

Dorset Tomorrow

Report and Action Plan - December 2020



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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Vermont Council on Rural Development

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I. Introduction

Dorset is a place with a storied past, a strong sense of community, and an impact far exceeding its size. Marble quarries including the first in the country helped to establish this town, and a bucolic landscape, vibrant villages, and beautiful inns have attracted countless visitors for well over a century. Three rivers, the Batten Kill, Mettowee, and Otter Creek pass through and help to shape the landscape of hills and valleys.

The area is a haven for culture and the arts as well as outdoor recreation. The Dorset Players and the Dorset Theatre Festival are both major draws. The Dorset Field Club, at 133 years, is the oldest continuously operating golf club in the country. There are great hikes and biking in town, and on hot summer days, hundreds cool off with a swim at the quarry. Also in the summer is the enormous 6-week equestrian event, The Vermont Festival, that attracts riders and spectators from across the Northeast. Dorset also hosts swimming and camping at Emerald Lake State Park. Another attraction in Dorset is the Wilson House, childhood home of the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous Bill Wilson. With all of these amenities, Dorset is a place that entices many visitors. Some have summer homes in the area, and others come for a get-away or for one of the many weddings hosted in town.

Dorset has a strong sense of community and a strong record of forward progress on climate and energy issues. The Dorset Energy Committee has an impressive history of strong work together, engaging community members and the municipality on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. The United Church of Dorset is also very active and hosts a “Green Team” that actively engages parishioners and the community at-large. With the support of the town’s energy committee and the Regional Planning Commission, Dorset developed one of the strongest energy plans that has been formally incorporated as a chapter in the town plan. This plan serves as a model for other communities around the state.

Building on their strong record, the Dorset Energy Committee applied to participate in the Vermont Council on Rural Development’s Model Communities Program. In a competitive process, Dorset was selected to participate in 2019. A local planning team dubbed the process – Dorset Tomorrow. The Model Communities Program is designed to help communities build and implement priority actions that increase economic vitality and affordability in a time of climate change. The goal is to help communities model change by implementing energy efficiency, transportation system transformation, renewable energy generation, working lands development, and entrepreneurship and business incubation to spur economic progress.

Modeled on VCRD’s Community Visits, the public engagement process for the Model Communities Program is designed to reach into all corners of a community to mobilize a wide mix of participants. Over the course of the initial four-month phase, the community rallies together to brainstorm, prioritize, and develop action plans. Partners take part as visiting and resource teams to inform the action planning process and then provide support to local task forces as they shift into implementation.

In Dorset, the outcome of this community conversation was a focus on four key priorities and the gathering of task forces that came together to move those priorities forward. The priorities identified in the *Dorset Tomorrow* process are to:

- Increase Affordable Housing and Attract New Residents to Dorset
- Build Community Unity
- Transform Dorset’s Energy Usage and Generate More Electricity Locally
- Improve Dorset’s Transportation Options

The leadership and initiative of the Dorset Energy Committee that rallied together to apply was responsible for bringing the Model Communities Program to Dorset. With the support of the Select Board, the team assembled a compelling application and made a strong case for participation. Once the process was underway and in an ongoing way, Select Board members Liz Ruffa and Jim Salsgiver stepped forward to serve as co-chairs of the *Dorset Tomorrow* effort.

The four months of public engagement and outreach that launched *Dorset Tomorrow* was a team effort that saw support from many people. A first step was the convening of a core team responsible for naming the process, planning the kick-off, and broadcasting an invitation far and wide to maximize participation. This planning team formed a backbone for community outreach, spreading the word far-and-wide about the kick-off and using every means available to raise the visibility of the *Dorset Tomorrow* process.

The kick-off included 4 different forums and a community meal occupying an evening on July 24. The Dorset School hosted the dinner and forums. Liz Ruffa and an incredible team of volunteers provided a delicious meal for participants. 17 visiting team members (listed later in this report) travelled to Dorset to listen to community members and provide reflections.

The community came back together each month after the kick-off, first to select priorities and then to launch task forces to develop and implement action plans. The Long Trail School generously hosted the community meeting, and the launch of the task forces returned to the Dorset School. At the final gathering, a resource team of facilitators and experts joined each task force as they built action plans and identified the resources they would need to achieve success.

40 area residents signed up to work on the four priorities that make up *Dorset Tomorrow* and local leaders stepped forward to guide the task forces that came together. The volunteers serving on each of those groups and particularly the chairs have put in many hours over the course of the process. Ellen Maloney, Bill Laberge, Liz Ruffa, and Jim Salsgiver all deserve recognition. All of these leaders share a deep commitment to Dorset and a strong belief that an active group of committed citizens can accomplish big things.

Efficiency Vermont has been a key partner with an ongoing commitment to the work of the *Dorset Tomorrow* energy task force. They have dedicated time and resources to the task force focused on energy use. Efficiency Vermont staff Becca White has come together repeatedly with the task force as they worked to implement their action plan.

The Climate Economy Model Communities Program is made possible thanks to the financial support of VLITE, Jane's Trust Foundation, and High Meadows Fund. Thank you to each of these funders for making this important work possible.

II. Vision for Dorset's Future

These points of vision were compiled from vision statements that were shared during Community Visit Meetings and supported by the majority of participants at the Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent broad hopes that the majority of responding residents have for the long term good of the Dorset community.

Dorset residents look to a future for the community where:

- ❖ Dorset retains the character of the town while supporting economic opportunities for residents and businesses
- ❖ Dorset is a smart, connected community that respects the environment, attracts families, and looks forward to future.
- ❖ Dorset supports strong educational opportunities for its children.
- ❖ Dorset is a model for maintaining connections for our elderly population.
- ❖ Dorset is a place where young people want to come to and grow food, be in a community, raise families and have a viable business or lifestyle.
- ❖ Dorset is a place with world class land stewardship.
- ❖ Dorset has a sense of community that unites both sides of the mountain.
- ❖ Dorset is welcoming to all, including racial diversity.
- ❖ Dorset is a great example of energy efficient new housing.
- ❖ Dorset is forward thinking, self-sufficient and welcoming to everyone.
- ❖ Dorset supports a food and farm network that feeds and nourishes our community.
- ❖ Dorset is a place where the full socio-economic spectrum can find a place to live and work in the area.
- ❖ Dorset encompasses a large expanse of forest land that provides multiple forest values.
- ❖ Dorset maintains and increases its sense of community and responsibility to each other/one another.
- ❖ Dorset is a place that preserves its rural and non-commercial value.
- ❖ Dorset takes care of all of its residents, both part time and full time.
- ❖ In Dorset our school can be a central focus and a real asset, not only for kids growing up but for people of all ages.

III. The Process

The Climate Economy Model Communities Project engages a broad swath of the community in gatherings to brainstorm, prioritize, and plan for local climate economy initiatives.



Planning Committee Meeting: June 6, 2019

On June 6, 2019, 18 local residents gathered at the Dorset Town Office to plan for the launch of the Model Communities effort. This group came up with a name for the process – Dorset Tomorrow – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics, meeting locations, dinner plans, and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, flyers and face-to-face conversations, this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Planning Committee included Jason Day, Nancy Faesy, Rob Gaiotti, Jim Hand, Vickie Haskins, Mara Hearst, Anna Johansen, Greg Kristiansen, Bill LaBerge, Cindy Loudenslager, Ellen Maloney, Berta McGuiness, Roseanna Moran, Scout Proft, Liz Ruffa, Jim Salsgiver, Ben Weiss, and Doug Zecher

Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: July 24, 2019

Dorset Tomorrow kicked off at The Dorset School with a series of four brainstorming forums and a community dinner. Over 100 community members shared their ideas and were joined by 19 visiting team members who listened and provided reflections to the community. The delicious, healthy, and local community dinner was a true team effort. Members of the steering team including Liz Ruffa, Mara Hearst, Berta McGinnis, and Cindy Loudenslager helped coordinate, and the following folks contributed:

- Oliver & Bonnie Levis, *Earth Sky Time Community Farm*
- Scout Proft and Mara Hearst, *Someday Farm*
- The Farm Crew, *Merck Forest and Farmland Center*
- Cindy Loudenslager, *Dorset Union Store*
- Berta McGinnis, *The Wilson House*
- Kelly Foster, *Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union*
- Rosanna Moran, *The Dorset School*

Visiting Team members included: Tom Berry, *Field Representative*, US Senator Leahy's Office; Michele Boomhower, *Dir. Policy Planning & Intermodal Devel.*, Agency of Transportation; Catherine Bryars, *Senior Planner and Community Planning Program Manager*, Bennington County Regional Commission; Christopher Callahan, *UVM Extension*; Donald Campbell, *SW Reg. Director*, VT Land Trust; Jonathan Cooper, *Community & Economic Development Specialist*, Bennington County Regional Commission; Jon Copans, *Model Communities Program Director*, VT Council on Rural Development; Paul Costello, *Executive Director*, VT Council on Rural Development; Rebecca Ellis, *State Director*, Office of Congressman Peter Welch; Ken Jones, *Economic Research Analyst*, Agency of Commerce and Community Development; Madison Kremer, *AmeriCorps/VISTA*, Bennington County Regional Commission; Laura MacLachlan, *Energy Educator*, Vermont Energy Education Program; Jeffrey Monder, *New Product Development*, Green Mountain Power; Erin O'Farrell, *Pathways Intern*, USDA Rural Development; Haley Pero, *Outreach Specialist*, Office of US Senator Bernie Sanders; James Sullivan, *Exec.*

Director, Bennington Co. RPC; Tom Thacker, Energy Auditor, Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council - Weatherization Program; Lisa Thornton, District Stewardship Coordinator, VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation; Becca White, Community Engagement Manager, Efficiency Vermont

Community Meeting: August 15, 2019

After the kick-off, all of the brainstormed ideas were distilled into key areas of action for community revitalization, and energy and transportation initiatives. About 50 citizens gathered at The Long Trail School on August 15th to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a round of dot-voting, 4 key action ideas emerged as the key priorities. As participants filtered out of the meeting, they signed up for task forces that would convene to move these priorities forward.

Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: September 23, 2019

On September 23rd at The Dorset School, community members, facilitators, and resource team members gathered to form task forces, develop action plans, and identify resources to implement the new Dorset Tomorrow priorities. After focused 90 minute sessions, everyone gathered to hear reports from each group about their plans and resources needed to make them a reality. From here forward, all action of Dorset Tomorrow is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team Members included: Ludy Biddle, *Exec. Director, NeighborWorks of Western VT*; Ted Brady, *Deputy Secretary, Agency of Commerce & Community Devel*; Jonathan Cooper, *Community & Economic Development Specialist, Bennington County Regional Commission*; Jon Copans, *Model Communities Program Director, VT Council on Rural Development*; Stephanie Lane, *Executive Director, Shires Housing, Inc.*; Bruce Lierman, *Instructor, CyclingSavvy*; Elisabeth Marx, *Senior Philanthropic Advisor, Vermont Community Foundation*; Jeffrey Monder, *New Product Development, Green Mountain Power*; Debra Sachs, *President, EcoStrategies*; James Sullivan, *Exec. Director, Bennington Co. RPC*; Mia Watson, *Research & Communications Coordinator, Vermont Housing Finance Agency*; Becca White, *Community Engagement Manager, Efficiency Vermont*



IV. The Priorities

Determined by community members from Dorset
at the VCRD Prioritization Meeting, August 15, 2019

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, community members whittled down a list of community, energy, and transportation ideas through discussion, reasoned arguments, and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with colored dots, over 50 participants chose action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the region through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Residents formed four task forces for future action:

► Increase Affordable Housing and Attract New Residents

With great schools, a beautiful natural landscape, and many places of employment, Dorset is an attractive place to live and raise a family. For low and middle income households, finding affordable homes to rent or own in Dorset is a challenge. A task force should work to increase the availability of affordable housing choices in Dorset and to attract new residents to the community. Particular attention can be paid to increasing Dorset's racial and ethnic diversity. Recruiting remote workers could also be a strategy and focus of this group.

► Build Community Unity

Dorset is one town with some existing divisions across geographic, socio-economic, and seasonal boundaries. Building unity and a vision shared by those living in Dorset is key as the town plans for and builds a more vibrant future. A task force could come together to create a communication and organizational structure that would build greater unity across community divides and actively promote the progress of the community. The task force could help lead a community-wide visioning effort designed to bring all members of the community into the conversation. This group could also work to expand communications networks to all residents and to ensure that all potential areas of collaboration and the sharing of resources are maximized. This effort would be helpful as Dorset prepares to update its town plan and works to develop plans for the newly acquired Raptor Lane property.

► Transform Dorset's Energy Usage and Generate More Electricity Locally

Dorset's Energy Committee has a strong track record of success, and local renewable energy companies have also had a substantial impact. A task force will come together with the goal of increasing energy efficiency, local renewable energy generation, and grid resilience. Based on the priorities selected at the August 15 community meeting, this group will actively explore priorities including community solar, a public engagement campaign to promote various new energy opportunities, a solar+storage microgrid project, and home weatherization.

► Improve Dorset's Transportation Options

Making Dorset a great place for walking and biking will be a key priority for this task force. The group will also work to develop and promote ride-sharing options and vehicle electrification as additional approaches that increase mobility while reducing costs and emissions.

Other Key Community Revitalization Opportunities identified by the community:

The opportunities listed below reflect potential ideas for action that community members shared at the Kick-Off Forums. Community members may find it useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.

Ideas for Community Revitalization Initiatives

Build a Network to Strengthen and Grow Food and Farming Enterprises

Dorset is host to a great mix of farm and food producers and has a landscape suitable for a diversity of working lands activities. There is a great opportunity for collaboration amongst those involved in local food production, both in Dorset and in surrounding communities. A task force could come together with the mission of leading in the development of a regional food plan, increasing farm-to-school and farm to table activity, and sharing resources including marketing, processing, and transportation.

Attract More Visitors with Eco and Agri-Tourism

With wonderful accommodations, great outdoor recreation opportunities, cultural events and a thriving horse show, Dorset is an appealing place for visitors. A task force could come together to market all of these assets and to better brand Dorset as a place to visit. These efforts could include a focus on eco and agri-tourism as emerging and forward-looking trends and would also likely involve collaboration with surrounding towns.

Increase Recreational Opportunities

A new task force could be created to promote existing recreational opportunities in Dorset and to create new ones. In addition to expanding and marketing outdoor recreation opportunities, an indoor recreation space and more facilities for children's play are among the needs that this group would work to fill.

Strengthen the Two Village Centers

The central core of both East Dorset and Dorset are tremendously appealing with great history and sense of place. A task force could work actively to develop and implement plans that enable additional development to increase density in the village cores while also preserving the charm and aesthetic beauty of these two places. This group could also work to recruit businesses and other services to locate in Dorset as a way to grow the local economy and minimize transportation demands.

Put Food and Other Waste to Good Use

Food waste and other compostable materials represent a significant contribution to carbon emissions. Capturing the nutrients and energy from these materials also represents an economic opportunity, particularly as Vermont continues to implement its universal recycling law. A task force could work to develop a private or public system to capture biodegradable waste and put it to efficient use. This group could also work to address other types of waste.

Realize the Benefits of Dorset's Natural Lands

A beautiful and diverse natural and working landscape is one of Dorset's greatest assets. How the private and public lands in Dorset are managed will have major carbon and economic impacts for Dorset's future. A task force could work to engage landowners about management practices, carbon offsets and other strategies that serve to protect forest tracts, maximize carbon sequestration, preserve native ecosystems and improve water quality. This task force could also work actively to develop systems to connect landowners with young farmers and entrepreneurs looking for land to start a working lands enterprise.

Key Transportation and Energy Opportunities identified by the community:

Transportation and Energy task forces selected from these ideas in developing their action plans.

Ideas for Transportation Transformation

Make Dorset Better For Walking and Biking

The transportation task force could focus on making Dorset a more enticing place for walking and biking. Tactics could include improving physical infrastructure including bike paths and sidewalks, building community awareness among walkers, bikers, and drivers alike, promoting e-bikes as an exciting new alternative, and working directly with the schools to develop and promote safe routes.

Promote Electric Vehicles and Build More Charging Infrastructure

The task force could work to make Dorset a great place for owners of electric vehicles (EV's), both residents and visitors, and to actively promote EV's as a way to save money and reduce emissions. The group would work to increase the availability of public EV charging stations to serve locals and visitors alike while also promoting EV's through events, workshops and other communications activities.

Deploy a Public Campaign to Inform Transportation Choices

The way we meet our current transportation needs requires significant expense and results in significant carbon emissions. At the same time, changing the way we get around requires a mix of improved options and infrastructure combined with a shift in culture and individual choices. The task force could focus on a community-wide campaign with messaging and communications designed to raise awareness, promote different options, and change behavior. Transformation begins with small steps.

Build More Park-And-Ride Options

Ride-sharing and public transit require convenient places to park. This task force should catalog existing options for park-and-ride and work to fill in gaps.

Bring Back Rail Service

Trains are both a fuel efficient and enticing way to get around. The task force should work to bring rail service back to Dorset

Develop Ride-Sharing Options

Uber and Lyft are transforming transportation in urban areas of the country, with both upsides and downsides. The task force could work to develop a flexible rural on-demand transportation alternative. This could include developing a tool or system that facilitates the sharing of rides to fill seats in available vehicles. There also could be a shared vehicle with volunteer or paid drivers. Trips to and from Manchester for various shopping and services, and the trip to and from the airport in Albany warrant special focus for this effort.

Improve School Transportation

Transportation to and from Dorset-area schools represents an important opportunity and expense. Informing the choices of students and their families also has the potential for long-term impact. The task force could work to catalog all of the transportation choices happening and then to deploy strategies to increase bus ridership, walking and biking, and carpooling. An effort could also be made to increase coordination between the schools and their transportation systems/schedules. Finally, this group could evaluate the potential of using school buses for additional community transportation needs.

Utilize and Improve Transit Services

Many workers commute into Dorset each day from the north, south, and west. Many also travel from Dorset in those directions. While there are some existing bus services, there could be more. There also could be more ridership. The task force will work to actively promote existing transit resources and to strategize with local providers about how to provide more comprehensive service.

Ideas for Energy Generation and Use for Buildings

Improve Building Codes and Building Owner Support

The Town of Dorset can play a role in making sure that new buildings and additions/improvements meet or exceed Vermont's building energy codes and that any new construction is solar-ready. The towns can also ensure that anyone building or improving a home or other building has access to all available expertise and resources to meet these standards. The task force could work with the town to implement strategies that put this idea into practice.

Engage Fuel Dealers to Engage Their Customers

Fuel dealers often have long-standing relationships with their customers and are well-positioned to provide those customers with additional energy services. As more Dorset residents transition to new technologies and heating fuels, these businesses could develop their role in assisting with the transition and providing associated services. The task force could actively engage existing fuel dealers with the goal of helping them to expand into this new business area.

Engage the Public through a Campaign of Workshops and Communications

Because Dorset's carbon emissions and energy expenses are the result of many decisions made by homeowners, renters, businesses, organizations and the town, a massive effort to educate and promote energy alternatives is necessary to help facilitate greater energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and reduced carbon emissions. The task force could design and implement an education and promotion campaign including workshops and other events with the goal of reaching residents and visitors and helping to inform their choices about energy use.

Develop Hydro-Electric Generation

Vermont is a place that is rich in rivers and streams, and Dorset is no exception. Small hydro-electric generation facilities represent a renewable option for generating a steady supply of local electricity. The task force should explore potential hydropower sites in the area with the goal of siting and building a new generation facility.

Develop Community Solar

As the cost of solar has steadily dropped, more Vermonters have made this investment to generate their own electricity and secure long term and stable electric rates. Not all Vermonters live in places suitable for solar. The task force could work to develop one or more community solar projects that enable more members of the Dorset community to partake. The project could be structured specifically to enable low income households to participate and could also include the municipality and The Dorset School.

Combine Renewable Generation and Storage to Create a Micro-Grid

The ability to insulate a small area of the electric grid, possibly including an emergency shelter, from a larger power supply disruption will be increasingly important as we face an increase in extreme weather events resulting from climate change. Micro-grids combine renewable energy generation and storage to create grid resilience during an outage while also providing valuable functions during other times. This task force could work with partners to create one or more micro-grid to serve Dorset.

Increase Home Weatherization

The Dorset Energy Committee in collaboration with partners has done an excellent job of promoting home weatherization, but there is still more work to be done. The task force could focus on assisting more homeowners with the process of insulating their homes. This effort would include utility partnerships and the cultivation of appropriate contractors to perform the work. An expanded weatherization incentive from Efficiency Vermont would be a key opportunity to tout. There could also be a role for free home energy visits from Efficiency Vermont.

Tackle School and Municipal Energy Usage

The Town of Dorset and area schools have made significant strides forward in reducing energy use and generating their own electricity. Because all area property tax payers carry some of this burden, the benefits of these efforts flow to all. There is always more to be done, both in terms of heating, electricity, and transportation fuels. The task force could work actively with both the municipality and area schools to document energy usage and to devise and implement strategies to transition away from fossil fuels and to bring down costs.



V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, September 23, 2019

Dorset Tomorrow Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. At the Resource Meeting, committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small visiting resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans and a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

► Increase Affordable Housing and Attract New Residents

Community Chair: **Liz Ruffa**

Facilitator: **Ted Brady**, Deputy Secretary, VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Resource Team Members: **Ludy Biddle**, Executive Director, Neighborworks of Western Vermont

Jonathan Cooper, Community and Economic Development Specialist, Bennington County Regional Commission

Stephanie Lane, Executive Director, Shires Housing

Mia Watson, Research & Communications Coordinator, VT Housing Finance Agency

With great schools, a beautiful natural landscape, and places of employment, Dorset is an attractive place to live and raise a family. For low and middle income households, finding affordable homes to rent or own in Dorset is a challenge. A task force should work to increase the availability of affordable housing choices in Dorset and to attract new residents to the community. Particular attention can be paid to increasing Dorset's racial and ethnic diversity. Recruiting remote workers could also be a strategy and focus of this group.

Action Steps

1. Develop a definition of "Diverse Housing" for Dorset.
2. Create a case statement for the value of diverse housing.
3. Conduct a housing needs assessment.
4. Explore various models to create affordable housing (Community Land Trust etc.).
5. Conduct review/compile lists of towns that have met this challenge.
6. Encourage completion of Raptor Lane surveys.
7. Consider creating joint meeting w/Raptor Lane Committee.
8. Review zoning and identify ways to encourage diverse housing development by changing zoning rules.

Resources

- Stephanie Lane at Shires Housing
- Bennington College field work students
- Neighborworks of Western Vermont – Rental rehab, Arlington pilot, revolving fund, HEAT Squad
- VHFA's www.housingdata.org
- VHFA's housing needs assessment guide
- John Ryan, Doug Kennedy and other housing needs assessment consultants
- AARP VT
- ACCD – Shaun Gilpin – Zoning for Good Neighborhoods
- VT Community Development Program planning grants
- Housing Trust Fund models
- GNAT – Public Access TV
- VHCB
- Elisabeth Marx – Vermont Community Foundation

► Build Community Unity

Community Chair: **Jim Salsgiver**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello**, *Executive Director, Vermont Council on Rural Development*

Resource Team Member: **Elisabeth Marx**, *Senior Philanthropic Advisor, Vermont Community Foundation*

Dorset is one town with some existing divisions across geographic, socio-economic, and seasonal boundaries. Building unity and a vision shared by those living in Dorset is key as the town builds a more vibrant future.

This task force will work on two fronts to help bring our Dorset Community together. On one front, the task force will work to improve Community communications – to enable residents of our Community to connect. On the second front, the task force will develop events and programs to draw together and engage Community members. The two projects tie together well, as better communications that reach more of our community will allow us to engage many more Dorset residents in events and programs that can build greater community unity.

Communications: Today, as in most Towns, Dorset has many “groups” – people who come together based on interests, affiliation, location or for other reasons. Also as in most Towns, many of these groups have ways to connect to others in their own group (mail & email lists, newsletters, websites, online groups, etc.). While this helps residents of similar interests join together, this “silo effect” is not helpful when looking to engage the broader Dorset Community. The existence of these silos, without a good way to connect the broader community, can potentially contribute to a more divided community. If we want to improve the sense of Dorset being one Community, this can be helped by improving the ability for Dorset residents to connect across existing “silos”.

Events / Programs: Success at building Community Unity is far more likely if we create opportunities for community members, who might currently not connect regularly, to come together. Even if such gatherings are strictly social, that can help drive greater community unity. If we are able to create opportunities for a wide range of community members to come together with a purpose, that can create even greater opportunities for lasting connections. And, if we can periodically bring a large contingent of Dorset together in a way that allows us to work on building (and communicating) a consensus view on topics like ‘a vision for the future of our Town’ - that can support our achieving great things for our Town and bring greater community unity.

This effort would be helpful as Dorset prepares to update its town plan and works to develop plans for the newly acquired Raptor Lane property.

Action Steps

Communications

1. Research how other Towns have been able to connect.
2. Build a tree of communications to engage all of Dorset.
 - a. Identify how various groups in Dorset communicate today.
 - b. Determine whether it could be possible to pull those together for cases where community-wide communications could be useful.
3. Develop a campaign to Get Everyone To Sign Up For The Town E-Mail List and the Town Newsletter.
 - a. Which provides Town-related information – governance related, town bodies, town services, town-supported activities.
4. Promote the new soon-to-be-released website that is a joint venture between the Town and the Chamber of Commerce which will provide more timely and complete information on activities in Town – for townspeople, visitors, etc.

Events / Programs

1. Host a town-wide visioning session on Raptor Lane.
 - a. It may make sense to connect with both the Raptor Lane Steering Committee and the Affordable Housing and Attract New Residents Task Force.
2. Take further steps to explore and develop a town vision. Use the Dorset Points of Vision from the Model Communities Town Meetings as a base for further discussion.
3. Develop a series of potlucks at the school, with childcare. Generally, we may want to look at ways to make better community use of The Dorset School, which is a great asset for our Town.
4. Look at how other communities have brought their residents together – like once a month gatherings.
5. Organize community action work days for Dorset
 - a. Green-Up Day, etc.

Resources

- Connect to other towns about events: e.g. – Bethel, Woodstock
- Elisabeth Marx at the VT Community Foundation - Spark Grants
- Regional Planning Commission
- Vision from this process may be useful for the town plan
- Neighboring towns – Manchester
- Some external foundations
- Web Development – piggy-back on work for the Town/Chamber website



Efficiency + You = Comfort & Savings

A **FREE** workshop brought to you by **Efficiency Vermont** and the **Dorset Tomorrow Energy Task Force**



Thursday, December 5, 2019

6:00-7:30 pm

The Dorset School, Dorset, VT

The cold doesn't have to bring you down this year! Instead, bring down your energy bills with efficiency upgrades that will make your home more comfortable and reduce your energy use.

We'll learn about:

- Weatherization
- Efficient heating systems
- Smart thermostats
- New incentives and financing
- And more!

It's free! Snacks will be provided.

CO-SPONSORED BY:

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**The Dorset Tomorrow
Energy Task Force**

For more info:
Contact Jon Copans at (802) 225-6393

DORSET RESIDENTS

**Schedule a FREE
Home Energy Visit by
April 24th, 2020**

- ✓ 360-degree view of where energy is being wasted
- ✓ Prioritized list of recommendations
- ✓ \$200 coupon for a new ENERGY STAR® appliance
- ✓ No sales pitches: Only objective, 3rd party recommendations

When it comes to saving energy, do you know where to start? For a limited time, residents can receive a FREE Home Energy Visit, a \$450 value!



How it Works

This 60 to 90 minute visit includes a top-to-bottom look at your home's energy use (have your heating and electric bills handy if you can). We will evaluate your windows, attic, basement, mechanical systems and appliances to determine whether energy saving opportunities exist. If needed, we may use special equipment to understand where your home is wasting energy.

After the walk-through, your Efficiency Vermont energy expert will present you with:

- ✓ Top priorities based on what we find & your goals
- ✓ A clear, organized plan of action to start saving energy

This offer is only available to residents until April 24th, 2020 and is available on a first come, first served basis.

**Efficiency
Vermont**

**Vermont Council on
Rural Development**

► Transform Dorset's Energy Usage and Generate More Electricity Locally

Community Chair: **Bill Laberge**

Facilitator: **Jon Copans**, *Program Director*, VT Council on Rural Development

Resource Team Members: **Jeffrey Monder**, *New Product Development*, Green Mountain Power
Becca White, *Community Engagement Manager*, Efficiency Vermont

Dorset's Energy Committee has a strong track record of success, and local renewable energy companies have also had a substantial impact. A task force will come together with the goal of increasing energy efficiency, local renewable energy generation, and grid resilience. Based on the priorities selected at the August 15 community meeting, this group will actively explore priorities including community solar, a public engagement campaign to promote various new energy opportunities, a solar+storage microgrid project, and home weatherization.

Action Steps

The first initiative for the task force will be to launch a community campaign to promote a variety of energy choices including but not limited to energy efficiency (both thermal and electric), fuel switching including heat pumps and wood heat, and solar. The task force also wants to explore the possibility of a community solar project and/or a community solar + storage project. This can happen in parallel with the community campaign, and there may be some overlap if the need develops to recruit participants in a community solar project. What follows are action steps focused on launching the community energy campaign:

1. Identify and select topics for the campaign.
2. Establish a goal or goals for the campaign.
3. Develop a marketing/campaign plan, to include:
 - Overall messaging
 - Audiences to target, with a particular focus on hard-to-reach audiences
 - Vehicles for communication (broadcast, print, electronic, social media, newsletters)
 - Calendar/Schedule
4. Collaborate with partners. This will include:
 - Consider the button-up campaign
 - Identify workshop topics and find workshop presenters
 - Identify tour sites to feature various energy technologies
 - Identify and find needed data
5. Develop targeted strategies for hard-to-reach populations
6. Develop a specific strategy to work with area schools and students
7. Develop the pathway(s) for moving projects forward. If someone wants to weatherize, install a heat pump, or go solar what are their next steps? How can the task force help facilitate their forward motion?
8. Deploy the campaign and marketing plan

Resources

- Efficiency Vermont – Becca White
- Green Mountain Power – Jeff Monder
- Vermont Energy Education Program
- Bennington Regional Commission – Jim Sullivan and others
- Neighborworks of Western Vermont
- Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council - Weatherization Program
- Contractors – building, solar, heat pump

Are you E-Bike Curious?



Bennington County Online E-Bike Workshop

Wednesday, July 8 * 7—8 PM

Want to learn more about electric bikes, which ones are available locally, and the incentives currently available? Want to hear from some E-Bike owners who are using their bikes for recreation and transportation? This workshop is for those interested in learning more about this fun and low-impact way to get around. Presenters will include:

- Dave Cohen, VBike
- Barrack Evans, Battenkill Bikes
- E-Bike owners sharing from their experience

Register for the Zoom Meeting : <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYrf-iqgTgiHt114uemKwc2BNCu8QzQPHMu>

Sponsored by:

- Dorset Tomorrow Energy/Transportation T.F.
- Bennington County Regional Commission
- VBike
- Battenkill Bikes
- Vermont Council on Rural Development

► Improve Dorset's Transportation Options

Community Chair: **Ellen Maloney**

Facilitator: **Deb Sachs**, *President*, NetZero Vermont

Resource Team Members: **Bruce Lierman**, *Cycling Savy Instructor and cycling advocate*, Bennington
Brian Maroney, *Executive Director*, Green Mountain Community Network
Jim Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Bennington Regional Commission

Objectives

- 1) To make Dorset a great place for walking and biking (neighborhood and regional connections);
- 2) To gather public opinion, synthesize results and adjust Task Force task priorities;
- 3) To advance and launch projects and campaigns that both inform and encourage everyone to practice shared transportation options (i.e., ridesharing, school busing, transit walking/biking) targeting youth and seniors; and
- 4) To seek businesses and partners to establish vanpool or "on demand" service;

Action Steps

The Transportation Task Force identified the following key areas of focus and developed strategic actions.

1. Advocate and support implementation of the Dorset Walkable Downtown Plan

- a) Rally and grow community awareness and advocacy for making Dorset walkable and bikeable.
- b) Expand walking/biking connections for safety and enjoyment of both residents and visitors alike.
- c) Broaden community support for improved pedestrian and biking infrastructure.

2. Establish and improve biking/hiking trails and eco-recreation

3. Implement a multi-layered promotion plan to encourage shared transportation

- a) Conduct a community survey about transportation needs
- b) Collect census and other travel behavior data on commuting patterns
- c) Organize a shared mobility carpool campaign specifically for youth and seniors
- d) Deploy a promotional campaign of existing transportation incentives
- e) Engage the hospital, Church and other businesses to identify interests for shared transportation
- f) Coordinate with representatives of VTrans about paving of Route 30
- g) Review and encourage VTrans to integrate Dorset's walking and biking plan for a dedicated path into planned resurfacing project of Route 30.

Local Resources

- The Quarry is offering to establish a Park & Ride for carpoolers
- Church organized vanpool or carpool for seniors and others

Outside Resources

- Go!Vermont – Deb Sachs and Ross MacDonald
- Bruce Lierman – biking and walking infrastructure
- Bennington Regional Commission
- Brian Maroney – Executive Director, Green Mountain Community Network
- Allegra @ Local Motion
- Jonathan Kaplan at VTrans (Bike/Ped)

VI. Task Force Updates

It will come as no surprise – 2020 has proven to be a challenging year to push forward with new community initiatives. The disruption imposed by the pandemic creates many obstacles for community members trying to gather to get new endeavors off the ground. The Task Forces that make up the Dorset Tomorrow initiative have made varying degrees of progress, but each one continues to represent a vision and potential for the future of the town.

For the Task Force focused on **building community unity**, while this priority was important to many who participated in the Dorset Tomorrow process, a critical mass of volunteers did not materialize to push this work forward. Jim Salsgiver remains committed to this work and welcomes collaboration from others interested in moving this priority forward.

The Task Force focused on **increasing housing and attracting new residents** came together multiple times to gather information and consider options for tackling this priority. A special meeting was hosted with Jill Davies, Board Member for the Woodstock Housing Trust, who described in detail their “One House At A Time” program. The task force also discussed the new town property at Raptor Lane and how they can best support the development of great housing options at that location. There was also some contact between the task force and major employers in the region to identify possible points of collaboration. Ironically, while the pandemic has presented a barrier to progress, it also has resulted in more permanent residents settling in Dorset and neighboring towns. Under the leadership of Chair Liz Ruffa, this task force will continue to evaluate and support options for increasing the availability of diverse housing options in Dorset.

Led by Ellen Maloney, the task force focused on **improving transportation options** came together once before combining efforts with the task force focused on energy. The transportation task force identified a multi-pronged approach of improving walking and biking options while also promoting alternatives such as transit and ridesharing. The task force also began development of a survey to gauge practices and attitudes of area residents about assorted transportation choices. Covid-19 has presented a major obstacle to any efforts towards transit and rideshare promotion. Meanwhile the Town of Dorset is continuing to move forward with possible improvements for biking and walking.

The **Energy Task Force** chaired by Bill Laberge met regularly through the winter and spring of 2020. In collaboration with Efficiency Vermont, an in-person workshop was organized to promote weatherization opportunities, and an online workshop was organized to promote E-Bikes. The task force also worked with Efficiency Vermont to promote free virtual home energy assessments. This task force is expected to combine forces with the Dorset Energy Committee as it continues to promote different approaches to reduce energy usage, increase electrification, and promote renewable generation in the community.

VII. Dorset Tomorrow Community Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 100 Dorset residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on July 24, 2019

Although the prioritization work of Dorset Tomorrow requires the town to decide what is most important as it moves forward with Task Forces, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.

Working and Natural Lands: Agriculture, Forestry, and Recreation

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Erin O'Farrell (scribe), Tom Berry, Catherine Bryars, Chris Callahan, Donald Campbell, Jonathan Cooper, Rebecca Ellis, Lisa Thornton

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is a successful farmer's market in Dorset that hosts many local producers.
- There are many different varieties of farms that produce veggies, poultry, lamb, sheep, cattle, fruit, and maple syrup.
- Some apple and blueberry farms sell their produce at a commercial scale.
- There is ample forest in the town that serves as a connection of the Northern Highlands to the Hudson Valley of Green Mtns.
- Dorset has one of the biggest segments of un-fragmented forests in the state.
- There is an extensive trail system in the town that is close to major trails like the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail.
- Dorset has a 300-acre town forest that hosts many miles of hiking and biking trails, including 2 mountain bike specific trails.
- There are Vermont Land Trust lands in Dorset.
- Saddleback Farm is an asset to the town.
- There has been development of forest-products in town.
- Some of the trails in Dorset connect to other towns, bringing in tourists and business from surrounding towns.
- Dorset is located within Green Mountain National Forest.
- There are many class 4 roads in the forest.
- There are snowmobile trails used in the winter.
- Dorset is home to marble quarries.
- There is Nature Conservancy land in the town.
- We have calcium-rich soils in Dorset, which makes for very productive forests and leads to successful forest management businesses in the town.
- The forest health is in generally pretty good condition.
- There are marshlands in Dorset, which are one of the only Class 1 wetlands in VT.
- The beauty of our town is a big asset.
- The headwaters of Otter Creek and Batten Kill are located in Dorset.
- We have some prime ag. land in Dorset, with streaks of good soil throughout the geography of the town.
- There are bolted climbing routes used for outdoor recreation.
- The Dorset Horse Show (Vermont Summer Festival) is a huge asset.
- There is a Frisbee golf course in the town.
- The Northshire Area Trails System is a non-profit that works on managing and creating trails in Dorset.
- There is an active conservation commission with interest in working landscapes.
- The Batten Kill is a good fishery location.
- We have abandoned logging roads that are now used for hiking and nordic skiing.
- There is a historic golf course established in 1886.
- We have a State Park in Dorset.
- Dorset is hiring a part-time recreation director who will help manage the stewardship of trails, marketing, events, etc.
- There is a strong outdoor recreation culture, among locals and visitors, in the town.
- There is a 100-person CSA.
- The intellectual and financial capacity of the population is a big asset.
- The Northeast in general has a good landscape, natural resources, and climate; it will be place for climate refugees in future.

What are the Challenges?

- Town bylaws can be restrictive, but it should be noted that the town plan is currently being revised.
- Our population of second-home owners makes for inconsistencies in the marketplace throughout changing seasons.
- Access to outside markets for farmers can be difficult.

- Farmers are not organized around the realms of marketing and distribution. There is little communication/collaboration among farmers.
- Limited broadband is a challenge for farmers trying to market their products online.
- The expense of using lands for ag. and forestry makes for a great burden on the individual, in terms of keeping up with taxes and other expenses.
- The increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions combined with the topography in Dorset creates issues, like severe washouts from rain.
- Changes in snow patterns are impacting maple syrup production.
- Invasive insects and caterpillars impact forests, maple trees and syrup production.
- There has been an increase in the tick population in our town. We are seeing more people getting ill and children impacted.
- The Emerald Ash Borer and Ash Yellow's fungus is impacting forests in our town.
- Parcels in Dorset are fragmented. Many people hold small parcels of land and it is hard to find big parcels that can be used as ag. land. It is also hard to get people to aggregate their land together.
- Dorset is a desirable place to be, but the costs of moving here are high.
- Current uses designated for small parcels are not available for use with properties under 25 acres.
- There are no active dairy farms.
- The town plan is missing info on working lands conditions and the number/locations of working lands and farms.
- 50% of the properties in Dorset are owned by second-home owners/residents who do not live in Dorset year-round. This can create a population that is not necessarily as invested in the town and land.
- There is a socio-economic divide between East Dorset and Dorset Center, which leads to challenges in leading initiatives to connect resources and ideas between the two centers.
- There are lots of invasive plants in the forests, which interferes with forest re-growth.
- There is a lack of education and retention of young people getting into working lands businesses
- We have limited housing for young people.
- There is a concern regarding the carrying capacity of Dorset Quarry that comes with its many visitors and popularity.
- It can be hard for young people who are interested in residential-scale working lands uses to access land/properties.
- The brook trout population is in danger from climate change threats.
- Topography is super steep, making it hard to make it accessible to all.
- The steep slopes throughout our town makes farming hard in lots of places.
- Little accessible space exists currently for kids to play in the town, especially in winter.
- It is unsafe to walk along the major roads in town, making it difficult for walkers to recreate.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- In addressing farming marketing challenges, Earth Matters has been investigating regenerative agriculture as solution to climate change.
- We should consider adopting a regional food plan to address food distribution, marketing, and food insecurity in Dorset and surrounding towns.
- We should put an emphasis on recycling and sustainability.
- We should set up a composting program/service, which also presents itself as a new business opportunity.
- There is a need for a better First Aid squad in town to ensure public safety.
- We should strengthen partnerships between businesses and entities in town.
- We should incentivize resource management planning for land owners of all property sizes by perhaps implementing a tax break for resource management at 25 acre or less level.
- We should focus on better communication/organization/education of our children and their surrounding working landscapes.
- The town should build capacity to do more farm-to-school work, more farm-to-forest work, and more next generation science education.
- We should look into building a USDA-sponsored poultry processing plant; More meat processing could help boost existing poultry farms and businesses in Dorset.
- We should build a cohort for conservation management of Dorset lands by pooling together useful resources.
- We should create space for young children to play in Dorset.
- We should lead efforts to make farmers in the surrounding towns be cohesive in communicating and sharing resources.
- We should feature Dorset as a community with a world-wide reputation as good place to live and visit.
- We need better promotion of the town's assets, along with producers and working landscape laborers. Since it

is more expensive to do this on individual level, we should collaborate together on a single website.

- We need additional skill-training and peer learning with producers and land managers about how to manage lands in our changing climates. We could use education in help with practices that deal with soil carbon, water quality, and carbon sequestration.
- We should look beyond Dorset town proper and consider working with towns outside of the town in marketing and collaboration of resources.
- We should use our current intellectual resources and people who have made lives off the land as resources for the next generation of working landscape laborers.
- There is a concern over whether Dorset is town set up for working landscape laborers in the first place or whether it is primarily a place for second-home owners.
- We should market Dorset as a destination point for tourists
- Even if there are less farms in the town center than surrounding towns and lands, we should use the town as a place to sell and market the products that come from these other places.
- We should better support agro-tourism in Dorset.
- We should lead efforts to make relatively affordable housing units available.
- Conservation efforts can bring down land prices to be more affordable, so the town should designate priorities

of land use so organizations such as VT Land Trust can help conserve land.

- We should consider bundling lands with VT Land Trust.
- We should look at organizations such as Habitat for Humanity to build affordable houses in Dorset.
- We should invest in the problem of invasive species by increasing community awareness and creating a campaign toward the collective action of exterminating invasive species from the land.
- We should look into building something like the Manchester Rec Center as a safe place for people to recreate and socialize.
- We should create a survey of farms and working lands to have a better assessment of what exists in the working landscape businesses in Dorset.
- We should reach out to second-home owners on these issues to get them more invested and involved in the town's land and resources.
- We should welcome more diversity into the town.
- Eco-tourism seems like it will be essential part of future, so we should use resources to expand trails and market existing natural resources.
- We should make sure the community and visiting community realizes that the vitality of this place depends on the un-fragmented nature of forest lands. It is important to keep the conservation of this forest central in our vision for the future.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It is apparent that there is a tremendously rich resource base for outdoor recreation in Dorset.
- The town should consider if there is a way you want to use the resources and ecosystem services as an economic resource. You can use a conservation commission to address issues and ideas like this.
- In assets, there is incredible administrative capacity in the town. This, combined with volunteers in the community, is a huge asset.
- People already working together in the town. Now they need to decide what they want to do in terms of working lands.
- Developing and changing the town plan will be great for the community.
- A regional food plan is something that people have been talking about for years and Dorset is a great community to get this going in.
- A missing asset in this discussion is are the highways (7 and 7a) as something that makes the community accessible to visitors.
- Un-fragmented forests and fragmented development seem to be both good and bad for the community. It is healthy in terms of ecosystem services but can be bad for some economic development in terms of broadband connection and connecting businesses to collaborate.

- Soil in un-fragmented forests will be key resource in climate resiliency.
- Making connections with other communities to make a sum of vibrant collaboration would be a great idea.
- A key question moving forward is whether Dorset wants to use all their natural resources to cultivate economic activity maintain them for their own use?
- It has been refreshing to hear supportive and positive dialogue throughout this meeting.
- Dorset is a great name for which to build a brand around.
- The impact of climate change on the town's natural resources is clear in this conversation.
- If you are already sensing issue with second home owners, this will only increase with climate migration, so you will want to think about how you want to deal with this in the future.
- I've been impressed with the knowledge about forestry, trails, and forest resources that the community's residents have.
- It might be interesting to connect trail connection organizations with forestry people in Dorset.
- Dorset is a happy community and needs to rally around issues brought up in order to make the step into being an activist community.

Dorset Tomorrow

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Jonathan Cooper (scribe), Tom Berry, Catherine Bryars, Chris Callahan, Donald Campbell, Rebecca Ellis, Erin O'Farrell, Lisa Thornton

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Raptor Lane purchased by town, with clean slate for development options.
- Concerns that a lack of business and industry leads to increased residential tax base and limited jobs in town.
- Committees working on Raptor Lane acquisition, "town website" buildout, conservation issues, etc.
- Vermont Summer Festival (horse show), Beebe Farm (host) as economic hub of our town.
- Education system is why people choose to live here. A real asset for our community, and regional differentiator.
- Natural beauty, hiking, bicycling, snowshoeing, the arts.
- Theatre is top-notch, really important asset.
- Older residents bring knowledge, volunteerism, and care for their community.
- Wildlife variation and beauty.
- Land use history: quarries, geology, natural resources, stewardship.
- Revolutionary War history is rich.
- Neighboring communities provide ski resorts, parks, civic centers, museums, libraries, and other amenities.
- [Dorset-Manchester relationship is reimagined as more two-way than in the past.]
- Really strong and well-supported institutions: Dorset Library, Dorset Historical Society, Wilson House, Field Club.
- Business community cooperative with one another, and cares about providing job opportunities to residents and kids.
- Dorset provides social diversity, and welcomes different ideas with healthy conversation.
- We have a lot of remote workers, generating cash flow from out of state.

What are the Challenges?

- We are wrestling with potential for change, currently rewriting town plan.
- Misses the residences in the core and the villages, all turning into businesses.
- Challenges with water, especially East Dorset. With hotter weather, streams are drying up. Might need new sources, but system is still run with hundred-year old pipes. Villages have water (spring-fed, main well); wastewater is all individual.
- Increasing traffic on Route 30, Route 7.
- We need young families; we need kids in the school. Fluctuation in kindergarten enrollment year-on-year.
- Need more low-cost housing, rental units. Difficult to work here and live here in early career.
- Employers have a hard time finding employees.
- Opioid crisis pulling families apart.
- Aging demographic creates concerns for the future.
- Finding the balance between community vibrancy and rural character. How to maintain both at the same time?
- It's really hard to make a living here. Kids love growing up here, but it's hard for them to find a way to stay.
- Geography divides town: East Dorset is industrial and year-round residents; "Dorset Village" is retirement and second-homes.
- Infrastructure: water/sewer, cell towers (two, but ineffective), high-speed internet.
- Firefighters, EMTs, first responders are hard to find, and don't live in the area so response time is slowed.
- No major forum (online/public) for direct social interchange and awareness.
- Chicken and egg situation: you can build the workforce housing, but you won't have the employment opportunities to keep families working in town.
- Livable wage jobs are lacking in this area.
- Local employers see economic opportunities, but are concerned that they'll be poaching from one another to grow.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We don't have an overarching mission/vision.
- Feel ownership of whole town: Dorset/East Dorset residents need to feel cooperative collaboration and trust in one another as partners. Status quo is separate fire departments, separate water companies, which reinforces distinctions.
- Consider locally-produced energy as an opportunity to focus on local, shared resource and economic opportunity.
- Offer training and support to employers willing to hire and keep on people in recovery.
- Can we play on the density of the two population centers, and promote village-centered residential development?

- Encourage mixed-use areas for housing and small businesses along existing corridors.
- Engage with ongoing town planning process, and ensuring that community vision is spelled out in new town plan and then reinforced in zoning regulations.
- Open up the Raptor Lane process to the town's full population, including second home owners.
- Separate out visioning process from planning process. Start with vision, and let plans respond to that.
- Developing broad-based questionnaire to secure public input for Town Vision.
- Bring Dorset's kids into the process, and let their visions for the future give them a reason to come back.
- Review results from other VCRD town visits to see what has gone well and apply learnings.
- Dorset is a Sleeping Giant, with a great deal of potential and just getting ready to stir. Capture and build upon the momentum in the room.
- General Stores in Dorset are a point of pride, and bring that model to East Dorset.
- Don't force ourselves into compartments, maintain community-based attitude, focus on Dorset in sum.
- Create and maintain a welcoming community to bring more racial and ethnic diversity.
- Focus on growth among remote workers.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Intra-municipal divides can't become normalized, there is strength in unity. Zoning rewrites need to follow on planning process.
- Lots of different ideas and visions. Some are project-based (wastewater, buildings, etc), others are fabric-based (communications, information-sharing).
- No huge deficit to overcome, thank goodness, but can prevent emergence of one single common cause. Regional collaboration can help clarify.
- Consensus on assets and challenges is very encouraging. Town plan is at perfect moment for draft input and commentary.
- "One Burke" helped create common vision, common cause.
- Dorset often ineligible for external funding due to income eligibility issues, but this ensures that actions are based on community needs and interests, not grant criteria.
- The Dorset Tomorrow process is meant to be inspirational, and generating ideas that community can rally around. Prioritizing leads to collective action - everybody working on the One Big Thing is likelier to happen than people may realize! East Burke and West Burke are night and day: derelict stagecoach inns/Kingdom Trails.

Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency

Visiting Team: Jon Copans (facilitator), Madison Kremer (scribe), Michele Boomhower, Ken Jones, Laura MacLachlan, Jeff Monder, Haley Pero, Jim Sullivan, Tom Thacker, Becca White

What are the Challenges and Assets in this Area?

- Energy storage: Green mountain power, tesla battery power residential installation; great customer service and installation; helps GMP to not have to store energy, creating micro-grids for community and helping individual be more resilient, e.g. storms.
- Heating and transportation are two largest areas of energy use in VT. EVs save individual money (esp. paired with solar). Dorset needs EV charging stations.
- Energy audit: residential audit recommendations helpful and led to improvements, esp. in old, drafty home
- Who uses what? Participants rose hands to indicate their primary source of home heating: fuel oil (~15), propane (3-4), cord wood (2), pellets (2), heat pumps (3-5), electric (0), passive solar (2-3).
- Energy costs: GMP bill may fluctuate greatly. Residential/commercial rate billing: federal tax credit will disappear soon (6%). 5% rate increase followed by Oct. 2.9% increase. GMP will be charging for tree removal and storm damages.; fuel oil prices variable, has decreased this year because of fracking
- Concerned that heat pumps or heat pump hot water heater less effective, esp. in older homes/colder areas? Or confusing/one-size-fits-all advice
- Efficiency Vermont and Dorset Energy Committee are good points of contact for questions about residential energy, but not always taken advantage of.
- Diversity of homes means that advice needs to be tailored.
- Efficiency Vermont provides free home energy visits.
 - Not many outages (trees are trimmed regularly)
- Dual-systems to manage costs –burning wood takes much energy—but we can't just do one thing
- Vote: Strong majority of people heat with multiple sources
- Non-automated systems (wood) makes it easier to conserve energy because you are more attuned to how much is used/needed.
- Youth don't care about energy efficiency, but respond to "if I save energy, I don't have to stack more wood" and more personal connections

- Talking with BROOC and other experts can help make savings and differences of experience more tangible.
- Energy Plan in Dorset is model.
- Residents get excited about audits and programs but there has historically been a lack of contractors to do audits and weatherization work in the county (have to wait, or lose momentum). Include health and wellness aspect.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- More micro-hydro
- Community solar (especially paired with affordable housing), municipality and folks without access to their own land could benefit
- Dorset has identified spots where solar would be best-placed, good first step.
- Opportunity to find/cultivate more contractors who'd serve as "energy service provider"—many are currently focused on one source. Regional energy plan relies on diversification of energy systems, but businesses don't necessarily follow that model and would be helpful to meet local goals.
- Workshops, e.g. in winter, to explain why, how, etc. of weatherization, transportation, etc.
- Wants to know that "if I make a change, that change is going to continue to benefit me." Tackling uncertainty of payoff, esp. with rate increases, would help adopt new technology/lifestyles. May feel forced to make an upgrade that individual does not need/company won't service or replace old product (issue of trust?)
- Engaging with stories of climate change/impact globally/elsewhere
- The majority of people have taken advantage of Efficiency Vermont/other energy programs, 5-8 say they would take advantage if they were made available
- Planning for a future (more a/c use as example) now before bills reflect these costs
- Dorset-specific cost: hundred-year old water system (town water) costs may make residents, of up to 200 homes who'll bear hundreds of thousands of dollars of cost, delay home improvement/efficiency measures
- Many funding sources for improvements may disappear as things change; strength is in acting as a group to together create micro-grid. Electricity/energy are going to drive residential and transportation costs so we have to act now. Metering capacity is "first-come, first-serve." Particular capacity and rules amenable.
- Micro-grid creates an island not reliant on greater system, more resilient, can be independent. Local energy produced=local energy needed.
- Low-hanging fruit: solar and batteries for emergency shelters in municipal buildings on own micro-grid
- Solar panels decommissioning costs (esp. chemical disposing) borne at the front end so that properly disposed
- Introducing renewable energy could better sustain Dorset economy, esp. because money spent on fuel oil/gas leaves the state.
- Require building of new construction to solar orientation
- Take advantage of new technologies – esp. micro-hydro.
- Dorset Energy Committee has investigated, "not worth it" in Dorset. Only 500 kw for a large dam, but variable based on weather.
- Waste removal (esp. since other countries won't take) could use our waste to generate energy.
- Transportation: everyone in Dorset has their own car, nobody shares. Could we have a small van or more sharing model?
- We should consider adopting a regional food plan to address food distribution, marketing, and food insecurity in Dorset and surrounding towns.
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Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Dorset energy plan, a lot of work and information on solar siting available. Renewable energy generation facility in Dorset is huge resource.
- Opportunities for houses abound.
- A lot of interest—need more education, but that seems fairly easier to tackle. Didn't seem like cost is huge issue but credit unions and others help
- Those who have done this work could open their homes, guide their neighbors through how to take on projects and sharing ideas
- Vermont Energy Education Program: community dashboard, homes and communities can list projects that have happened locally which is good to measure. Opportunities for youth to do outreach and engage because they will be the future, and they are an avenue to share with the rest of the community (parents and others).
- Dorset target community is a good thing, can provide more resources. Those who have done
- Audits and other projects may be self-selecting, need to get word out more. Button-up Vermont happening this September to spread word. As a municipality as a community up to \$4000, and 90% of project, available as target community. Resource for advice.
- Technical information is needed.
- Carbon focused and making sure homes and businesses are fueled as clean as possible. 90% of GMP power is carbon-free, 60% is renewable, with lofty goals and high

level of concern. Technology that can be more efficient. Transportation is good opportunity to incorporate electricity into fuel-used. \$2/hr is the break-even point between oil and electricity—if you're paying any more

than that EV is more cost-effective. GMP provides incentives.

- Select board and Dorset energy committee: open and public for those interested. Would love to have more people!

Improving Transportation Options

Visiting Team: Michele Boomhower (facilitator), Jon Copans (scribe), Madison Kremer, Ken Jones, Laura MacLachlan, Jeff Monder, Haley Pero, Jim Sullivan, Tom Thacker, Becca White

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is one park & ride – making plans to pave it. It is in Manchester, at intersection of Rte 7 and 12 and 30. Improvements are being made.
- Park & Ride Program – available for municipal land. Municipal owned or controlled.
- At St. Pauls church in Manchester - parking lot gets used as a park and ride.
- Montpelier is initiating an on-demand micro-transit pilot.
- Other communities are working on community-based models to provide on-demand rides to those in need. Mad River Valley and Hinesburg as examples.
- There are great resources at the state for van-pooling and carpooling.
- Bill Laberge – providing level 2 charging at their business – Grassroots Solar.
- EV Charging coming at HW Williams Store.
- State of VT held two rounds of grants for EV charging infrastructure. Next round will be for fast charging. Unclear what comes next after that.
- Jeff Monder describes GMP's current EV charging offerings.
- Amtrak comes through the area at noontime and 5:00 only.
- There are two Uber drivers in Manchester
- One or two taxi services in the area as well.
- Shires Connector – runs from Manchester to Bennington to Albany – provides the same connection that a train would. We need to make sure that service is fully taken advantage of and serving Dorset in particular.
- Greater Manchester – Neighbor to Neighbor. Provides rides to Doctors appointments and more.
- Not many kids walk to Dorset School. Maybe 6 on a typical day. Otherwise kids are taking the bus or getting dropped off by their parents.
- Bus rides can be very long – one of the contributing factors for parents who are choosing to drive their kids to school.
- Bus service is provided to both Burr and Burton Academy and the Long Trail School.
- Long Trail School buses kids from as far away as Rutland. They are all over the place with vehicles.
- Burr and Burton also has a bus that travels far.
- State of Vermont invests \$13 million annually in bike and pedestrian resources

What are the Challenges?

- Route 30 corridor is one issue. Route 7 corridor is another issue.
- Bus service along the Route 7 corridor presents a challenge. Bus is always going the wrong direction.
- Our cars are under-utilized. They are parked most of the time.
- On the Rte. 30 side – village is dense enough and walkable, but no infrastructure for walking. People drive from point to point between places in close proximity due to the lack of infrastructure.
- Observation for Dorset, Manchester, and other areas. Bike paths along major routes – not safe and not aesthetically pleasing.
- Example of a home tour – traffic noise is loud along major thoroughfares.
- Kid biking to school on Rte 7 – concerned about safety.
- Danby Mountain Road – School Bus won't go up there. Once the parents drive them down the road, they go the rest of the way.
- Sidewalks and paths aren't adequate.
- In East Dorset, all kids have to go to the General Store to catch the bus. Not all families can do that.
- Any expansion of train infrastructure and operation is very expensive.
- Many kids are all driving themselves to school.
- There are negative health impacts of driving everywhere. When walking is part of a daily routine it helps people stay healthy.
- Retired people drive to the supermarket every single day. Maybe they could team up and go together.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done

- For those who have businesses in Dorset – many employees are commuting in from NY state. Much traffic is generated as a result. How could we serve these employees? Is there a way to work cross-state?
- Michelle B. responds – we do work across state lines at times. Particularly when workforce is involved
- Public transit that is available doesn't serve my needs. Most efficient vehicle is best option. Or ride-sharing. Somehow connecting more community-based or micro-transit options.
- I would like to suggest as far as car-pooling – we don't have a place to park our cars. Community could have a park & ride or parking spaces.
- Albany airport to and from. If there was some coordinated bulletin board or website to ride-match.
- The back parking lot, during the week, at the Dorset Church might also be available as a park & ride facility. Especially during the week, during work hours.
- Sidewalks and bike-lanes can enable people to get out of their cars. We are trying to plan for a bike lane on Rte.
- 30. Walk path/bike path. Eventually get into the Manchester bike path.
- I'd like to see Dorset build out its current EV infrastructure.
- Bring back rail service – Bennington to Rutland County and back. Running all day every day.
- Several elderly people spoke to me about not wanting to drive to Manchester for shopping. Would appreciate the help to get to Manchester. How can we serve this population to minimize their need to drive to Manchester?
- School buses – the small ones. Not used in summer and weekends. Could those buses be used for other purposes? Would need a driver.
- Could we place "share the road" signage on local roads? VTrans - we don't put them up on state routes – not enough \$\$\$ to do it adequately in all places.
- How do we get more people to encourage kids to take the bus? Congestion around the schools for drop-off has become an issue.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Consider electric vehicles as a way to reduce costs and emissions.
- How about the bus? There wasn't much talk of it. It already serves part of this area. Could that service be better promoted?
- Electric bikes are an emerging transportation alternative. There is a new GMP program providing a \$200 incentive.
- Vermonters take a high number of trips. The Go Vermont page is a great resource and under-utilized. Could employers get involved in promoting the various Go Vermont tools and alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles? Currently it is kind of up to the individual to find.
- There is a chicken and egg dynamic. There is already all of the existing infrastructure. The community has the power to build demand. Building demand would get people interested in Dorset. It would bring partners willing to fund better service.
- Transportation Climate Initiative – It will increase in cost of gas and diesel, and proceeds are invested in the states that participate. Keep your eyes open about the proposal. If Vermont participates, how do those funds roll back into Vermont? Where does Dorset fit in this?
- Recognizing Dorset's location and where the trips go. Similar to a conversation in Winhall. Let's have the conversation regionally. Engage our regional transit provider.
- Are there services to have in Dorset to avoid car trips? Can we re-localize certain services?
- Could you reformat the school bus routes to minimize the trip time for children.
- The example in Rutland around school drop-off. Student led initiative.
- Local Motion E-bike lending library.
- Electric Bus RFP has been released. Due August 15.
- Use this as an engineering challenge and get your school involved.
- Drive Electric Vermont is a great resource on electric vehicles. Electric vehicle expo as an example.
- Micro-transit pilot is of interest. Walkability of downtowns is a big deal. Life in downtown White River Junction as an example. What are the ways to build walkability?
- Another plug – Drive Electric Vermont – a great resource related to electric vehicles

VIII. Dorset Participants

Brooks Addington	Jordan "Skip" Dickinson	Anna Johansen	Linda McGinnis	Craig Salsgiver
Laurie Adler	Ryan Downey	Linda Joy Sullivan	Kate McPhee	Jim Salsgiver
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Chris Anderson	M Durland	Thea Kelly	Jim Mirenda	Tom and Sylvia Smith
Bill Bridges	Sarah Elliott	Bruce Ketcham	Kristian Moore	Gay Squire
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Courtney Callo	W Scott Erickson	Peter Kinder	Brad Myerson	Ruth Stewart
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