

# Greater Middlebury Climate Economy Initiative – Forum Notes From the September 18 Kick-Off Event

On September 18 over 100 citizens from Middlebury and surrounding communities gathered with nearly 25 Visiting Team members from around Vermont for a series of themed forums to discuss ideas for improving the affordability, economic vitality, and resilience of Middlebury while also tackling Climate Change. You can read an Addison Independent story about the kick-off event [here](#). Below are detailed notes from each session. If you have ideas you would like to add to the list, please e-mail them to Jon Copans at [jon@vtrural.org](mailto:jon@vtrural.org) by Friday, October 20.

On the evening of Thursday, October 26, the community will come back together to select 3 to 4 priorities for action and sign up for Task Forces to write and implement action plans. Please come to champion the ideas most important to you and to choose the initiatives you think will have the greatest positive impact. Add your voice to the conversation at 6:30 on October 26 at the American Legion on Wilson Road in Middlebury.

The compiled notes from the eight sessions are in the following order:

- **Home and Business Renewable Energy Generation Opportunities**
- **Home and Business Energy Efficiency and Transform. Opportunities**
- **Middlebury’s Vision for Climate Success**
- **Housing**
- **Neighborhood-Scale Initiatives**
- **Infrastructure and Transportation Efficiency**
- **Local Food, Agriculture, and Health**
- **Business Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Jobs**

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## Home and Business Renewable Energy Generation Opportunities

**Visiting Team:** Betsy Bloomer, Sarah Brock, Jon Copans (facilitator), Paul Costello, Dwight DeCoster, Laurie Fielder, Jeff Forward, Jennifer Green, Jeff Manney, Paul Markowitz, Tom Murray, Rick Shappy, Li Ling Young (scribe)

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### What is the current lay of the land? What has been tried and what has worked in Middlebury and surrounding communities?

- Energy Dashboard, can see properties that have gone solar. Hosted events like energy expos. Tours of some of these facilities. Two already.
- SunCommon, 1 in 28 in Addison Co have solar from their company. What is the next stage of development? Increased storage capabilities.
- Home owner now heats with wood stove and 5 heat pumps. Was this a deep energy retrofit? Sounds like new construction. ACORN will soon be offering a buy-in for power from the grid.....sounds a little vague...is still secret.

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### What are some individual/household challenges in going solar or using other new efficient technologies?

- Too much shade; low electric use could not justify;
- Likes the chores of fire wood;
- Don’t use enough electricity;
- Those without means can’t afford the option;
- Indifference or unaware;
- There needs to be an emphasis- upfront—on conservation/efficiency upgrades;
- Hard to take on the debt with all the other expenses;
- Might be moving soon; what to do with the old heating system; there needs to be new ideas in thinking
- The PACE program can be tapped and can get rolled to next homeowners.
- VSECU, a lot of work to train appraisers (already 8); they order green appraisals for homes they know have PV and renewables
- SunCommon – looking at other ways to adjust traditional mindsets.

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### What are some community-based models of encouraging deployment of residential and business-scale renewables?

- Sarah Simonds, VITAL Communities - Solarize Program and the Weatherize Program – reach out to local solar installers and determine outreach capabilities on a very grassroots level, influx of small scale contractors to help with these

efforts; Upper Valley area will be training realtors and appraisers for VSECU type programs; facilities managers to talk to each other about large scale business and C&I;

- Jennifer Green, Burlington Electric Department – Solar Shopper - vendors agreed to respond to interested

customers about solar installs, customers answered 5 simple questions; 40 inquiries so far...no contracts yet...still looking at financing

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### **What are some opportunities to increase participation in renewable energy opportunities?**

- How to navigate through the complexity of these technologies
- Solar Shopper works well, believes in it;
- All utilities are required by law to have as part of their energy portfolio a certain amount of renewables. When will efficiency upgrades be considered marketable for individual homes?
- How can GMP and other electric utilities work with groups of residents to address these or other obstacles/issues?
- Why isn't it mandated...the savings are often there.
- Use whatever money you can have...remove cash and assets from the stock market...redirect your investments. What money do you already have?
- Continuing education from SunCommon.
- Homeowners should be aware of tools like PVWatt (online tool)....
- Inform by neighbor to neighbor action;
- Put information in the GMP bills;
- We need more volunteers, need more financing;
- Getting process into the economic mainstream;
- Scale-up NWWVT to address the problem;
- School/education;
- Get solar arrays on those large business flat roofs—make it easier to incentivize these;
- ACORN - sometimes these retrofits are difficult—not designed for arrays;
- Put into the building code where new barns can physically handle these arrays;
- Home tours of residences that have already done the work;
- Address the NPV of solar installations and investors of bonds looks are future cash flows in form of a loan;
- Why wouldn't commercial businesses be interested in the 30% tax credit;
- What bills does what take advantage of to offset the upfront costs in eventual ROI? ;
- Group net metering needs to be pushed more strongly.

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### **Who should be invited in to participate in this conversation moving forward?**

- Regional Planning Commission
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture
- Better Business Bureau
- Chamber of Commerce
- State Pension Plan
- Banks
- Credit Unions
- Facilities Managers
- Middlebury College
- Schools
- Do-It-Yourself'ers
- Legislators
- ACORN
- SEON (Brattleboro example)
- Wind experts
- Storage experts
- Weatherization Assistance Program agencies
- Churches
- Builders

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### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- Liked the mix of participants;
- Learned a lot, lot of expertise here, maybe biomass, too, what does future look like;
- Need need to help the LI folks;
- Don't forget your business community, Heat Squad has done great work;
- Bring value with grid system and adding storage to strategic locations;
- Home Energy Labeling, wood is the "other" renewable, town energy coordinator;
- Use Solar Shopper, Vermod for lower income folks, the nexus between health and renewables, including indoor air quality;
- Financing has to be a big piece, they finance a lot of solar projects, V green program;
- Many different ways to go forward, whether it is solar or biomass....go with one cohesive plan;
- Don't forget your non-profits;
- The power of this community is incredible, bonding comes naturally, involving teenagers, the power of the lead utilities/organizations of GMP, EVT, VGS are great.

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# Home and Business Energy Efficiency and Transformation Opportunities

**Visiting Team:** Betsy Bloomer, Sarah Brock, Dwight DeCoster, Laurie Fielder, Jeff Forward, Jeff Manney (scribe), Paul Markowitz (facilitator), Tom Murray, Rick Shappy, Li Ling Young

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## What is the current lay of the land? What has been tried and what has worked in Middlebury and surrounding communities?

- Past efficiency work and efforts in Middlebury was to reduce carbon footprint, form energy committee, neighbors are spreading word to neighbors, Middlebury Unplugged was geared to reducing electrical end uses in homes and small businesses, group talks, home energy visits, best—not lowest—hanging fruit
  - Weybridge energy committee- 80% of work is on energy efficiency, start with weatherization before alternative energy, did Button Up workshops, had Button Up day, they won a prize of \$10,000 (3% weatherized). Keys to Success: being a small town, great leadership and motivation
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## What are some individual/household challenges in going solar or using other new efficient technologies?

- education and volunteer efforts must be increased, the business community has to step up;
  - Vermonters tend to be pretty resourceful and frugal and practical;
  - these large, old rambling farmhouses are very difficult to maintain and to fix;
  - So many costly fixes and types of fixes;
  - much of this work is confusing...confusing to understand;
  - Even energy efficient measures are mis-prioritized by homeowners...like new windows;
  - Get loan applications for \$60,000 cars every day;
  - Some homeowners have grown accustomed to other, immediate conservation fixes (heavier clothing) / love wood heat;
  - A lot of the lead stuff has been done...need to get more of this work to resonate with homeowners;
  - Most people make these decisions on economics and payback.
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## Who/What are some of the existing programs to provide residential and business-scale energy efficiency and energy transformation services?

- Dwight DeCoster, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity Weatherization Program - CVOEO is trying to get more low income folks served, are putting more emphasis on single family/mobile homes; have improved to a year and half waiting period; do full energy audit for these folks; do shell work; health and safety issue mitigation; deferred maintenance is another component that is often part of work scope
  - Laurie Fielder, Vermont State Employees Credit Union (VSECU) - loans that were structured to help homeowners with energy efficiency work, such as the Heat Saver Loan; these loans have very low interest rates, including down to 0% loan; this includes business loans, too; 375 loans have been filed, must be EEN Certified contractor;
  - Tom Murray, Vermont Gas Systems - team of auditors, do full reports, they are exploring many different markets and options, they have a stable of participating contractors, they do about 400 audits a year (free);
  - Rick Shappy, Neighborworks of Western Vermont - does similar model as VGS, but the audits are not free, they have their own financing option (very similar to Heat Saver Loan);
  - Betsy Bloomer, Green Mountain Power - their heat pump program works closely with NWWVT, they offer heat pump rental plans (much like water heater rentals), GMP has great feedback; EVT has great survey feedback;
  - Sarah Brock, Vital Communities – were able to double number of solarization by coupling owners with contractors, brought all stakeholders in the room, try to figure out what was holding back the owners from going forward....cost.....so contractors scrapped the audit/estimation fee; there was also screening with online survey...they had 50% conversion rate.
  - Paul Markowitz, Efficiency Vermont – HPwES program – audits, incentives; buy-down or upstream incentives with LEDs and heat pumps, etc.; offering free LEDs for committees engaging in at least two actions in your own home...then go into the community dashboard and fill in what was done;
  - Laura McLaughlin, Vermont Energy Education Program (VEEP) - change the light program, students got two LEDs for free, and got more if they did work at their homes or in their schools, do Button Up too.
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## What are some opportunities to increase participation in energy efficiency and energy transformation opportunities?

- Addison Co has eVolve Pantown...why aren't we hearing about it?
- What resources are available for homeowners to understand what is available for them;
- Did stuff right at church services...what other captive audience opportunities are there?;
- Maybe we need to think smaller for individual projects...emphasis is on too much of the comprehensive energy retrofit;

- Customer service is biggest missing piece;
- Efficiency providers need to coordinate more cohesively with each other;
- One visit, one stop type of shopping;
- Lack of contractors in Middlebury;
- Affordable efficiency bond (posed to Senator Bray);
- Incentive amount from EVT is not enough, homeowners need more than a couple thousand dollars for these more costly jobs.

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### Who should be invited in to participate in this conversation moving forward?

- Teachers and educators;
- Keith Wilkerson;
- Energy planner;
- Matt Couture;
- Bruce McIntyre facilities manager of the district;
- Rental property owners;
- Addison county land trust;
- Nursing community/assisted living facilities (facilities managers);
- Sarah Carpenter – national bank of Middlebury;
- Doug Nedde;
- Paul Ralston;
- Oakley Smith;
- Realtors (Bonnie Bridley);
- Matt Curran with Middlebury College;
- Harvestar in Bristol (Eric Hartman);
- John McIntyre; Silver Maple Construction.

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## Middlebury's Vision for Climate Success

**Visiting Team:** Jon Copans (facilitator), Paul Markowitz (scribe), Tom Murray

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### What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- Middlebury College says they are carbon neutral; they are an asset in terms of students and experts on campus that can be tapped into
- New town office that is new zero energy, has an energy dashboard
- Lot of support for mass transit, looking at bringing a train through
- Emphasis on using local foods in schools, elsewhere
- Individual efforts to bring renewable energy, e.g. rooftop solar
- Active energy committee in Middlebury, Weybridge, others
- Transfer station, Addison county solid waste district, composting
- Energy dashboard tracks progress
- UVM extension service to work with farmers
- Digester is Salisbury that will produce methane gas from dairy farm and will go into pipeline; folks can buy "renewable gas"
- Safe Routes to School program – encourages students to bike, walk; Addison Bike-Walk Group
- Very supportive Selectboard in Middlebury supporting economic development, this effort
- Middlebury Food Coop big hub for local food, has solar
- Energy plan developed by energy committee;
- CO2 emissions study done back in 2004 – however, limited data
- Strong community of green builders, architects who are very knowledgeable
- Bristol co-housing project in downtown Bristol
- Supportive local newspaper, Addison County Independent
- Lots of physical resources, e.g. land, hydro, wind
- ACORN – developing another 150 kw community solar array; CPG is currently before Public Utilities Commission
- Middlebury Town has committed \$\$ to combat climate; still to determine how it will be spent

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### What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- Getting individual towns to buy in and establish priority areas in their towns for community solar
- Existing fossil fuel infrastructure makes it really tough to make the big shift that we need to make
- Backlash against "green" energy happening, e.g. large solar, wind
- \$\$\$ - big obstacle
- Community engagement – how do we engage community members?
  - Lack of awareness of how serious the situation is (climate change); how do we reach people and affect them in a way that they want to change
- Climate denial has become a political reality
- People are overwhelmed by the problem of climate change, e.g. "we are already screwed anyway"; how to make it so that people aren't disempowered
  - People don't believe they can make a difference or that individual changes they make will make a difference.
- We are short on professional to do the work, e.g. thermal shell improvements
- Lack of awareness by developers who aren't aware of green building techniques; why they should build green
- People bought into myth that what's good for the environment is bad for the economy

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## What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?

- Show people how alternatives/efficiency pays
- Educating young people in the schools
- Our job is to convince people that everybody can do something
  - And then share what they did with their neighbors and friends
  - Give folks very concrete actions that they can take
  - Change happens at an individual level; let's start within our own sphere of influence
  - Or – who is one more person I can do something with, do something as a group – projects where neighborhoods get together
- Educate the next generation of trades people – the ones who are doing the actual work; increase the number of people in these fields, e.g. thermal shell experts
  - Hannaford Career Center had a program on green buildings
  - Need to re-skill folks who are in fossil-fuel related jobs – for jobs of the future
- Modeling is important – if you see what your neighbor has done – can influence people
  - There are some opportunities if you think about how to turn a negative into a positive.
- There are some positives that have occurred over the last few decades, e.g. blue box recycling container
- What about commitment/declaration of community to set a forward thinking goal? E.g. net zero energy by xxx date
- Leicester has proposed a net zero goal; (Jeremy Guildiron)
- Montpelier, Burlington have set goals of net zero energy
- What about Middlebury?
  - Middlebury doesn't currently have a vision – but this process can help us develop this vision
  - Do we want to develop a vision for Middlebury?
- Working at the neighborhood level to do bulk buy for heat pumps
- Food! We have a strong agricultural base. What we do around food has a huge impact on our economy and the climate
- Incorporate climate curriculum into schools; make it real, hands-on, help create identity among school children
- Adopt a bold community goal – key first step!
  - Then start to lay out how we are going to get there
- Need to make it accessible to everyone. Develop a brand, an identity. How do we create an identity where people identify as someone who takes action around climate change?
- Climate success in Middlebury means educating children so that they are knowledgeable about what climate change means elsewhere
- We need to meet people where they are at now.
- Health network – 'Practice Green Health' – might be an opportunity to tie-in
  - Work with Porter, UVM health network
- Work with Middlebury College – key economic driver
  - Environmental Council – active student-faculty-staff group moving Middlebury college toward negative net energy use
- We need young people sitting at the table as we develop and implement ideas
  - Student from Middlebury College will be joining energy committee
- Make products here in Middlebury that help alleviate climate change impacts
- Green burial – all of our cemeteries are going to accept green burials
- Vital Communities models – Solarize Upper Valley, Weatherize Upper Valley
  - We need paid staff, establish a regional organization that works on sustainability
  - Move beyond solely volunteer efforts
- What role does Middlebury Town have in this effort? It would be great if the Town could take a greater role.
- Samsø, Denmark – an island community – that has gone net zero/self-sufficient. Built upon strong community involvement.
- What would be a goal that would appeal to folks?
  - Save \$xx by xx date
  - Comfort, safety, health – benefits of efficiency/alternatives beside cost savings
- Increase # of businesses that are owned locally, owned cooperatively, owned by community
  - Community-owned businesses have more of interest in helping the community
- Should it be focused only on energy or broader to climate impacts/contributors to climate
  - Broader provides an umbrella for a lot of people to take action
  - People need to go where their passion is – provide a broad range of actions that they can take following their passion
  - Economic vitality is a strong motivator
- Creating good middle class jobs so that kids can grow up here and work when they get older
- Middlebury take a leap that puts us on the map! Go big or go home! Take a big leap forward.
- No new fossil fuel infrastructure

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# Housing

**Visting Team:** Abby Bleything, Ben Doyle (facilitator), Haley Pero, Kathy Beyer, Jenna Koloski (scribe), Adam Lougee, Melanie Pascevich, Karen Ranz, Kevin Wiberg, Claire Tebbs, Craig Peltier

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## What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- There is a lot of housing available for retirees, but especially for wealthier ones.
- The Farmers Home Administration program helps first time homebuyers afford homes. They will subsidize, or will even temporarily cover the mortgage. It is a great program that pays for itself.
- A lot of homes are located in walking distance of elementary school.
- Middlebury has a very walkable, bikeable town center.
- ACCT has just built some beautiful new homes north of downtown, replacing old less attractive ones.
- The Cottage Lane houses are narrow and close together with front porches. It is the town's most dense development. Everyone knows each other and socializes. That works really well.
- We have a number of good homebuilders interested in high quality and good home performance. Their homes tend to be higher end, but the sector is interested in green development.
- We have a decent mass transit system that helps connect the neighborhoods to the community.
- Habitat for Humanity has built 10 houses countywide. They have built very low/net zero energy homes that are affordable.
- Heat Squad of Neighborworks is a great resource and partner for weatherization in the area. They did the Cottage Lane efficiency work. They also have a buyer education program to inform homeowners and down payment assistance and energy loans.
- Middlebury has good infrastructure for water/wastewater and electric.
- We have access to goods and services in the downtown like grocery stores and other basic services and needs.
- A lot of people are putting on solar panels. There is interest in the community.
- ACCT owns 9 mobile home parks in the area. There are 14 or 15 in the county.
- ACCT has grant money to subsidize new Vermod homes to about \$100,000.
- There is a local homeshare program.

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## What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- It is hard to find a good home for less than \$300,000.
- There is a shortage of buildable land. Developments are filled up.
- In towns outside of Middlebury, housing is at a premium, especially because of septic requirements. It is expensive to build and hard to find a lot to get a permit. That is a challenge especially for young families with children.
- There isn't a lot of housing stock available as families are staying in their homes and space isn't opening up for new families to move in.
- The quality of what is available is often not what is wanted. We have old housing stock.
- Prices are high in Middlebury whether you are renting or trying to purchase.
- Even rental costs are high. It costs \$500 a month just to rent a room in someone's house.
- If you have a family with more than one child, finding a rental is very difficult.
- Middlebury College just built a lot of new dorms which has relieved some stress, but they also do own homes in town that are used for new faculty members or different programs on campus. In certain parts of town, they do own a lot of the houses. They don't have many students living off campus.
- There are certain parts of town where parents buy a house when kids are in college just to use when they come visit.
- This leaves many houses that go unoccupied for months during the year.
- The college has some subsidized housing for students.
- Regulations around home construction can make it difficult for a homeowner to use alternative building techniques. We have a building code that hasn't caught up at the state and local level.
- It is difficult to value solar panels on a home. Some are worth more than others. That is an issue with banks giving loans. Two different homes have come out differently. There is inconsistency in appraisals.
- Many appraisers are not educated on appraising for green building techniques.
- Affordability is the biggest challenge. We don't have a lot of production and new building happening.
- Rental stock is old and deteriorating.
- Starter homes don't stay that way because people add to them and they get larger and larger.
- Mobile home parks are built on land with poor drainage and there is no source to make infrastructure improvements. ACCT has been piloting putting Vermods in the parks and one of the challenges to that, besides cost, is that you don't want to put a brand new home on old infrastructure systems that aren't ready and able to support newer, more efficient homes.
- The age of homes in these parks varies significantly. Some are much older.

- It is still a challenge to find a market for Vermods at the subsidized rate of \$100K.
- Lack of education about housing and particularly energy efficient housing in the county. People are aware as they should be about heat pumps, weatherization, etc. Several entities are doing some of that education, but somehow people aren't quite catching on.
- It is a challenge to convince people to spend more at the front end to spend less later.
- Sometimes it's about education, but sometimes the cost doesn't work out. Low energy costs make it harder to make that argument – it's also about timing. If you're there long

term, you can make the case, but for shorter term it can be harder. For a young person, jobs aren't as secure so it's hard to plan in the long term.

- We don't have an energy rating for homes. There are tools/scores, but they are underutilized.
- NIMBYism. Sometimes there can be resistance to affordable housing or dense housing in the community. It takes a lot of persuasion to develop in that way.
- Needs are met in Middlebry, but it is less money to build outside of town. This increases the need to drive longer distances.

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### **What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?**

- Realtors could educate the community more about availability of energy score ratings and tools. Tools exist but we need more education and marketing around it. We could build an education campaign.
- Education around allowing multi-family housing to be built in our town center.
- We need to cultivate a culture of downtown dense housing and making zoning/regulations more friendly to that development.
- Major employers can be advocates to help shift the culture.
- We should hold big events as part of an education campaign.
- Develop a toolkit for those that need to approach landowners about new energy/housing/etc. projects so we don't have to start from scratch every time.
- We need to be educating our affordable housing organizations to know what our process is. There will be public input and hearings and it is the job of planners to use our process to help people get to a point where they're reaching consensus.
- Start a local housing committee to address affordable housing.
- Put energy codes on the radar screen. We have an energy code, but it's not enforced. We need to advocate for enforcement. The state energy code should be administered by people who understand it and not the local zoning administrator.
- We should adopt a stricter energy code for new construction locally.
- We could model national programs for rent to own options to help to get more affordable housing on the ground and build communities where someone has an equity position in something they can potentially afford. Detroit has one program as well as Austin, TX.
- Build small "tiny home" type developments. We could become a model. This has started happening in Windham County.
- Identify unused parcels in town and build incentives for development there.
- Conduct an infill study for the area to identify land and inform future zoning.
- Conduct a housing needs assessment.
- Conduct a survey to get a lay of the land. Perhaps engage the college in helping to capture the current situation.
- Develop a house labeling system for energy and provide incentives to use it.
- If you put a price on carbon, it reflects the cost of fuel in the cost of heating the home.
- Work with ACCT to develop an application for the new bond funds that state is putting out. The bond dedicated funds to 60-120% of area median income. The local housing coalition is working to get a project off the ground that can help address that need.
- Apply for the New Neighborhood programs with the state.
- Scale up public transportation for the three hub towns of Vergennes, Bristol and Middlebury. There's a need for coordination.
- Starter home for starter jobs. Work with companies to identify creative ways to bring housing for workers. For example, companies could purchase multifamily houses for new workers to live.
- We need more options for long-term stay for workers.
- John Graham has a grant to do weatherization in mobile homes. It hasn't rolled out yet and will be challenging in mobile homes because sometimes upgrades can be more than the home is worth.
- Cultivate local developers rather than try to engage large developers. Train local developers in a joint program between other communities.
- Approach Hannaford Career Center to develop a green building program.
- Redevelop vacant buildings for better community use.
- Encourage regional planning to hire an energy inspector to help enforce energy codes.
- Explore the redevelopment of the St. Marys property. This space is open land with an empty brick school building and empty old Victorian home. It would be a good place for affordable housing and should be looked into as part of the assessment.
- Gather a group to engage owners or property around their plans for vacant properties as potential locations.
- We need a higher level of sophistication to help coordinate and attract development. We are planning in silos.

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## Reflections of the Visiting Team

- Looking at New Neighborhood affiliation would be a great way to bring development costs down if there is a specific need in mind, someone needs to drive that. Conversion of single family into group housing or homeshare or apartments could be a good step. I liked the idea of workshops and education – how-to. The challenge is that the market is upside down. We would like to look for market incentives or figure out incentives that make the market work better again.
- The VT Community Foundation does impact investing and that includes housing. There is always an opportunity to work with VCF when starting to look at a specific project. Middlebury has so much going for it. I would encourage you to start looking at vacancies and think creatively about using infill as a way to keep costs down. A decrease in housing costs would take a major economic event – the other strategy is to think about how to create jobs that help people afford housing available to them.
- I heard a strong theme around affordability and availability as linked issues. It's been an economic drag and an obstacle to growth.
- To what extent is it about appropriate availability? Houses may be more appropriate for people looking for a place to move – how much needs to go into new construction vs. right sizing and right “qualityizing?”
- There is a “MPG” certificate for single family homes that was developed by Efficiency Vermont. Homes built in the 50s, 60s, or earlier are the biggest challenge and weatherization could have the most impact on carbon footprint. I loved hearing talk about density – don't give up on more density in the center or neighborhoods. There are models for Accessory apartment development, or increasing density in a district over time – it can happen!
- In Windham they have done work to make an economic hub around a green development theme. They may have some thoughts to learn from. Home share is a great idea to offer affordable housing in larger homes.
- Where does the density conversation sit with the town now? Has it been explored in depth? Does the current town plan accurately reflect community view point? Encourage town committees to discuss true costs of carbon to help people make the decision to go deeper.
- You have so many assets in place – education, incentives, walkability, etc. How are you sharing that information? How would I know that if I was a developer? There may be some additional tools to help tell that story. Share what is working, recognizing you do have challenges.
- It is a great idea to start a housing committee. Maybe there is a way to develop that committee from existing committees and volunteers. There are people willing to support if there is a local charge to bring it to that level.
- We need market drivers. Energy costs are low, it's getting warmer – the energy code needs to be enforced. We need to be forced into energy efficiency. People aren't making that choice and we need to push them. The energy score is important. We need to label homes to encourage informed decisions. The market isn't asking for it and we need to push that market.

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## Neighborhood-Scale Initiatives

**Visiting Team:** Kathy Beyer, Abby Bleything, Michele Boomhower, Ben Doyle (scribe), Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Adam Lougee, Melanie Pascevich, Haley Pero, Karen Ranz, Kevin Wiberg

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### What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- Group is trying organize a plastic bag ban. Was presented to the select board and discussed with Hannaford, but the group has realized that the issue more complex than originally thought.
- There is a culture of sharing in our neighborhoods (tools, trucks, etc.)
- There are a number of recognized neighborhoods and a sense of neighborhood identification.
- The condos have formal neighborhood associations, but many neighborhoods are informal as well.
- Front Porch Forum is very active.
- There are also some identified outlying neighborhoods away from the village and East Middlebury (has its own neighborhoods).
- Neighborhoods are organized and come together very quickly to responds to challenges.
- There are also other kinds of “neighborhoods” churches, etc.
- South Ridge (neighborhood development) is new and ripe for potential. Newer development makes it easier to bring a green ethos to projects. Because the development is not complete, there might be an opportunity to request some new/higher “green” standards.
- ACORN is active (works on net metering).
- It's a walkable community and people get out and see each other.
- Amazing number of organizations that work to support this work in VT and folks in the neighborhoods are very engaged.
- Some neighborhoods have maps of properties and homeowners that are used to foster information haring.
- Access to trail systems.
- College is involved in a lot of energy efficiency.
- The schools are centrally located and near where folks live.
- Lots senior folks contribute.



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**What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?**

- Lot sizes in some neighbors (due to privacy) are very large.
- There was a community garden (has gone defunct). How could that work again?
- College is the elephant in the room—often they do great things but also has an outsized influence.
- Participation levels are of varying degree.
- Winter is a challenge—people don't get out as much as they would in summer.
- Snowbirds (some homes are seasonal and it's tough to organize people who aren't here).
- Folks don't have a lot of time. People are often working—being neighborly is tough.
- Aging population can't do as much as they used to.
- Middlebury can be an exclusive community—people who live outside of Middlebury need to pay the county but don't get direct how the funds are (but there are two sides to this issues and folks in town could say the same thing about how their tax dollars are used).
- Active cooperative market that brings people together.

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**What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?**

- Think about neighborhood approach to try to increase/inform energy savings. Looking for ways to share information at the neighborhood effort. Peer to peer support.
- Revive Efficiency Vermont neighbor to neighbor informal audit program.
- Try to ban plastic bags. Model that ban for the rest of the state. Start a committee to get a bag ban. Give everyone a free shopping bag (perhaps with neighborhood name).
- In response to act 146, encourage community composting. Gets some education around that and develop collaborative neighborhood composting.
- Group purchasing for neighborhood efficiency projects. Use collective community buying power.
- Develop a systematic program for tree planting. Strengthen tree committee. Look for incentives and grants to purchase.
- Develop community gardens through garden paths (let folks walk around the community) connect neighborhoods through gardens/walking paths.
- Looks for ways to get rid of lawns or turn them into edible lawns. Do it in an organized fashion. Don't build an orchard in one place but throughout a neighborhood.
- Develop rain gardens (provide education around how to build them).
- Convene conversations at the neighborhood level about affordable housing. What is each neighborhood's plan for contributing to affordable housing goals?
- Share available neighbor lawn space (cooperative lawn) for growing food or other forms of landscaping.
- Ensure that new houses are oriented towards solar in the long-term. Folks should at put homes on north/south axis. Create zoning regulation that makes this happen. Every house should be designed for solar.
- Create wood banks for planed cutting that could be donated to community members who needed firewood. Ensure that privately owned (trust) forests are properly managed.
- Looked into biomass options as well.
- Encourage people to use Energy Action Network dashboard (is it up to date?).
- Look for ways to increase biking safety (work is already being done by the bike/pedestrian group that this taskforce can plug into).
- Lots of community activities but look for ways to engage others outside of the neighborhoods (or Middlebury proper). Make it more welcoming for folks.
- County-wide festival or activates that expand people's sense of community. Every town can have its own voice. Market county-wide, not Middlebury specific.
- Look for ways to increase bus routes (like Central American models). Look to increase routes bus routes. Paint the buses in colorful/exciting ways.
- There should be lots of bike related activities. Look to expand existing programing that exists in other town.
- Get involved on local boards/committees to provide local leadership.
- Push major employers to organize carpooling options. Use Go Vermont (software)—Michele will provide additional info. Look to Hinesburg example.
- Empower local energy committee.
- Clothes line project. Provide technical assistance/education campaign around clothesline. Condos group need to revise bylaws. (It is illegal to ban clotheslines).
- College should eliminate free parking. They should also put solar on their buildings.
- Develop community development position to support neighborhood development.
- Put solar on rental properties—what's the market barrier there?
- Engage students at the high school around project based learning. Connect students with community gardens, clothes lines.

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**Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- Likes the idea of engaging the co-op. Expand their mission to include energy. ACORN is doing great work. Likes the wood bank idea. Look to neighborhood campaigns.
- Neighbor to neighbor campaigns really work well. The more neighbors that sign up save everyone money (purchasing power). EAN product is successful and can be used. Lawn

sign campaigns worked well. Obviously it needs someone to organize.

- Love the safe routes to school program. The jitney service program is exciting but is challenging to make work. Develop sub-committees to encourage.
- Tool sharing is great as is neighborhood purchasing power. Neighborhood composting—sell the compost back. Gamify the neighborhood to increase participation and innovation. Tap the resources of the college to move projects forward.
- Believes there is a larger conversation worth having around transportation. Look to promote electric vehicles. Enhance opportunities for biking safety and education. Similarly

encourage bus trips as well too. Think outside box. Go electric on lawnmowers.

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- So many ideas about physical environment. Accessory dwelling units are allowed everywhere in Vermont and folks can look into that to explore on large notes. Look for opportunities to expand neighborly connections throughout these seasons.
- Neighborhood tours is a good idea. Purchasing power is really important. Look to students at all levels. Community gardens and composting are connected and can often find resources to both.

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## Infrastructure and Transportation Efficiency

**Visiting Team:** Abby Bleything, Michele Boomhower (facilitator), Ben Doyle, Jenna Koloski (scribe), Adam Lougee, Nancy Owens, Melanie Pascevich, Haley Pero, Karen Ranz, Claire Tebbs, Kevin Wiberg

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### What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- Middlebury is a hub and the intersection of all transportation options. We're special that way.
- We are doing a round bridge construction project.
- We are planning a transportation center to receive rail.
- We have the ACTR transportation center.
- We support bussing, walking, and biking to school.
- We have a lot of bike/ped infrastructure – crosswalks, sidewalks, etc.
- There is a wonderful Trail Around Middlebury through the Middlebury Area Land Trust.
- We're recognizing that electric vehicles are more than just cars and have held events related to that.
- We are working on trying to publicize and expand EV charging.
- We are looking at parking – not just traditional cars, but a full spectrum of vehicles that will need to access building and services.
- Middlebury has just rewritten our town plan and are maintaining and sharing the data.
- We don't have an interstate highway. This contributes to the kind of place we are in that it doesn't allow for sprawl outside center.
- We have a fairly dense settlement pattern and a village with things we want to access and services.
- It's not too hard to get to where you want to go without using a car.
- In many cases it is easier to walk than to drive places. On the path to elementary school for example.
- There is a long serving public works director with a lot of experience on these issues.
- Relatively new wastewater treatment plant.
- Good stormwater management system – could use some upgrades, but do a pretty good job.
- Great water supply.
- Basic needs are met.
- Efficient street lighting in place.
- The College has a district heat facility for the campus that is a biomass system.
- We are lucky to be in a safe place in the world. There are some flooding concerns, but in terms of climate change we're quite lucky.
- The railroad line through town is a transportation asset.
- Great schools.
- Relatively vibrant agricultural sector.
- A lot of social services are available. We have collaborative social services.
- The Middlebury - Burlington Link buses are very well used. ACTR would like to add more routes. The 116 route continues to grow.
- It helps that the college is behind and subsidizes sustainable transportation. It increases ridership.
- At the college students have done a lot of surveying to understand barriers around culture and convenience. Student data shows that if you build it, it will come. The tri-town shuttle has improved 23% this year after their work.

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### What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- There are no streetlights in Budolph Acres. Many would like to have them, but the developer wasn't required to install them.
- When we talk about walk to school events, schools outside of Middlebury are challenged in bike pedestrian access.
- There is no interstate.
- Despite the concentrated settlement pattern in Middlebury, there is still a challenge of people living very scattered around the county. It is not amenable to mass transportation solutions.
- It is hard to change people's mindset to take the bus.
- Since the 60s, we have developed in a suburban model with only single access to each school. That creates traffic

problems for people getting to school. When the new middle school was built it was built separately from the other schools, This is inefficient.

- There are housing challenges. People want to live in downtown but the housing isn't available there due to both affordability and availability.
- The infrastructure is aging and needs to be replaced, but it's expensive. There are property tax limitations to improving roads, sidewalks, sewer, water, etc.
- The transportation infrastructure was built along river corridors. That worked fine, but with the changing climate it presents challenges. Rt. 125 is washing out annually.
- There is a sense of isolation here. Until the railway is ready to move people and freight, this is a relatively inaccessible place.
- There is a cultural challenge in Vermont. Amtrak train service hasn't been that popular. It is going to take some time to build that culture.
- Technology will help a rural state like Vermont because they can depend on availability and accessibility of transportation.
- Awareness and education and outreach. There is always more to do.
- We are a car-focused culture. We need to move to a culture around alternative transportation.

- The roads are challenging to bike commute on. Cycling can be harrowing.
- Self-driving vehicles are a "looming factor." There is uncertainty around how that will change the dynamic.
- Flying adds significant emissions and there are a lot of airplane flights. It adds up.
- Students are also not riding the bus. We promote a non-driving culture in our kids.
- There are barriers to using the school bus system for transit purposes.
- Our sense of time is a cultural reality. We tend to be in a hurry all the time and think we need to get to where we're going immediately.
- This is also an economic issue. Public transportation is successful in countries where many can't afford a vehicle.
- The town is paying for duplicative bus services to ACTR. We need to improve coordination.
- Road Maintenance is a challenge in the long-term. We need to think about the material we use and maintenance in the long term as the climate changes.
- VNAP is doing a smaller scale system with composting. There are good models out there. How can we generate heat and energy from waste we send to landfills?
- Railroad causes blockages in the transportation system and limits a couple of places where pedestrians cross informally. Is there any way to make that formal?

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#### **What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?**

- Develop a solar powered street lighting project.
- We should think more broadly about parking and claim parking for electric motorcycles, e-bikes, or bicycles.
- Create more park and ride options at the end of bus routes and all over the place.
- Build wider shoulders on streets for bikes to ride.
- Get a critical mass of bikes up to a level where cars expect to see bikes on the road.
- Advocate for the "Idaho Stop" – if you come to a stop sign you can treat it as a yield sign on a bike. Make this the local and state policy.
- Develop paved bike paths.
- Improve traffic calming measures. There are certain roads that cars fly down. We should use visual devices to cue vehicles to slow and do a "road diet" – keeping the road width the same but limiting traffic lanes.
- Middlebury is currently working on multiuse path in Middlebury on Exchange Street and rotary at end to help improve traffic issues.
- Develop incentives to walk/bike to school such as offering first dismissal where cars are last to be dismissed, or require students to pay for parking at the school.
- Work with Middlebury College to be more restrictive on student vehicles. Parking isn't priced to discourage. We could use revenue for other travel options for students.
- Find a way to slow traffic on unpaved roads.
- Provide bikes at college for students to get around town.
- We need a place close to downtown for commuter parking. There is space available just north of town owned by Agency of Transportation. This would be an asset for both passenger rail and commuter bus parking.
- We need to build these principals in as we develop from the get go.
- A lot of international students want to get to Burlington and don't have cars. We should help a more diverse student body and community access services.
- The Goodrich Farm methane digester project has been approved but we are unsure about the current status.
- Capture waste and turn that into energy for the area. We could do a waste mechanism to utilize gas infrastructure for energy like Essex has done. We do have opportunity for that here in Middlebury but would have to redo the current system. Right now we are going into a planning process for upgrades with the existing plant, it is our biggest electric draw.
- Build awareness around electric assist bikes and trikes
- Build awareness around Go Vermont and build involvement. Work with large employers to map where people are coming from and incentivize carpooling – like National Life and NRG do.
- Think locally. Think about where we can source things locally.
- Purchase hybrid or electric buses. This is being trialed in Burlington. We haven't found a suitable smaller bus, but

ACTR is always looking and trialing and getting closer all the time. The buses have 5-7 year life so it may take a couple of cycles but we'll get there.

- Protect or improve pedestrian crossing over railroad.

- Build pedestrian bridges in town as an alternative to railroad allowing crossing.
- Paid parking/enforced parking in the downtown to limit day long parking downtown and encourage people who work in downtown to use peripheral parking.

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### Reflections of the Visiting Team

- It seems like a great idea to hold a campaign to draw attention to concrete action steps to ride the bus! Engage the college – this is a real opportunity. USDA RD invests in rural communities to improve the quality of life and Middlebury actually qualifies for grant programs in a way other communities will not. There are ways to access resources that you have access to that others don't.
- I've been impressed by the depth and breadth of this conversation. My work centers around affordability in housing. One asset is the new gas line because we look at heating homes and propane and oil are 3 times the price. To reduce the cost of heating is an asset. We also see the cost of water increasing in communities around the state. One interesting comment was the idea about how we've settled communities around rivers, wetlands, etc. thinking about how climate change will affect our settlement patterns is an important topic overall. In order to get change you need dissatisfaction – have a demo week – close down the town to cars – bike and ride and take the bus and show people that the bus works because you have to do it!
- Thinking regionally – Middlebury, Vergennes, Bristol could be low hanging fruit in this county. It's all there in the 3 towns and they can easily lead by example to whole county. Really think about our village as village centers and allow villages to mimic larger towns in infrastructure,

- wastewater and design and alternative technologies that are out there. Middlebury can really be a multi modal transit hub, but don't have to start there – can think regionally. Incentivizing that culture shift is key at all scales.
- Even though electric vehicles are critical, the focus of this conversation has really been on public infrastructure. That is further ahead than a lot of communities. Efficiency VT does have a program for wastewater treatment facilities so make sure you're taking advantage of that and connecting with other communities that have made improvements.
- I was glad autonomous vehicles came up. They are on the horizon and good to think ahead. The state is putting together a working group on that. The CNG pipeline exists – and its actually reducing petroleum use quite a bit because limiting diesel trucks. There could be an opportunity for local energy through RNG and there is an exciting pilot project for that is happening here. I would love to work with Middlebury to strategize around reducing travel to campus community.
- There are sister communities in Vermont working on efficiency to connect with like Montpelier and Burlington. The Governors climate commission will be looking for ideas at the community scale that can be replicated in other parts of the state. They will be watching communities closely.

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## Local Food, Agriculture, and Health

**Visiting Team:** Tom Berry, Paul Costello (facilitator), Liz Gamache, Gary Holloway (scribe), Craig Peltier, Claire Tebbs, George Twigg

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### What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- The co-op food movement has been expanding supporting local food
- We have more organic farms per capita – Addison county has more farms per capita
- Data suggests that summer meals and after school meals are resulting in declining hunger
- ACORN Statistic – Addison county local food index captures wholesale value of local food Vermont + 30 miles – Middlebury college, Addison NE co-op, Middlebury co-op – \$4.5 million and growing
- Ben Gleason finding someone to purchase farm
- ACORN supports through events – farmers to coordinate distribution, matchmakers and financing education
- Middlebury co-op identified key need several years ago as better food storage
- Paul Hawken – keynote at VCRD event - key leader in country – solution #6 on top list is food waste – another one is refrigerants which are many more times potent than methane
- Carbon sequestering – not enough work being done – not part of the conversation viewed locally but Addison County is having the conversation, regenerative agriculture, rotation grazing – Champlain Valley coalition is growing fast
- Perception of Vermont branding is very good

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### What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- We are surrounded by industrial farming – polluting water
- Seniors and hunger continue to be an issue and needs to be addressed – income barrier
- Food insecurity – total amount 41% down coming into local food shelf – due to erratic amounts of rain and cold weather
- Year-round local food being grown here – climate change, seasons – outdoor food vulnerable to pollutants – growing year-round would help food insecurity
- What are niches? – who is selling honey berries, aronia berries, oils, grains – more of coordinated change between farmers and suppliers and buyers such as schools to focus effort so farmers know that there is an income consistently
- Accessibility to food kitchens/food hub such as Hardwick
- Decline in local stores
- Mowing programs – impermeable roads, waste pollinators that could sequester carbons – cut out mowing program or cut back
- No till relies on chemicals which is critical to sequestering and adds nitrogen – need cover crops
- Spray to kill the rye which defeats purpose of no till
- Too much organic milk has driven down costs of milk
- Lack of labor force from production to processing to distribution

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### What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?

- Health care reform – developing medicine and funding healthcare at state level
- Food waste – law for grocery stores to sell imperfect products – eliminates food waste and provides for needy
- Dig below earth to store products without using refrigeration
- Organic – health for people and soils – have a committee tied into legislature comprised of people knowledgeable of permaculture, organics, farmers, businesses owners – considers health, energy use, water, etc. – holistic approach
- Incentive for becoming organic farmer at state level – farm viability and working lands board has invested in that – fed farm bill for transitioning farms to organic
- California has a new label for regenerative and organic
- Need to grow production and be sensitive to how we grow market – processing and storage facilities will support a short growing season – Bennington County and Brattleboro and Hardwick are doing some work on this – Addison County is oldest agricultural base in state. Every man for himself – successful farmers have grown their own infrastructure. Hardwick has had sources of financing and built it together. Cautious about other food hub stories such as Mad River – what is the failure rate for products – successful growers going to Boston and NY.
- Statewide goal of reducing pesticide use over time to 100% - Middlebury puts in bylaw to limit pesticides would help improve ag system, marketing, and improved products
- Aquaponics uses less resources, and have proven successful
- Rent pieces of farm to young aspiring farmers – matchmaking – Is there a shortage of good soil for vegetables? Fewer soils for veg production. Lead growers are aging out and looking to pass on operations and save for retirement. Work with Intervale Food Hub, many have settled in Addison county.
- Get VT land trust involved to help parcel off land to younger growers – need coordinated effort
- Meat, grain, dairy – share infrastructure
- Food storage – communal drying facilities for fruits and vegetable – powdering them makes it easy to store and transport.
- Subsidize infrastructure – drying, root cellars – identify what infrastructure is needed for a specific project
- Solar panels on farms – GMP wants to buy green energy – farms are good solar collectors – match farmers with GMP for \$\$ to support infrastructure
- VT Gas, work with engineering experts to look at most cost-effective strategies for bio digesters – VT Gas could back feed to the bio digesters – Jasper Hill Farm is supported by 80 cows in a closed system – 1000 cow system at Monument Farm (450 feeding system at any one time) – VT Tech is unsustainable – closing system on methane digesters
- Addison County Farm network – ACORN is a member
- Generate electricity through bio digesters
- Champlain Valley Creamery – has income to support staff – apprenticing young cheese makers that want to own business – Champlain Valley Creamery – business needs help to foster this
- Aquaponics solves many problems - \$20M in northern VT to produce these farms – look at perspective of scale that will work where there is big return that is sustainable
- Solar arrays in conjunction with GMP – Sun Common has farmers that want to host but recent legislation has created a barrier for that opportunity - modernization in regulatory changes to support solar arrays to generate income for farmers – barn roofs could be a good option to explore for farmers
- Waiting period to have meat butchered and packed – shortage of butchers in state – 6 month waiting list for one steer
- Teach incarcerated how to cut meat – don't have enough students to keep program viable – not a livable wage and other issues – very small state and should continue to brand state – can't compete with commodities / Costco
- Specialty food products bring a premium so focus on those products – value added

- Champlain Orchards – how to get out of commodities – top apples, ciders, oils, etc. – they can help others through this complicated process
- Hard Cider – apple orchards are doing well if they are linked to hard cider
- Bring in out of state funds to help invest in VT because of strong label – movement to go beyond the local to aquaponics fresh – some product goes to high end restaurants and other go to schools, institutions, etc. New England is a larger market and can support paying people a living wage – the investors would support expansion of VT farm – culinary herbs for restaurants, mushrooms, etc.
- Addison County – has advanced hard cider, spirits, beer – largest in state – Exchange Street is a mecca in this area in the industrial park and should expand up it and market
- Hemp Industry – what are the possibilities for Addison County? Not a large margin. Need to have large quantities to make a profit
- WIC program – families served don't prepare food any more – teaching people how to cook again – grow garden beds – educate the importance of - Everyday chef – Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL) – is doing this very well
- Middlebury College Students run food hub being started – purchasing food from around the state and sell as close to wholesale – students are not paid. There is a very thin margin and still they make it work. Serve 150-250/month – 6 pick-ups around the area – offers program 1x per month. Looking for additional funding to expand program – demonstrates local demand if there is a reasonable price. This has been run through support of the ACORN Board – conducting research around shared facilities. Visiting facilities such as Hardwick Food Venture Center trying to understand what the specific need is in a concrete way. This concept should remain on the list as they develop a business plan with VEDA, SBDA – finding suitable space for this is necessary
- Entrepreneur, incubation, storage, shared spaces
- Funds to set up properties, hold them until a project is ready – Preservation Trust of Vermont is a good resource for how to do something like this
- Community purchased property
- What happened to local slaughter house proposed? Plan fell through due to margins.
- Green Pastures is doing well butchering
- Exchange Street – people want to build houses, condos – develop branding around ag economy. No sidewalks but they are coming – used to be 2 slaughter houses on exchange street. Businesses are already branding on Exchange Street – 250 businesses – the tasting trail helps to benefit area businesses. College owns property – town would like to be included in conversation with food/beverage conversation.

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### Reflections of the Visiting Team

- Lack of labor force – consider folks in other states that may want to relocate
- Transportation efficiency?
- Reduce food waste, prescription idea – awareness of eating healthy or reducing meats
- Shared infrastructure
- Old generation farms – need for labor – senior population need jobs, incarcerated youth – matchmaking
- Organic transition needs more support, food hubs, expertise is available locally, bio digesters are working well in Addison County
- Outdoor recreation link to food scene in Middlebury
- Is there a gap for food venture center in Addison county? Could Hardwick model work here?
- Demographic reality and pressure – seniors and food insecurity – living in poverty – free up and attract labor force – career exposure jobs – VEEP
- Dependent upon price structures, be cautious, do it efficiently, costs effective structure, can't take a big risk. Are there opportunities for young entrepreneurs to test and fail? What is the pipe line that is not quite developed? Should be a doorway to this in Addison County.
- Capitalize on successful businesses on Exchange Street – market, attract new businesses, expand, support farms, start-ups, new business concepts, shared facilities.

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## Business Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Jobs

**Visiting Team:** Tom Berry, Paul Costello (facilitator), Liz Gamache, Gary Holloway, Craig Pelletier, Claire Tebbs, George Twigg (scribe)

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### What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- Over the last nine years, there are many more young people working here today, especially in adult beverage industry. In agricultural industries also. The college also has an expanding view of entrepreneurship.
- Connecting students to local opportunities. Help fund internships, including in the summer. Connect students with mentors. Working more with alumni who stay in Vermont. More students want to stay here. Focus on exposure to local opportunities here and in Burlington.
- VCET is an incubator. Six or so businesses at any given time in Middlebury. Three have graduated recently. They stay for varying periods.
- Architectural Firm - Started in an economic downturn, focused on energy efficiency. But very well received, people

- wanted to save money. Triple bottom line business. Commercial and residential customers. Rapid growth.
- A solar installer had a hard time getting locals interested in solar projects. Working as an individual. Built an array near Rutland. Surprised at lack of interest.
  - Middlebury College is an economic asset. Brings intellectual oomph - lectures and other offerings. Partnership between college and environmental program. Information sharing.

- Surprised there aren't more college students. They are very interested in this topic. Town-gown divide?
- Less town-gown divide than in years past. But they are looking for projects to do that involve the town. But they don't get off campus that much.

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### **What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?**

- Dairy has challenges, but not sure they are unique to our area. Same problems as Franklin County.
- Lots of small farmers are doing veggies. Beverage industry is huge - Woodchuck started it - and Otter Creek. Exchange Street is a huge success. Act 250 is all done. Land is available.
- There is a lack of affordable housing. Lots of dining workers commute from New York. Cheaper even if you have to commute an hour. Discourages young people from staying. Cost to build is higher than appraisal, nobody can afford to build. This challenge is not unique to this area.
- There is a high local tax rate - one of the highest in the state. Hard for businesses and residents.
- There is a lack of child care options, especially for infants. Hard for working parents.
- We are not taking advantage of the internet - live here, telecommute to remote employer. More co-working opportunities needed. People working in coffee shops etc.
- Solar developers can't find substations for large solar projects to tie in to. Can't meet state goals because of grid constraints. GMP analysis shows most of local grid is stressed. (Suncommon - grid is good in middlebury, Northern Addison is a no go, Southern Addison also has issues)
- Looked at retrofitting old buildings like barns but they can't bear the weight. Downtown solar is a work in process - many downtown buildings can't do a large solar array. Too expensive to retrofit.
- Marble Works has done lots of solar. Heavy duty buildings.
- Project with septic issues. Cornwall village. Town has revival plan with new town center. Wants a facility with inside seating. But current septic doesn't allow for customer seating - employees only. Lack of municipal wastewater system is a constraint. Can't develop and expand. Can't make a profit under the current restrictions. The state needs to work with the town to resolve these issues to support more development.
- Cornwall has no country store or anything. No place to buy a gallon of milk.
- Old assumption was that solar would be the preferred energy source. But it has created a lot of tension. Projects built close to roads because of utility rules the projects need to be close to roads. Could utilities socialize the cost of longer connection distances so projects aren't right next to the road? Would require regulatory changes and approvals.
- Quality of the housing stock. Needs a lot of help to be energy efficient. But cost to make those improvements might exceed the value of the home itself. Bonding is one option for advancing this goal, or others. Similar to the new housing bond that just passed.
- Instead of building new affordable housing, what can we fix up?
- Another issue is banks failing to value high-efficiency homes. But Craig / VHCB says that's not an issue any more, real issue now is the up-front cost. Banks are being supportive.
- NeighborWorks is around but not doing much.
- Only one Efficiency Vermont approved contractor that can do projects that qualify for incentives. Lack of demand is part of the problem.

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### **What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?**

- Mentorship. Lots of interested young people, lots of older experienced people, need to set up those relationships. Work through Chambers etc.
- Some mentorships happening between students and businesses, need to scale that up though. Mentor doesn't have to be a business owner - just a professional role model.
- What about all the people who aren't entrepreneurs? Need to support them too.
- Support more co-working and remote workers. How do we connect those people. There used to be a telecommuting workgroup. Initially had lots of interest 30-40 people.
- Vergennes has a co-working space with lots of vacancies. Why? Not cool enough?
- Isolation is an issue - no support network. Appreciated the inclusive framing of climate conference at UVM - spoke to me even though I'm not an energy expert. Need to find ways to be inclusive and account for more diverse motives and interests. Not just solar experts. Need to be welcoming, and avoid silos.
- Issue isn't attracting new businesses, focus needs to be on building and retaining the ones that are already here.
- When we talk about the jobs we need, be clear what we are talking about. We need jobs in trades and construction, not just sending everyone to college.

- Took a timber framing class at Yestermorrow. Wants to connect Cornwall space to Middlebury College. Maybe add an artisan space - blacksmith, etc. some kind of hands on school or courses. Take a break from the books. Renaissance man. Connection to the land isn't what it used to be.
- What about the career center? Used to have a green building program. It died during the recession. Maybe bring that back?
- Analysis shows most of the good paying jobs are related to manufacturing and green construction. VTC trying to lure more women into the workforce by pitching home building and trades as a human / social service.
- Provide more respect to people in the building trades. Need to engage and include them. That perspective is lacking. Builder/carpenter. Probably still working!
- Would be great to have one place where all these resources were available entire region. Not just Middlebury - entire county. Step up from the no wrong door approach. Others are looking at issues related to county level structures and approaches.
- Incentives for contractors to be certified for Efficiency Vermont incentive programs? Not much demand for single family retrofit. Process is hard. Someone needs to find a way to make that easier.
- What is to come out of this? Local goals, or statewide? Vermont has very limited resources to pay for anything. Solar boom was a product of tax credits. Look at all the regulations that go into building a house, try to maintain high standards but reduce regulations.
- Maybe Middlebury can reduce taxes for high efficiency homes, to adjust the playing field. Lots of really old housing stock out there, need to provide incentives and ways for limited financial resources to flow to this goal.
- Tax system is out of whack. Added value for sustainable home results in higher taxes.
- Some things like electric vehicle incentives can't happen at the town level.
- We should have a goal of more electric vehicle charging stations to show that we are welcoming those tourists and drivers.
- Support for changing tax system to reward, not penalize, sustainable construction and green building. Stagnant growth here, need ways to reverse that.
- Middlebury does have a designated downtown with a growing youth cohort. One of just a few in the state.
- Parking should be reduced in downtown. Look at what Seattle did. Zoning rules set parking requirements. Surplus parking spaces encourage more people to get cars. Seattle did demo projects with parking spaces - pocket parks etc. Zoning was changed to reduce parking space requirements. But you then need to increase public transportation. Look at how great church street is.
- Public transit downtown is pretty constant. But only a few buses a day for commuting to Burlington. Lots of local gaps though like east midd. affordable.
- Change the frame of how we talk about young people. "Attract and retain" is the wrong language. Doesn't sound like a cool place to be.

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### Reflections of the Visiting Team

- Opportunity to support co-working spaces, comradery, inclusive job spaces. Dynamic economy here. Invest in homegrown businesses, instead of attracting new ones.
- likes idea of parking rule changes. Increase in young entrepreneurs is great. Housing issues ... quality vs. quantity. Property tax rate idea is interesting. Involving others.
- Addison is one of the first solar storage sites in the state. Vermods in Vergennes will all have storage. GMP doing that, and Tesla home storage. Get more trades involved. Look at social cost of carbon. How do we get that into the conversation? Low cost of oil is a challenge. Regional approach to carbon pricing is one option. People respond to prices. Incentives matter - link local initiatives to broader efforts.
- Three themes. 1 lack of turnout and lack of diversity. engage young members of population. 2 training - guide students to where the jobs are going to be. 3 regulations and barriers, lack of incentives - current governor cares about housing - New housing bond as an example. Need to find ways to improve housing stock.
- Middlebury students did an award winning tiny house...there are skills waiting to be tapped. Lots of skilled people in the ag community - pioneers on digesters etc. Recreational economy has lots of potential. Interesting that nobody talked about that all day.
- Local bond to pay for those who can't pay for their own efficiency upgrades, to address social justice and equity issue.