A Bristol Land Trust should be created that would allow people a direct and easy way to make both time and money contributions for land conservation, protection of agricultural lands, and trail development.
- ❖ **Addressing Municipal and Recreational Facilities Needs:** Bristol should develop a plan to prioritize and address municipal and recreation facilities needs including: the floors in the fire station, studio and classroom space for the rec. program, gym and banquet space, indoor plumbing at the youth center, picnic shelter near the playground, the development of the pavilion project, and town office maintenance. This could include building a new multipurpose municipal services building.
- ❖ **Improving Transportation Infrastructure:** With traffic flows increasing, there are not enough traffic calming devices in Bristol, especially at the two ends of the Village. Public transportation should be expanded. There are concerns with pedestrian safety downtown and about the entrance to Mt. Abe. On certain streets sidewalks do not exist or are extensively damaged. They should be maintained and extended. The Bridge on Route 116 has yet to be fixed and historic bridge structures should be preserved. There is not enough parking in downtown Bristol; the Village should develop a public

parking lot. Currently, downtown parking is not well allocated and the 2-hour parking regulations are not enforced.

- ❖ **Advancing Downtown Development and Beautification:** The town's green is in need of improvements and a more attractive and effective tree planting/streetscape could be developed. A downtown revitalization committee could raise funds for streetscape improvements. This group could also see the Downtown Designation process through to conclusion, be a voice within the community promoting Buy Local and help lead in marketing Bristol to visitors and the region. There is inadequate common signage in Bristol and a coordinated signage system should be completed to give people directions around town and to businesses. This group could also look to attract the development of a downtown inn to help make Bristol a tourist destination.
- ❖ **Supporting the Success of Youth:** Bristol could build three significant volunteer-led efforts in support of the success of its young people: A Mentoring/Apprenticeship program would promote job skills and provide positive role models to Bristol youth. Mentoring efforts could also include recreational activities like hiking and camping, and involve Middlebury College, which has expressed interest in developing a big brother/big sister-type mentoring program. A Community Service program could involve students in positive and productive work that benefits the community and builds skills and experience that will be useful when they seek employment. A Speakers Program in the High School could invite adults to share their stories of vocations, hobbies or life experiences and build another bridge between generations in the community. These projects could expand opportunities for adults and young people to engage in positive ways.
- ❖ **Improving Zoning:** Zoning regulations in Bristol are out of date with current developments, needs, and the vision of the community. Zoning could be used to control the growth of retail outside the downtown and could be changed to recognize and encourage the further development of small businesses, and so that regulations no longer discourage multifamily and apartment development in the village. A full review of zoning would include considering conservation of the rural nature of areas outside the village.
- ❖ **Building a Bristol Vision:** The Bristol community does not have a consensually defined vision of its future. Many residents see a need to find a balance between what businesses need to be viable and sustainable and what residents need to maintain the wonderful quality of life in the town. There is a critical need to address the divisiveness between long-term residents and relative newcomers and between town and village dwellers. There's a huge interest in working to find common ground, show mutual respect, unite the community and encourage cooperation and good relations. Part of the vision may include potential resource sharing with the five-town area.
- ❖ **Expanding Affordable Housing:** Housing is needed in Bristol for young families starting out, single parent and low income families, and elders who can no longer maintain their homes. The Home Share program could address some of the issue of elder housing, but Bristol should also consider the development of a senior housing project like the Weathervane development in Lincoln.
- ❖ **Enhancing Public Transportation:** Elders. Low income families struggle with challenges of after-hours transportation. Students from outlying parts of the community lack late transportation. Multiple-use strategies should be explored combining school busing with regional routes.

- ❖ **Improving Municipal Communications:** Many Bristol residents are unaware of meetings and may not feel invited; some feel there are limited protocols to encourage citizen involvement. Improvements to Town communications could include using web site and email announcement of meetings, minutes, organizational charts and the town charter; putting meetings on public access TV, and establishing regular places and publications to get out meeting and other information.
- ❖ **Changing the Structure of Municipal Government:** The Selectboard and Planning Commission work very hard, have a huge agenda when they meet, and struggle to deal with all the issues. Some residents don't think that the right issues are on the agenda, that municipal government is not responsive or pro-active enough; they believe that the management by the Selectboard of so many issues interferes with their ability to look at policies, planning, and improving the services of various departments. The Town Administrator does not have enough authority to manage, and Bristol should evaluate whether a Town Manager system could help the community make progress on all fronts.
- ❖ **Expanding Child Care:** The lack of and expensiveness of child care is a significant challenge to young families in the area. There is limited or no affordable childcare for low-income families, especially for those who work during the evening or night shifts.
- ❖ **Enhancing Elder Services:** Many elders are isolated physically and psychologically. Better communications should be developed to inform them of available and underused services like Meals on Wheels and transportation through Project Independence.
- ❖ **Developing the Forest Products Economy:** Bristol has an opportunity to develop a strong vertically and horizontally integrated forest products economy, one that adds value to the material, works with local landowners and produces products that meet market demands.

III. VCRD Resource Team Recommendations **In response to the Five Bristol Priority Challenges**

General Recommendations:

Our assets provide us our challenges. Bristol's diversity, the root of the dynamic culture in the town, sets its most fundamental challenge—building bridges and working in unity toward the future. This sort of work is never fully or finally done, but it is pursued in steps, and those steps are actions that get real results, but also reinforce the binds of common purpose that make community real.

Let's face it: in almost any town in Vermont old-timers and new-comers carry the heritage of their experience and knowledge of the world—each can see the other as misguided, and distrust the others' values and motivations. This distrust is magnified all out of proportion when anyone feels disrespected, un-listened-to, or devalued. And, backs against the wall, almost anyone then gets defensive, and in defensiveness we diminish the importance of the others' point of view—or come to look for the worst in each other. What we can lose when we dismiss the talents and experience of others! Bristol residents should deliberately build bridges by inviting participation and work to eliminate faction.

If Bristol is going to tackle much in the way of new projects, then the town may need to consider what it needs in terms of staff capacity to do so. The Bristol Administrator and the Recreation Director are doing all they can, and asking them to pursue additional grants and drive new processes may not be realistic. Vergennes' success over the last few years has been the result of a vision, but also the additional capacity to make the new things happen--like the Opera House as a new non-profit; the Vergennes Partnership for downtown; the boys/girls club. A good part of this increased activity was a result of the town manager hiring a "projects" person part time to get these things going--and much of it spun off as new organizations. One key to Bristol's success might be to add organizational capacity, which probably means municipal capacity. Johnson did this in the wake of their Community Visit with real success. Talk to Duncan Hastings, Municipal Manager, at 635-2611.

One place to seek support to implement projects across the board would be the Vermont Community Foundation. The foundation provides \$1,000 to \$10,000 grants to projects that make a significant difference to the state and address a clear community need in the areas of environment, public affairs, community development, social services, education or the arts. VCF, PO Box 30, Middlebury, VT 05753, 388-3355, www.vermontcf.org, dunning@vermontcf.org.

Building a Bristol Vision:

There's no one, off the shelf, quick and dirty way to build a vision.

VCRD could provide facilitation at particular junctions in this process if called on by the task force: 828-6024, vcrd@sover.net.

If needed, money to support costs for facilitation in building a vision might come from the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) Program, assuming that the "Visioning" is related to the town plan. There probably should be such an explicit connection, given that the town plan is the formal

document that addresses all the infrastructure, business, housing, natural resource, pathway and other issues. MPG is an annual grant process, applications usually due in September; contact Peg Elmer, Planning Division Director, DHCA, National Life Building Montpelier 05620, 828-5220, peg.elmer@state.vt.us.

Another source of support, especially on land use issues, might be the Vermont Forum on Sprawl - Beth Humstone (864-6310) - which has been doing some community level work on planning/growth issues.

Manchester produced a vision document a few years ago, and it has been quite helpful at several critical points in town planning/permitting (call Lee Krohn at 362-4824). Poultney also produced a unifying town vision and could be contacted to review their document. Tim Kononan, 773-3206.

The key to this is really the design of the process; the content and outcomes will flow naturally as long as enough pre-visioning work is done to get a critical mass of key people on board with the idea. In Bristol, each of the four other task forces from the Community Visit process could contribute paragraphs describing their visions and this committee could edit, integrate, and fill in the gaps. The committee could hold a public forum to take input on what should be in the document, and later present it back to the community for comment and correction. There should be a timeline for points of input and for public adoption so the process is done fairly and efficiently.

Building Walking/Hiking/Biking Trails/Expanding Bristol

Conservation:

Bristol might be able to use municipal planning funds to build a plan for trails (see above). The committee should also talk to Addison County Regional Planning Commission (Adam Lougee, 388-3141), which acts as the county transportation-planning agent for VTrans and coordinates the use of VTrans resources for the county—and see what they can do to help Bristol plan and build trails.

Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) are possible through the Agency of Natural Resources--Bristol may have previously received these fund for its ice rink (241-3600).

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) has a lot of experience with trails and Right of Ways; if snowmobiles are part of the equation, VAST could help.

The VT Land Trust (VLT) can help an interested group set up a trust if that is what people determine to do. Potentially, the new committee could be the Board or build one, which would need to establish by-laws and secure an IRS 501(c)(3) determination. Contact Darby Bradley, 223-5234. The VLT can provide templates for both the by-laws and the IRS application. The Housing and Conservation Trust Fund might be able to provide overhead for the organization.

The Town of Springfield found significant funding for construction of their very nice walking path that may be similar to what Bristol would do. They could be contacted for advice, a field trip, and recommendations for resources.

There are some significant resources for the construction of trails once Bristol has a plan in place:

- VT Conservation Youth Corp. Call Tom Hark @241-3699 info@vycc.org, or Brian Cotterill the program manager in the Department of Forests Parks and Recreation at 241-4452. Communities can either hire a trail crew through the Fee-for-Service program or apply for a Greenways Crew funded by AOT and FHWA.
- Agency of Transportation VTrans Enhancement Grants and Local Facilities program. Funding is available for transportation enhancements including provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, or acquisition of scenic easements. The website is www.aot.state.vt.us/progdev/sections/LFT. Dick Hosking at 656-1580, is the Regional Director for Bristol. Curtis Brown is the Grants Administrator at 828-0583.
- The Bicycle/Pedestrian Program at VTrans may also be able to help; Amy Bell is their coordinator: 828-5799.
- VT Scenic Byways Program. Call Warren Vail, Coordinator@ 828-0457.
- There's a Downtown Transportation Fund through the VT Department of Housing and Community Development; call Joss Besse of the Downtown Program for info at 828-5212.
- The Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program of the Agency of Natural Resources may have funding; Sherry Smecker is the grants administrator, 241-3690. She could also let you know about the Vermont Land & Water Conservation Fund and Vermont Recreation Trails Grants. The Recreation Trails Grant Program provides matching grants for (1) maintenance on existing trails; (2) restoration of areas damaged by use of trails; (3) development of trail-side and trail-head facilities; (4) provision of features which facilitate access to and use of trails by persons with disabilities; (5) construction of new trails on state, municipal or private lands where a recreational need for such construction is shown; (6) preparation of and printing of trail-related maps and other educational information and materials; (7) trail protection including fee simple or easement acquisition; and (8) purchase of hand tools for trail work.
- There could be Public Lands Highways Funding for projects that are on, adjacent to, or provide access to federal public lands (e.g. Green Mountain National Forest). Warren Vail at VT Agency of Transportation, 828-0451. Warren.Vail@state.vt.us.

Other potential grant sources include:

- The Bikes Belong Coalition (BBC) is sponsored by members of the American Bicycle Industry. They assist local organizations, agencies and citizens in developing bicycle facility projects. Grants of up to \$10,000. Bikes Belong Coalition, 1368 Beacon St., Suite 102, Brookline, MA 02446-2800, 617-734-2800, <http://bikesbelong.org>, tim@bikesbelong.org.
- Conservation Alliance Grants come from a group of 62 outdoor businesses that donate 100% of their membership dues to support grants to grassroots groups protecting wild and natural areas where outdoor enthusiasts recreate. Recent grants ranged \$15,000 - \$50,000. You'd need to get in touch with, and be sponsored by, a member company (such as Eastern Mountain Sports, Patagonia, Timberland, Northface). Grant questions

should be directed to John Sterling, Patagonia, 259 W. Santa Clara St., Ventura, CA 93001, 805-667-47412, www.conservationalliance.com.

- D.I.R.T. (Direct Impact on Rivers and Trails) Grant Program is supported by PowerBar. This program supports projects that protect threatened lands and rivers, preserve access to the outdoors, or restore damage to lands and waterways. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Early June deadline. DIRT Program, PowerBar, Inc., 2150 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704, www.powerbar.com/whoweare/dirt.
- Kodak American Greenways Awards / Conservation Fund--Local, regional and statewide non-profit organizations are eligible for up to \$2,500 to stimulate the planning and implementation of greenways in communities throughout America. Applications may be submitted from March 1 to June 1. American Greenways Program Coordinator, The Conservation Fund, 1800 North Kent St., Suite 1120, Arlington, VA 22209, (703) 525-6300, www.conservationfund.org/conservation, postmaster@conservationfund.org.
- National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program helps plan and implement local trail, greenway and river protection projects. The program provides NPS staff assistance. Project assistance can range from a short-term consultation to a three-year involvement. Contact Jennifer Waite, VT Projects Director, NPS Rivers & Trails, PO Box 178, Woodstock, VT 05091, 457-3368 ext 21, www.ncrc.nps.gov/programs/rtpca, jennifer_waite@nps.gov.
- The New England Grassroots Environment Fund gives small grants of \$500 to \$2,500 to increase engagement and participation in grassroots environmental initiatives and to build and connect healthy sustainable communities in New England. NEGEF, PO Box 1057, Montpelier, VT 05601, Cheryl Fisher, 223-4622, www.grassrootsfund.org, info@grassrootsfund.org
- Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program; "Trees for Local Communities" (TLC) are competitive grants for developing and implementing local urban and community forestry programs. Grants from \$500 - \$4000 are available. Steve Sinclair, VT FPR, Waterbury, 241-3673.

Developing Water and Sewer Infrastructure:

The committee will need to show leadership to figure out the game plan (with timeline) for a system to be developed over the next 3 to 5 years.

USDA Rural Development can provide professional consultation and implementation assistance. Call Max Muise at 257-7878 x106. Even though Bristol's Median Household Income is above USDA RD's grant criteria the town could still be eligible by way of an income survey for the particular system users. RCAP has assisted many communities in accomplishing surveys of this sort. (Putney is one example. Their MHI according to the 2000 Census is \$40,346. The survey that was completed showed that the users of the water system MHI would be \$24,000.00—so the project was eligible after all).

There has been a lot going on with alternative sewage systems - new technologies, new standards-- so there may well be some different options for Bristol today than there were just a few years ago. The Michael Woods Lewis Group could provide guidance in innovative project design: [13](http://mwood-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

lewis@neruralwater.org. Two other key people with leadership in innovative systems are Mary Clark of Stone Environmental, and Bruce Douglas of Forcier Aldrich. Bruce in particular has been a national figure on alternative systems. There are, of course, other engineering firms that do design work, too.

If Bristol looks to 'creative' or alternative technologies, sometimes the congressional offices can help facilitate. Bristol could seek support from the offices of Senators Leahy (863-2525) or Jeffords (658-6001).

Vermont Economic Development Authority has loan funds for the development of municipal infrastructure: Jo Bradley at 828-5627.

The Lake Champlain Basin Program may have a small pot of funds for designs that could prevent future worsening of Lake Champlain watershed.

For funding, Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation does pay for design work. It is repaid if the project moves into construction, but the funding is treated as a grant and is not repaid if nothing is built. Don Robisky at DEC is the best contact person (241-3734). A wide range of grants and/or assistance for development of community water and wastewater systems and stormwater management can be found on the DEC website:
<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/grants/html>.

The Vermont Community Development Program and The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) through the Agency of Commerce could perhaps help with a planning grant, but it would have to be done in the context of job creation or affordable housing—if Autumn Harp or another business expansion is part of the reason to expand the sewer system, then that is probably enough hook to qualify for these funds. Contact Nate Bailly, Community Development Specialist at 828-3220. Later, this program might provide some funding toward implementation.

Because Addison County has completed a CEDS, Bristol might be eligible for EDA funding; contact Jamie Stewart, Addison County Economic Development Corporation at 388-7953. ACEDC, or the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (Adam Lougee, 388-3141), may also be able to help with grant preparation.

RCAP Solutions and NeRWA will provide FREE assistance with water, sewer and stormwater issues. RCAP offers water, waste and community development technical assistance to rural communities. NeRWA assists the small system operator to provide an adequate supply of quality water to rural residents to meet requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act. Northeast Rural Community Assistance Program: Tom Clark 233-0300; Northeast Rural Water Association: (800) 556-3792.

Shanna Ratner of Yellow Wood provides “Green Community Technologies” service development. Bristol could investigate this opportunity. Information is available at (524-6141)
www.yellowwood.org.

Enhancing Economic Development:

Bristol can take a major step forward by creating an economic and business development committee in the community. Creating a business culture of sharing tools, tips, and practical stories could build a greater sense of camaraderie and ‘ownership’ among local business owners. Instilling a sense that ‘we’re all in this together’ might create further momentum around both starting new businesses and growing existing ones.

This committee could work with the Small Business Development Center, Micro-business groups, the Peer-to-Peer Collaborative, state Economic Development staff, and other groups to set up monthly meetings providing technical assistance to emergent businesses.

This committee could look to develop an incubator building in Bristol with support of VEDA funding.

The leadership team of the economic development task force should include a broad range of residents, including some successful business owners. They should contact Jamie Stewart at Addison Economic Development Corporation in Middlebury (388-7953). Jamie can provide advice on possibilities and support for developing an industrial park and/or incubators. The SBDC counselor for Bristol is also located at Jamie’s office.

There is a National Forest Foundation grant that Bristol could apply for. Kathleen Diehl of the Green Mt. National Forest could help. 747-6709.

The Addison Country Regional Planning Commission (Adam Lougee, 388-3141) can assist the town planning commission with ideas for planning an economic development area and any zoning changes they may need. If they need zoning changes, the town planning commission has to be supportive—so building positive communications early will be important.

USDA Rural Development does not have any programs to assist with planning an industrial park per se; however, if the leadership group is working with a specific small business that has technical assistance needs (market research, feasibility study, etc), the town or regional development corporation can apply for a Rural Business Enterprise grant to assist them. See the USDA web link for more info: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.html>.

The idea for an industrial park is tied up in the water/ sewer/ storm water problems identified earlier. Maintaining good communications with the Water/Sewer Task Force will be a key link to developing more jobs in Bristol.

Are surveys ever conducted at Mt. Abe about the future plans of juniors and seniors? How many would like to stay in the area? What is their perception of the job market if they do want to stay? Guidance counselors could perhaps conduct such a survey. That data could be a powerful motivator.

Working with Jamie Stewart of ACEDC, and the regional planning commission, the committee could apply for a planning grant (from the Vermont Community Development Program—see above) to review the options for the town in building an economic development plan in conjunction with the town’s infrastructure needs.

It seems important to continue to explore the business relationship between the local forestland owners and the wood manufacturers in Bristol. Using the new Vermont's wood products brand coupled with sustainable/certified harvesting could create a market niche for value-added products manufactured in Bristol.

Bristol could seek assistance from the Addison Chamber of Commerce on ways to increase tourism-based facilities to take advantage of the natural resource assets of the surrounding countryside.

It is noted that, "the town's permitting system should be streamlined". Many towns have created a Development Review Board (DRB) (under title 24, chapter 117) to hear and decide all development proposals. Right now permits must be given by the zoning board for some things, by the planning commission for others. A Development Review Board can expedite decision-making--many towns are doing it this way now. Contact ACRPC for advice and help. If Bristol makes progress on sewage issues it may face unplanned growth that is at odds with current zoning—paying attention to this in advance of system development will be critical.

Some additional resources available to the new committee include:

The Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP). Contact Nate Bailly, Community Development Specialist at 828-3220.

Richard Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Economic Development, at 828-5774.

George Robson, Director of Natural Resource Products for the Department of Economic Development, at 828-5241.

Tom Murray, Director of Telecommunications Infrastructure, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, at 828-5208.

Supporting the Success of Youth/Developing Recreation Facilities:

This is a need/desire in many Vermont communities and each seems to have taken a different tack to get there. USDA RD has some facilities programs, as does VCDF through ACCD (see above), but the bulk of the financial burden, in many cases, is borne locally.

Nicole Bachard, Coordinator of the VT Teen Center Coalition (229-9151, info@vctc.net) is a good source of information about the opportunities available to support youth and recreation facilities. She has Teen Leadership skill-building grants and can share several other grant opportunities including those of the Windham Foundation winfound@sover.net. She also has lots of ideas for building teen centers, too.

To develop a Speakers Program, Bristol might start by calling VSAC to get a list of Career Day participants, many of whom would be willing to speak.

Vermont Land & Water Conservation Fund, Sherry Smecker, grants administrator, FPR (ANR), 241-3690, might have resources to support some of the work of this committee.

A number of school districts have built community service programs, speakers programs, and apprenticeship programs. Call Julie Wolcott from the Fairfield School Board to learn how they did it with volunteers (933-4592).

The engineering departments at UVM and Norwich University occasionally need student projects for design and survey work and will provide engineering students for these tasks; maybe Middlebury College students could also be involved in youth activities or planning for facilities. The Norwich University Architecture Department even has a program where architecture students will provide competitive designs for facilities, such as those for recreation areas, then build the one selected, the town providing the funds for materials. (Randolph has built two structures using this option.)

South Burlington has gone through an involved process of planning for recreational facilities. Tom Hubbard, who oversees this effort, is available to consult with the committee by phone (846-4117).

IV. Task Force Workplans

Developed in response to the Five Bristol Priority Challenges
on December 9, 2004

Building a Bristol Vision **Task Force**

Chairperson: Lynn Dyke

- ❖ **Building a Bristol Vision:** The Bristol community does not have a consensually defined vision of its future. Many residents see a need to find a balance between what businesses need to be viable and sustainable and what residents need to maintain the wonderful quality of life in the town. There is a critical need to address the divisiveness between long-term residents and relative newcomers and between town and village dwellers. There's a huge interest in working to find common ground, show mutual respect, unite the community and encourage cooperation and good relations. Part of the vision may include potential resource sharing with the five-town area.

Committee Members:

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<u>Anne Wallace</u>		

Action Steps:

1. Ask Four Questions of Bristol Residents:
 - a. What does Bristol have that you want to keep?
 - b. What does Bristol have that you want to get rid of (or lessen)?
 - c. What does Bristol not have that you want?
 - d. What does Bristol not have that you don't want?
2. Ask the 4 other committees built through the Community Visit process (and other clubs, groups and committees in town) to submit their answers to these 4 questions for sections of the larger vision.
3. Publicize the points of vision that come from community committees and take comments on them.
4. Survey the community to invite everyone's opinions.
5. Compare inputs, integrate, coordinate points of vision from other committees and build a first draft.
6. Set an open community meeting to review the draft (using TV, mail, newspapers to get the word out).

Resources:

1. Poultney's Vision Document (Tim Kononen will send).
2. Paul Costello of VCRD could facilitate some meetings.
3. Mt. Abe Students might be asked to help with the Survey.
4. Funding might be obtainable from a Municipal Planning Grant at the VT Community Development Program at the Agency of Commerce.
5. Adam Lougee at the Regional Planning Commission for grant writing or other help.
6. Ask Shirley Emilo to develop a list of all clubs and groups in town.
7. The committee wants chairs from the other task forces to sit on this committee to ensure that they build an inclusive vision.

Building Walking/Hiking/Biking Trails/ Expanding Bristol Conservation Task Force

Chairperson: Tom Wells

- ❖ **Building Walking/Hiking/Biking Trails/ Expanding Bristol Conservation:**
Better walking and biking lanes should be built on existing streets and a bike path should be built to connect Sycamore Park to Bartlett Falls. A path could be built to connect the town property from the north end to the south end of town. A multipurpose trail would be a real attraction for residents and visitors alike. Right-of-ways and liability challenges should be overcome with a partnership of landowners and municipal leadership. A Bristol Land Trust should be created that would allow people a direct and easy way to make both time and money contributions for land conservation, protection of agricultural lands, and trail development.

Committee Members:

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Action Steps:

1. Work on creating a trail from the village to Bartlett Falls, maintain areas around the falls, deal with parking and trash.

2. Clean up and beautify Sycamore Park.
3. Secure easement/license to preserve trails on the ledges.
4. Improve existing loop sidewalk system in the village.
5. Establish lanes or shoulders on Mountain Road, North Street, Burpee Lane, and Hardscrabble Road.
6. Create a loop like TAM around the village.

Resources:

1. Conservation Commission. Recommend places for conservation. Investigate the Land Trust.
2. Middlebury Area Land Trust—Presentation on trails and open space.
3. ACRPC—Maps of areas for trails
4. New Haven River Anglers
5. River Watch Collaborative
6. Lewis Creek Association
7. Title Research—Tom Wells
8. Funding Research—State Grants, Parks and Recreation, Vtrans, VYCC.
9. Find Grant writers—Town, Recreation Department, Rec Club.
10. The Watershed Center
11. Volunteers—Boy Scouts, Rotary
12. VT Family Forest
13. VT Community Foundation

Developing Water and Sewer Infrastructure Task Force

Chairperson: Dave Sharpe

- ❖ **Developing Water and Sewer Infrastructure:** **A. Sewage Treatment.** Septic systems have worked for small businesses and residential in Bristol; their success has prevented creative solutions around the issue of wastewater treatment needed for future village and business development. The sewer system on Merchants Road does not serve the rest of the community; this limits economic development opportunities in the village, especially for businesses that incubate here but grow out of their small shops. New technologies and potential systems should be explored. **B. Water System.** The town water facility has abundant water but the system lacks significant capacity to deliver it. **C. Stormwater System.** A stormwater system should be designed and built to prevent run off from damaging private property, especially near Mountain Street, and from flowing unimpeded into the New Haven River.

Committee Members:

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Lee Beckwith		

Action Steps:

Evaluate each area of concern: water, sewer, stormwater and other infrastructure (sidewalks and roads).

Research and inventory existing systems and previous studies.

Seek out additional people who could join the committee and bring information and resources to it.

Learn about potential funding sources.

Prioritize needs and set next action steps.

Resources:

1. Existing town maps.
2. Existing studies/reports—Town and Regional Planning Commissions.
3. Alan Huizenga, an engineer who lives in town.

Enhancing Economic Development Task Force

Co-Chairpersons: Kevin Harper and Ken Johnson

Enhancing Economic Development: Jobs that provide a livable wage are crucial to the retention and attraction of youth, and to the future prosperity of Bristol. A business space or industrial park for non-retail business incubation and growth should be established. Incentives should be developed to attract businesses that fit with the vision of the community. The current process for starting a business can confuse entrepreneurs who must present their ideas to two different boards; the town's permitting system should be streamlined. Bristol should build a pro-active leadership group to encourage entrepreneurs and help to retain growing businesses. This group should also work to ensure that Bristol businesses have access to competitively affordable broadband access. This committee should also explore Bristol's opportunity to develop a strong vertically and horizontally integrated **forest products economy**, one that adds value to the material, works with local landowners and produces products that meet market demands.

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Action Steps:

1. Establish broad criteria for new businesses to be attracted to town in conjunction with town vision.
2. Hire Bristol ombudsman to facilitate business development and retention.
3. Inventory land and determine usability.
4. Suggest new criteria for business use in various zones.
5. Convene a congress of groups working on forest products industry.

Resources:

1. Selectboard, Planning Commission
2. Selectboard, Regional Development Commission, Sustainable Jobs Fund, SCORE
3. Lister, landowners
4. Conservation Commission, Zoning Board, Planning Commission
5. Department of Forest & Parks, Agency of Agriculture, Congressional Delegation.

Supporting the Success of Youth/ Developing Recreation Facilities Task Force

Chairperson: Joe Devall

- ❖ **Supporting the Success of Youth/Developing Recreation Facilities: A. Activities.** Bristol could build three significant volunteer-led efforts in support of the success of its young people: A Mentoring/Apprenticeship program would promote job skills and provide positive role models to Bristol youth. Mentoring efforts could also include recreational activities like hiking and camping, and involve Middlebury College, which has expressed interest in developing a big brother/big sister-type mentoring program. A Community Service program could involve students in positive and productive work that benefits the community and builds skills and experience that will be useful when they seek employment. A Speakers Program in the High School could invite adults to share their stories of vocations, hobbies or life experiences and build another bridge between generations in the community. These projects could expand opportunities for adults and young people to engage in positive ways. **B. Facilities.** Bristol should develop a plan to prioritize and address recreation facilities needs including: studio and classroom space for the recreation program, gym and banquet space, indoor plumbing at the youth center, picnic shelter near the playground, the development of the pavilion project, and other recreation facilities needs. This discussion could include building a new multipurpose municipal services building.

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Action Steps:

1. Develop a Youth/Adult Partnership with open lines of communication.
2. Include youth from all five towns in this conversation.
3. Recruit youth for the next meeting
 - a. Establish youth members
 - b. Establish youth co-chair.
4. Inventory of facilities resources and needs.

FOCUS GROUP NOTES ON MAJOR ISSUES

Compiled from focus groups of Bristol residents reporting to Community Visitors on October 12, 2004

Resource Team A

Mel Adams, Director of Planning, VTrans

Adam Lougee, Executive Director, Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Susan Hays, Area Director, USDA RD

Joss Besse, Director, Vermont Downtown Program

John Hall, Commissioner, Department of Housing and Community Affairs

Brian Keefe, Community Liaison, Senator Jeffords' Office (Facilitator)

Seth Herman, Graduate Student, UVM Center for Rural Studies (Scribe)

I. Infrastructure: Wastewater, Stormwater, Water Quality (in the 3 rivers), Sidewalks, Roads and Bridges

Ernie Senecal

Darla Senecal

Jodi Lathrop

Scott Powell

Michael Fisher

Dave Sharpe

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- There were few select board and planning commission members present at this session of the community visit.
- The town is forced to take a reactive instead of proactive role when it comes to undertaking municipal projects. For example, the town has not yet covered their salt sheds.
- Stormwater runoff is a major problem. Specifically, the storm drains on Spring Street have become plugged several times in the last few years and, consequently, the water has damaged homes.
- There is no wastewater treatment facility in Bristol; this may limit economic development opportunities in the village.
- There is above average levels of lead and radium in Bristol's drinking water.
- The stormwater system dumps water directly into the New Haven River.
- The town water facility/water system does not have significant capacity. For example, it has undersized water mains, which hurts prospective business growth.
- The water system needs more storage capacity and the capacity to serve hydrants.
- On certain streets sidewalks do not exist or are badly damaged. Streets identified include Devino Street and Pine Street.

- There are a few bridges within the town that are not up to par. This includes the temporary one-lane bridge on Route 116, which all residents at the meeting identified as a problem.
- Property taxes in Bristol have tripled. One resident asked, “How do you keep things so that it is realistic to keep people living here?”
- There is a limited sewer system, which is located only on Merchants Road and does not serve the rest of the community.
- The current process for starting a business becomes confusing because entrepreneurs must present their ideas to two separate boards.
- Businesses seem able to start in Bristol, but often move out of town as they grow larger.
- No new industry has moved into Bristol in the last 21 years.
- The school is the biggest employer in town.
- Most residents felt that there is too much oversized-truck traffic on Rt. 116 and through Bristol.
- The town owns a landfill that is unlined and is filled by less than 1000 tons of waste per year.
- Forum members say that Bristol residents expect to get the services and have the same resources of a larger town, despite the fact that they are smaller.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Jobs of a livable wage should be created—this is crucial to the future.
- A business space for industry incubation and growth--other than retail--should be created.
- Businesses should be provided with help so they choose to stay in Bristol.
- The town permitting system could and should be streamlined.
- The types of industry that residents would like should be identified.
- Incentives may be provided to encourage business to come to Bristol.
- An industrial park/business site should be created that has proper wastewater facilities.
- There is a possibility to find something other than a new wastewater treatment facility to serve Bristol—new technologies and systems designs should be explored.
- A stormwater system could be put in to prevent water from going onto private property.
- Run-off should be prevented from flowing into the New Haven River.
- FEMA funds could be used to address some of the origins and locations of stormwater runoff.
- Better walking/biking lanes should be built. This may include the addition of a walking/biking lane on existing streets and also improving sidewalks, maintaining the existing ones, and building new ones.
- The sidewalk near the entrance to the school could get proper lighting.
- Sidewalks should be built on airport drive.
- A bike path could be created to connect “Tin City” to Bartlett Falls.
- The state could define new flood insurance regulations.
- The stormwater system near Mountain Road should be improved.
- Higher curbing along the west side of Mountain Road would prevent water from running over the curb.
- Water pipes could be replaced to provide safer water.
- The river watch program should be supported and their data should be used.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Residents identified the number one challenge to be stormwater.
- The town has had severe flooding problems.
- There is not a great deal of talk about the sewage system, or other sewage related issues.
- Covering the salt shed was a problem that reoccurred in the discussion.
- Residents had a high fear of accelerated property taxes.
- The lack of a wastewater treatment facility was identified as a key problem.
- Residents are concerned over sidewalks that are in need of repair or do not exist at all.
- Permitting problems were identified that might be ameliorated.

II. Transportation Infrastructure, Traffic and Parking, and Downtown and Retail

*Doug Corkins
Naomi Swier
Carol Wells*

*Linda Hanson
Robert Bernstein*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- The bridge on Route 116 has not been fixed.
- One member of the community explained that he wanted historic bridges to be saved.
- There is not enough downtown parking and no public parking lot in Bristol.
- The downtown parking is not allocated well and 2-hour parking regulations are not enforced.
- There is inadequate common signage in Bristol.
- Traffic flows, including through car and heavy truck traffic, appears to be increasing.
- There are not enough traffic calming devices in Bristol.
- More preservation of rural roads is needed.
- The traffic entrance at Mt. Abe high school is dangerous.
- There may be a lack of pedestrian safety at the Brooks and Shaws parking lot.
- The town's green is in need of improvements.
- Public transportation needs to grow and also be more sustained.
- Bristol needs more money and resources to succeed in implementing projects.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Zoning could be used to control the growth of retail outside of the downtown.
- A more attractive and effective tree/streetscape program could be developed.
- A business incubator service could be developed to help downtown businesses.
- Business space could be built with amenities so a business could grow into it.
- A municipal parking facility could be built.
- The 2-hour parking ordinance could be more strictly enforced.
- A more effective parking system could be developed that may include and extend diagonal parking.
- The bridge on Route 116 should be fixed.
- Historical bridges should be preserved—they are assets to the community.
- A coordinated signage system could be developed that would give people directions to places around town, including businesses.
- Positive aspects of the streetscape study have not been but could be implemented.
- Bristol could consider forming a downtown membership organization or downtown revitalization committee to help pay for downtown improvements.

- The entrance to Mt. Abe School could be relocated.
- Sidewalks could be better lit and improved in the vicinity of Mt. Abe High School.
- A path could be built to connect the town-owned property from the north end to the south end of town.
- The town should continue its efforts and gain a Downtown Designation.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The community is aware of increasing traffic and specifically truck traffic on roads and bridges.
- There is a major concern over parking.
- The town members have no interest in expanding the downtown district, but do have interest in maximizing it potential.
- The town wants to polish-up their amenities.
- Citizens have outlined several solvable problems.
- The town has a starting point to solve their problems.
- The community has “good problems” because of the prosperous downtown.

III. Municipal and Recreation Facilities

Pat Sharpe
Doug Corkins
Bruce Acciaratti
Darla Senecal
Elizabeth Farr
Kenneth Weston

Joe Devall
Mark Bouvier
Gerrie Heuts
Carol Clauess
Bob Rathbun

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- There is not enough gym space for recreation activities.
- The ice skating rink does not have a roof over it.
- The town lacks a multipurpose trail.
- There is difficulty talking with public property owners when trying to get land easements for a multipurpose trail.
- More studio and classroom space is needed for the recreation program.
- There is no intramural sports program at the high school level.
- The 110-year-old fire station facility has wooden floors that are outdated.
- There is not a municipal service department.
- There is no wastewater treatment plant.
- Sidewalks are falling into disrepair.
- The town does not have a banquet area.
- The youth center building is in need of indoor plumbing.
- There is a need for a motorized trail that goes to Bartlett Falls.
- There is no picnic pavilion near the playground facilities.
- There is softball field for girls little league.
- There is not a clear vision or 5-year plan for recreation facilities.
- The current town office building is in need of maintenance.
- Residents felt that there is a real struggle to attain the money in order to undertake and complete needed projects.
- There is no clear separation of the relationships between the school, town, and community members.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Right-of-ways should be identified and relations with property owners could be further cultivated so that the town can complete a multipurpose trail. Reimbursement and the cover of liability could also be provided to these property owners.
- Parcels of the town-owned land could be connected to each other by trails, improving recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

- Existing trails should be identified and resources should be put into ensuring that they stay open to the public, particularly through easements.
- The Agency of Transportation could fund different roads by the amount of width of shelters on the roads. The wider the shelters, the more money the road would receive.
- A Bristol Land Trust could be created that would allow people a direct and easy way to make both time and money contributions for land conservation and trail development.
- The town should systematically identify its municipal service needs and start to address them.
- The town should identify how to manage the operation of the ice skating rink once it has a roof over it. Challenges in this area also need to be further identified.
- An administrative position for the parks and recreation facilities could be created.
- Uses of the recreation facility could be prioritized. A conversation with coaches, the recreation club, and the school recreation department should continue toward this end.
- Water and electricity could be included in the pavilion plan to increase its utility.
- A questionnaire could be created to be handed out on Town Meeting Day that would ask residents which recreation activities they felt were most important to them.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There has not been much talk within the community about how to wrap together several different types of recreation activities into one facility.
- The community is making a good move by trying to rank the types of recreation activities that are important to them.
- Residents of Bristol have many different visions that include a wide range of community stakeholders.
- The vision for the recreation organization should include phased planning stages to help develop the idea of what the organization will look like ten years from now.
- The town must focus on specific needs and prioritize them.
- Residents have established committees, which is a testament to their willingness to contribute to the community.

Resource Team B

Hal Cohen, Executive Director, Central VT Community Action Council (Team Facilitator)

Brian Byrnes, President & CEO, VT Community Foundation

Lynne Cleveland, Field Representative, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy

Jan Eastman, President, Snelling Center for Government

Andy Gilbertson, Outreach Assistant, U.S. Congressman Bernie Sanders

Fred Schmidt, Director, UVM Center for Rural Studies

Charlie Smith, Secretary, VT Agency of Human Services

Shevonne Travers, Assistant Director Safe & Healthy Schools, VT Dept of Education

Candy Koenemann, VCRD Executive Assistant (Scribe)

I. Supporting Vulnerable Populations

Betty Anderson

Fred Baser

Sue Buonincontro

Bunny Daubner

Isoline Duclos

Max T. Dumas

Jordan Engel

Mike Fisher

Larry K. Gile

Bridget Leopold

Sophia L. Morris-Pittman

Reed Prescott

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Bristol's vulnerable populations are identified as the elderly, low income families-- including single parents and children, youth in search of jobs, the developmentally challenged, and those who are underemployed or unemployed.
- Many elders are isolated physically and psychologically.
- Transportation is not available to elders living in outlying areas or those without family support to reach services, low income children wanting to participate in after school programs, or teens and others needing to access employment.
- Affordable housing is needed for young families starting out, single parent and low-income families and elders who can no longer maintain their homes.
- Better communication is needed to notify elders about available and underused services such as Meals on Wheels. Many elders are isolated and lonely.
- Low income and single parents experience employment and housing pressures and need support.
- Single parent families are struggling with the pressures of work, the lack of childcare or their inability to afford it, and difficulties of after-hours transportation.
- Job services and counseling are needed for teens, developmentally challenged and adults seeking work or higher level employment. Most services are in Middlebury.
- There is little or no affordable childcare for low-income families, especially for those who work during evening and night shifts.
- Some community members are fearful of teens and have negative feelings about youth.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Explore possibilities of satellite offices being located in Bristol for services such as those provided by DSW and DET.
- The Home Share program could address needs of isolated elders and provide housing for those unable to secure affordable housing on their own.
- Schools do a fine job in identifying children at risk; funding is needed to provide assistance in addressing some of their issues.
- Develop a Weathervane project such as the one in Lincoln to address elder housing needs.
- Educate elders about services available such as Meal on Wheels and contacting Project Independence for door-to-door transportation.
- Investigate Good News Garage/Commute Share programs.
- Contact Champlain Valley Office on Aging to determine what help they can provide.
- Expand the existing, high-quality volunteer base to expand into other areas of need.
- Organize discussion with the existing Recreation Department to explore broadening their programs to reach uninvolved residents.
- Promote better communication to advertise various activities such as swimming opportunities at the high school pool and ice skating rink events.
- Area churches are highly active and efforts should be made to reach out to uninvolved residents.
- Use Rotary and other service clubs as resources.
- Develop friendlier relationships between the local police force and residents, especially youth.
- Tap into grant writing talents of residents who have been involved in previous efforts.

Reflections of Community Visit Team

- Bristol appears to be a healthy community with some great assets.
- Better coordination of resources and finding access to services should be explored.
- Communication and outreach to those who are isolated should be a priority.

II. Enhancing Community Support for the High School and Jobs for Teens

*Ena Backus
Ray Beaver
Paulette Bogan
Kathy Bushey
Bill Connor
Bunny Daubner
Jordan Enge
Gerrie Heuts
Scott McArdle*

*Reed A. Prescott III
Dave Rosen
Mary Ann Rueger
June Sargent
Darla Senecal
Dave Sharpe
Mary Jackman Sullivan
Ken Weston*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Unionizing the high school was not popular with some residents who thought smaller schools were better, and there was discontent about who would pay for what.
- Behavior, vandalism, and bad language at the high school are concerns, although many residents think the majority of the youth are terrific and that these problems are not excessive.
- There are not enough volunteers to cover support for activities.
- More parents need to be involved and made to feel welcome to participate. On the other hand, some teens express that they don't want their parents around.
- There are not enough safe and organized activities for the youth who are not involved in sports programs.
- There is a lack of service-based learning or mentoring programs.
- Community members wonder how to encourage more people to get involved in the High School for sports, bake sales, drama, clean up work, and other activities. It is hard to get people to come out in support of PTO or governance, while support of individual student events is high.
- Some residents are worried about the potential for heroin in the community.
- There's a need for more connections between community members and young people.
- Late transportation for students in out lying areas is needed for after school activities.
- Kids do not feel involved in decision-making processes.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Develop apprenticeship/mentoring programs to promote job skills and good role modeling for the Bristol youth.
- Get input from the kids so that they feel part of the community and have an investment in the future of Bristol.

- Explore use of the area near the Mobil station that the 21st Century Grant writers saw as a potential for a student automotive center or consider using that space for a cyber café site where young people could show the elders how to use computers and email.
- Encourage the police force to “shoot pool” and expand social opportunities with the kids.
- Develop more community service work for youth. The Recreation Department currently uses students who are serving “school suspensions” in this capacity, but more can be done to involve all students in a productive way—they can then later use this experience on their resumes when seeking employment.
- Establish intramural sports and other activities for kids who aren’t on school teams.
- Continue to support the school budgets, especially for the “Activities Bus” which is included in next year’s budget.
- Explore possibilities of combining the use of school buses and regional busing to allow both students and adults access for purposes of getting to work or services. Adult presence on school buses could contribute to a safer and better-supervised ride for the kids and would promote cross generation relationship building.
- Re-institute adult learning at the high school, either in day or evening classes.
- Recruit adults to bring life experience into the classrooms for enhancement of studies.
- Plan a discussion for school official and recreation staff to coordinate efforts. Schedule lunchtime presentations at school by the Recreation Department to seek input from kids about what programs and activities would be interesting to them.
- Work with community businesses to develop jobs that can be added to the Recreation Department Job List; currently more students on the waiting list than there are jobs available.
- Don’t focus everything on job creation; develop hiking/camping and other recreational activities to help burn up youth energy and relieve boredom.
- School officials should follow through on Middlebury College’s interest in re-establishing a big brother/big sister-type mentoring program.
- Continue to make use of vouchers for high school students to access Middlebury College course opportunities.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It was unfortunate that none of the youth who were invited to the session were able to attend.
- There are many good things currently happening in Bristol, including the “Hub” for adolescents, Recreation Department’s activities and Job List, no obvious presence of drug related problems, and many residents who care about the welfare of the youth.
- Primarily, the need is to find a mechanism that will bring together all the good efforts and work on communication between groups. Encouraging community involvement will alleviate any “fear of teens” that exists for some; Bristol can work to identify specific problems, resources to address them, and mobilize to build the momentum to move forward.
- Reach out to all populations within Bristol so that no one is left behind. Kids need to be involved so that they have a say in solutions.

II. Vision for Bristol

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Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- There is currently no known or defined vision for Bristol.
- Zoning regulations need a new look—they currently discourage multi-family housing and apartments.
- There is a need to find a balance between what Bristol businesses require for sustainability and what the residents who live in Bristol want to maintain the quality of life. This tension has not been addressed by a consensual vision.
- Pressures from Middlebury and Burlington increasingly affect Bristol.
- Many residents work outside of Bristol which limits participation in many activities and impacts the recruitment of volunteer groups such as the fire department.
- Strong core businesses in the community are important for Bristol’s future success and identity.
- Residents want to keep out urban problems like drugs.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Bristol is the center of a much larger community; it’s the hub of the 5-town watershed, a natural region.
- There are many skilled artisans in town, lots of diversity, a strong downtown, open land dedicated to recreation.
- Bristol residents should build a trail network for biking, walking, and hiking.
- Plant trees on Main Street.
- The town should develop affordable housing for low-income and young families.

- One way to do this would be to consider building a well-planned, paved, landscaped mobile home park as a source of affordable housing; if done right this could overcome stigma and prejudice of some residents. However, a negative effect may be the impact of increased school costs.
- Acknowledge that people in low or entry level paying jobs can contribute to the community too.
- Look at zoning regulations to identify ways the regulations might discourage affordable and multi-family housing development. State regulations may be a problem too.
- The town should also explore the development of elderly housing.
- It will be important to seek the input of village landowners to incorporate into housing planning.
- It's also important to consider the impact that housing development has on property taxes, but don't limit ideas to only apartments or trailer parks.
- Bristol should design an industrial park to offset the property tax burden. Research should be done to be certain that tax rates are favorably affected and to seek out data to support the best sort of project.
- Develop good paying local jobs so that people can participate in the community during the daytime hours too.
- Implement a preservation walking tour and other wholesome activities that make Bristol a desirable destination.
- Protect Bristol's agricultural heritage and flavor that could be lost by over development.
- Retain the rural feeling while building a vital and vibrant downtown and good job opportunities.
- Make it a priority to find ways to retain and attract the 17-44 year old age group by developing good paying jobs.
- It is critical to address the divisiveness between long-term residents and newcomers. There is a huge need to find a common ground, show respect for each other and unite the community. Address the tension issues between village and town residents. Part of a Bristol vision would be for old and new residents to work together.
- Make it clear that people who do not work in the community can also bring value to Bristol.
- Do not limit the vision to Bristol alone, but look at its relationship to other towns (like Vergennes) in the region. Explore possibility of resource sharing with other towns,
- Be cautious in introducing businesses that are too big (like an IBM) for the infrastructure and support those that can develop in an incremental manner. Try not to lose business that cannot remain in Bristol because there is no ability to expand locally.
- Reconsider purchasing the gravel pit outside of town.
- Work toward maintaining the things valued by the residents and move them into the future, allowing for inevitable changes. Keep Bristol family friendly.
- Vigorously promote keeping purchases within Bristol to support town business and not take business out of town. Buy locally!
- Bristol's Vision needs to develop in a way that recognizes that every resident is part of the same body and should take into account what people don't want Bristol to be too.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Bristol is an amazing and vibrant community with residents who want it to continue to be a desirable place to live.

- Residents want good local job development and a sustainable community but also want to retain the rural elements.
- Change is inevitable and care must be taken to consider the infrastructure capacity as growth occurs.
- It is healthy to dissent and debate, but both old timers and new comers must come together to work with compromise to realize their goals before a vision can come.
- Efforts must be made to attract and retain the 17-44 year old age group that is missing from the community and causes imbalance.

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I. Communications and Governmental Structure

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Reed Prescott III

Linda Hanson

John Lea

Robert Bernstein

Jim Peabody

Doug Corkins

Kenneth Weston

Gerrie Heuts

Mary Ann Rueger

Challenges in this Area

- The general public does not know much about what the government does.
- The annual town report is not easy to read, and not user-friendly.
- The annual town meeting is not an effective tool – it is cumbersome and confusing, and attendance is poor.
- There is poor attendance at public meetings in general.
- Attendance and participation at public meetings is issue-driven (i.e. meeting to discuss the gravel pit was very large and people were vocal)—people respond to controversy.
- Many Bristol residents are unaware when meetings are held and may not feel invited.
- Some forum participants believe that communications about meetings or public events do not go out systematically.
- The selectboard and planning commission work very hard, have a huge agenda when they meet, and it is a struggle to deal with all the issues on the agenda.
- Some residents don't think the right issues are not on the agenda.
- Government is not active in producing results: sewage collection, parking, traffic, police.
- The Town Administrator duties are not defined by town charter, rather by the select board; the Administrator does not have enough authority and so selectboard time is spent micromanaging rather than looking at proactive policies and planning.
- Most selectboard candidates run uncontested, and there is currently no representation by women.
- Several town departments are not as successful as they could be (library, police, fire departments). There was a discussion on the public and private control over these departments and whether having public or private control is most effective.
- One community member suggested that the success of the Recreation Department is causing lack of attention to other issues and is a reason why other departments are struggling.
- There is no protocol for citizen engagement. Residents do not know who to seek out for particular issues.

- Lack of communication between the police and local teenagers has created tension in the community. The police have pulled guns on teenagers and are overreacting in certain situations.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Use the internet as an opportunity for getting the word out about public meetings and events.
- Minutes from town meetings and the town charter could be posted on the web.
- The town could create and distribute an organizational chart of government structure.
- Bristol could create a citizen taskforce (possibly volunteer based) which would have two main responsibilities:
 - Communicate with citizens regarding matters of public interest and information that comes out of public meetings.
 - Be the “eyes and ears” of the community: act as a filter to bring issues to planning committee and select board.
- Tape public meetings and air them regularly on community access television.
- Hire an outside organization (such as the VT League of Cities and Towns) to do a study on how other cities are successful on issues of communication, and bring the information back to Bristol.
- Establish regular places and publications that regularly post information regarding public meetings (kiosks, local newspapers such as Five Towns Paper, phonebook).
- Hold public meetings at a regular time every month (such as every 2nd Tuesday or the 1st Thursday of each month).
- Hold meetings at a convenient time for more people to attend (not in the afternoon on a work day).
- Hold trainings for local leaders: “How to have more effective town meetings”.
- Conduct a survey of Bristol residents to see how government could be communicating more effectively.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It will be an ongoing challenge to get volunteers involved in town leadership and in public service to the community.
- The town government structure does not seem to encourage communication. An opportunity may be to look at where the flow of communication is breaking down, and to work on that area.
- It is important to get information out in a timely fashion so that people can participate.
- It is a challenge for the town government to constantly engage community on the basics of government and communications.
- It seems like people only want to know about town issues when they feel the need to react to developments (gravel pit) and harder to involve in pro-active development work—but this is critically important.
- Bristol should look at the success of neighboring communities such as Starksboro, which regularly publishes a gazette with information on public meetings and events.
- The town might look to the success of the Recreation Department as a model on which to build other departments.
- Bristol town could tap into local assets such as the community cable station, internet, monthly and weekly newspapers to communicate with the community.
- Investment in training volunteers and neighborhood leaders could provide huge benefits.

- Create a listserv for neighborhoods or the full community that could help get the word out about public meetings and activities.
- “Create controversy” – think outside the box to get people involved and engaged.

II. Economic Development – Incubation and Retention

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Challenges in this Area

- Bristol is geographically confined. This has both limitations and benefits in terms of economic development.
- Septic issues currently prevent job growth and expansion.
- There isn't a development park and businesses that grow are tempted to leave.
- Bristol had considered a business park, but septic, water, and landowner access issues made it extremely challenging.
- Small businesses are incubated in Bristol, then they move to other locations such as Middlebury or other towns in Addison County.
- Bristol doesn't have the capacity or the infrastructure for businesses when they experience growth.
- There's an indifferent attitude of the community towards incubating small business, then losing the business: some residents have a “so what” attitude.
- The town zoning is not flexible enough to allow businesses in areas other than those already zoned—the zoning by-laws are old and may be outdated for Bristol's vision today.
- Town government structure is a problem: the Town Administrator doesn't have enough authority; because he has to manage the mechanics of town government; the selectboard does not have the opportunity for a vision; they need to react to problems that arise and have a hard time planning and developing pro-active projects.
- The current selectboard lacks representatives that are pro-active around economic development issues—who look to actively support the incubation of businesses and are motivated to grow and keep businesses in Bristol.
- There is a lack of space, and a lack of buildings in Bristol. There isn't a place for businesses to go when growth exceeds space.
- Rt. 116 has seen an increase in truck traffic – and this has impacted traffic in and out of Bristol. It is harder to park and drive downtown.
- The group agreed that the primary limitation to economic development is septic.
- The big “ogre” of septic issues prevents planning around economic development on a smaller level. It has prevented the development of creative solutions around the issue of wastewater treatment.
- A large number of businesses are home occupations – which are illegal by zoning regulations and have limited opportunities for growth in town. A pro-active set of strategies should be developed and implemented to help them succeed, grow, and stay in

Bristol.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- A comprehensive review and revision of the town plan by the planning commission should entail a systemic emphasis on economic development.
- Zoning needs to be clarified and communicated to all new and current businesses.
- The office of Planning and Zoning should create a list of 10 priorities, such as the business park, and a municipal sewage system, which would help Bristol move forward with identifying and working towards goals.
- An inventory of existing space would help identify buildings that are available for business development and expansion.
- Increased and enhanced communication would benefit Bristol's existing businesses.
- The town needs to have a priority to work to keep the existing businesses in Bristol.
- Bristol should be tapping into the natural resource economy – and celebrating it to make Bristol more accessible as a tourist destination – to draw people to shop and tour and provide an economic boost.
- The town should work to develop the infrastructure for light manufacturing and other non-retail business opportunities.
- The community should systematically encourage development of the “creative economy” – artisans and craftspeople who will add to the economy and attractiveness of the town without impacting septic and water as much as other businesses.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Changes should be small scale as they happen – in order to gain maximum community support.
- The community needs a shift in attitude – thinking more towards what is good for the whole community in general.
- When there is opposition to an idea, the leaders need to hold on to the vision, and stick to the plan.
- There is a need to attract people to be involved in the community process, and to break the cycle of the same people showing up to the same meetings.
- An analysis of the benefit of attracting a certain number of jobs or a certain number of businesses to Bristol (done by an outside expert) would help rally community support of small businesses.
- The leadership from the selectboard needs to send the message of inclusiveness and the desire for a deeper community involvement.
- Town leaders and committees need to think creatively of different ways of drawing the interest of the general public. Good examples may be through art, music, and dance.

III. Natural Resource & Natural Resource Economy

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Challenges in this Area

Forest products

- Competition of the global market makes finding a niche market for the raw material (timber) that Bristol produces very difficult.
- It would be impossible to find a local market for all of the wood and raw material.
- The attitude of the general public regarding harvesting natural resources, such as timber, is often negative, and the public doesn't always recognize the value of harvesting in the economics of land conservation and the vital role it plays in the local Bristol economy.
- If residents can agree that harvesting a natural resource is beneficial for the community, they are still adamant that it cannot happen near their residence. There's often a "Not in my backyard" mentality.
- Landowners are driven by the desire to make a profit on the raw material resource, and may never realize the benefit of a value-adding process.
- The changing ownership of lands in VT: the new owners are less likely to sell the timber; forests are being parceled, sometimes out of production. When landowners do sell, they expect a premium price.

Farming

- Fewer farmers are farming the same amount of land that was farmed 50 years ago (there's a decline in the number of farmers, and an increase in the amount of land per farm).
- The workforce of the natural resource economy (which employs the greatest amount of people in Bristol outside of Autumn Harp) is getting older and their equipment is antiquated.

River/Flooding

- Around every 100 years, Bristol has a flood that devastates the community and its natural areas.
- It is crucial to keep the river clean to use as a recreation spot for swimming and fishing. Septic issues and the dumping of pollutants are creating a challenge.

Road construction

- Bristol has seen an increase in thru-traffic, both automobiles and trucks. The building of roads to accommodate the traffic, along with the volume of the traffic is having a negative impact on the natural areas around the roads.

Tourism and Eco-tourism

- The lack of overnight lodging beyond limited bed and breakfast accommodations, poor signage in and out of Bristol, and recreation trails needing improvement or creation are making it difficult to capitalize on Bristol's potential as a tourist destination.
- There was disagreement within the group whether Bristol should try to attract tourists and visitors.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Producing a material (such as hardwood flooring) that has a history: "Wood with a story to tell." If sustainably-grown and harvested, the material will demand a premium price. Building a value-added chain with existing milling would be a real benefit to Bristol.
- The Bristol community could support efforts to create a plant that manufactures such a material (such as hardwood flooring) that can compete at a national and global level.
- A key strategy could center on manufacturing more products (using raw materials readily available in the Bristol area) that have a value-adding process so as to create more niche markets for these specialty goods.

- It might be possible to use the successful model of the dairy co-ops to create more producer co-ops.
- Bristol is in position to create a connection between the tourism and agriculture and tourism and other natural resource businesses.
- A lodging/recreation center that will draw tourists and visitors in to the area to partake in recreational activities and also add to the local economy. Bristol would benefit from an Inn!
- Better partnering and communication between the businesses, the community, and the people they employ would benefit everyone.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There's a need for enhanced communication and proactive planning: as it is, the community only gets involved when there is a project on the table that is creating controversy.
- Utilizing the proximity to the National Forest, and opening up a dialogue of public vs. private forest management.
- There is a real opportunity for economic growth if the community can rally behind the idea of value-added processing of the area's raw materials.
- There needs to be increased community discussion so that the community can fully understand and trust in some of these ideas.
- Creating a Natural Resource Business Center, or a Microbusiness Resource Center
- The topic of the aging of the natural resource workforce needs further discussion, as this will have a huge impact on the natural resource economy.
- There needs to be a proactive plan regarding housing.
- The idea of a working landscape: the community needs to alter its mindset around what this means – think about new ways to involve farmers and foresters in this picture.
- The National Forest brings in 3 million people to Vermont for hiking, fishing and hunting. Bristol should really think about the impact of eco-tourism and the benefits as well as drawbacks that this may have.

Bristol Community Visit

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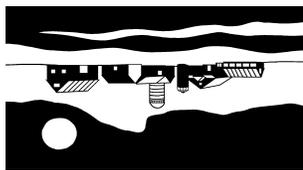
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