

Proctor's Future

Report and Action Plan, May 2018



Produced by the **Vermont Council on Rural Development**
in partnership with the **Vermont Community Foundation**

Table of Contents

- I. The Proctor’s Future Community Process 1
- II. Proctor’s Future Priorities 1
- III. Task Force Action Plans 2
Action Steps, Resources, Task Force Members
- IV. Community Forum Notes 8
- V. Community Visit Participants 10
- VI. Resource Team Members..... 10



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On 4/18/18, over 50 community members attended the priority setting session (above) and participated in a dot-voting exercise to select their top priorities for action (right)



On 5/16/18, the new task force groups met to build their action plans (left) and at the end of the session, presented them to the full group (below).



I. The Proctor's Future Community Process

The community of Proctor is on the move. A scenic town situated along the valley of the Otter Creek, Proctor has a rich history as the center of the global marble industry and a town with abundant assets numerous from the well-regarded local school system to annual community events, trails and recreation, the Vermont Marble Museum, active businesses, youth recreation programs, and more.

Now, the community is coming together to engage residents in setting and advancing key priorities for the future. Through the Proctor's Future process, community members came together to identify and prioritize goals, foster local leadership, connect to resources and develop and realize achievable action plans. **The Proctor's Future process consisted of two phases:**

Phase 1: Over 50 residents came together for a community meeting at the Proctor High School on **April 18th** to review assets and challenges, brainstorm action items, discuss what's most important, and vote on 3 community priorities. Once priorities were chosen, residents signed up for task forces.

Phase 2: The new community Task Forces met at the Vermont Marble Museum on **May 16th** to create action plans and work with a team of federal, state, business, and non-profit leaders to identify action steps and resources.

It is not easy to choose priorities, but in the end, Proctor selected solid priorities for action, listed in the report below, that will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community and economy for all Proctor residents. These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals, and there is much work to do, but Proctor is a town that is ready to take action. Local leaders Tom Doty, Linda Doty, and Carol Protivansky have stepped up to chair the new task forces. Laura Marsh, a dedicated and energetic community leader, has agreed to help the task forces move forward as the overall chair of the Proctor's Future task forces. Laura is excited to engage with all three task forces to ensure coordination and collaboration and act as a liaison between the groups and municipal leadership.

II. Proctor's Future Priorities

Determined by Proctor residents at the Community Meeting, April 18th, 2018

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Proctor community members came together on April 18th to review community assets and challenges, and brainstorm a list of potential action ideas. In the end, over 50 participants chose three action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the April 18th meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Proctor Community Priorities Include:

- ✓ **Market Proctor as a Place to Live, Work, and do Business**
- ✓ **Build Community: Events, Communication, and Engagement**
- ✓ **Redevelop Historic Buildings**

III. Task Force Action Plans

Action Planning Meeting, May 16, 2018

Proctor Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. At the May 16th action planning meeting committee members worked closely with a facilitator and a visiting resource team to develop step-by-step action plans and a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. Next, residents will truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

✓ Market Proctor as a Place to Live, Work, and do Business

Community Chair: **Linda Doty**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello**, *Executive Director*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Ed Bove**, *Executive Director*, Rutland RPC

Mary Cohen, *Executive Director*, Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce

Action Steps

1. Develop a marketing story and brand narrative describing the assets of Proctor, identifies target audiences and sets strategies for outreach to each audience.
2. Build a sheet or brochure on “Living in Proctor” that describes all the assets and wonderful quality of life in the town and includes a brand/logo and get it to all major realtors, big businesses, hospitals and institutions; also promote it digitally.
3. Build and implement strategies to market the schools and especially to outreach to market the high school to students and families in ‘sending towns’.
4. In the short term, the committee could help update the community website to attract a more useful audience and advance search optimization to reach more people.
5. The team can work to engage a group of high school student to build a video promotion of the town, the quality of life, things to do, natural assets and the beautiful buildings.
6. The group can consider using the image of the bridge as a marketing icon or brand image for the town with a short word logo; this image and logo could be used ubiquitously on signs and communications for the town.
7. The committee can work with the Rutland Regional Chamber of Commerce to develop a “Discovery Map” marking out things to see and do with visual images.
8. The team can work with Rutland Herald to systematically develop and plant stories about Proctor activities and then drive these stories on social media.
9. It can also work with the Chamber to gain earned media outside of Vermont, like a Boston Globe story.
10. The Committee could also build a ‘card’ describing and annual events calendar and share it throughout the community, with regional employers and realtors, and through the Chamber of Commerce

Resources

- Proctor High School Youth could be recruited to help develop a video, advance social media and potentially become members of the committee.
- The committee could reach out to Castleton University to seek an Intern to support its efforts.
- The Rutland Economic Development Corporation (Tyler Richardson, tyler@rutlandeconomy.com or 770-7067)
- The Rutland Regional Planning Commission (Ed Bove, bove@rutlandrpc.org or 775-0871)
- The Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce (Mary Cohen, mcohen@rutlandvermont.com or 773-2747)
- The Rutland Herald (Katy Barcellos, 417-7378)
- The VT Community Foundation (Liz Gamache, egamache@vermontcf.org or 388-3355)
- Preservation Trust (Paul Bruhn, paul@ptvermont.org or 343-0595)

- USDA Rural Development (Ben Doyle, Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov or 828-6042)
- Local Businesses
- Local Photographer Dave Carman, dcpropilot@hotmail.com

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✓ Building Community: Events, Communication, and Engagement

Community Chair: **Carol Protivansky**

Facilitator: **Jenna Koloski**, *Community and Policy Manager, VCRD*

Resource Team Members: **Steve Costello**, *Vice President, Green Mountain Power*

Liz Gamache, *VP of Grants and Community Investments, VT Community Foundation*

Background/Current Issue:

- “Our Yard” is an organization that started years ago. They do events and community building but are primarily focused on town beautification, the Memorial Day parade, and the Fall Festival. The question is, whether this group should be a separate committee that helps to boost and expand this work, or merge with Our Yard to build in more capacity to extend event offerings and communication efforts.
- We have a 4th of July event.
- We have a town website where info and events can be posted.
- We should engage the school and youth in any work that we do.
- There is limited participation in events and community in Proctor.
- The Marble Museum is a great venue. We have had some events here over time, but there could be a better connection with local residents. We tried a café here but there wasn’t local support.
- We have a nice athletic field.
- There is real disappointment in town after several economic development strategies (like bringing in the PA program at St. Josephs) have not come through.
- We have ice skating, a pool, and pond access.
- Omya gave the Town the Beaver Pond and are now working on cleanup, access, and picnic tables on site.
- The Carriage Trail in town connects over the Pine Hill trails. There is one race from Pine Hill to Proctor each year.
- We need to draw and engage families with young children.
- There are some younger volunteers in town that organize events like the color run and a trick or treat tail gate event.

Action Steps

1. Connect with Our Yard to determine the best structure moving forward. Is a separate Building Community group needed, or does it make sense to merge efforts?
2. Create an annual series of “Starting Point Events” that will bring people together of all ages for fairly low cost and low effort. Over time, these events could grow and become center points of community engagement and unity. Events may include:
 - a. “Touch-a-truck” and BBQ event in partnership with the fire department and local/regional businesses.
 - b. Themed BBQs each month in the summer (movie night, touch-a-truck, pool party, etc.)
 - c. Build a community picnic onto the Memorial Day events
 - d. Help to boost and support the Fall Festival
 - e. Hold a “Pet Parade” or other dog-friendly event to engage families and pet-owners
 - f. Host “Science pub” events at the museum – community education paired with food and drinks!
 - g. Hold outdoor moving nights (with the Marble Museum as a rainy day backup location).
 - h. Events connected to the pond or to the Carriage Trail such as a spring “Fiddlehead Fiesta.”
3. Connect with the school to host community events and engage youth. Work with the school to bring Proctor youth together to ask what they would like to see. What would they like to do? What events would they like to be involved in? What are some volunteer opportunities they might be interested in taking on? The group might even consider developing a mentorship or “buddy program” to better connect students across age groups and students to the community.
4. Build a communications strategy to share events and other information with the community. Strategies include:
 - a. The group could bring Front Porch Forum to Proctor and work to engage residents in the forum. <https://frontporchforum.com/> This forum is available to every Vermont town, but it takes local leaders to spearhead an effort to get folks signed on.
 - b. Ensure that the town website has up to date information on events and point people to the website from local Facebook pages and other communication tools.
 - c. Draft and submit letters to the editor and press releases that showcase Proctor stories and events. Tell the story about the great things going on here!

Other ideas:

- Increase attendance and Town Meeting Day
- Develop a “Proctor Professors” program that offers courses to the community taught by community experts and teachers.
- Host and Arts and Crafts Weekend

Resources

- The strength of Proctor’s people and families. We are a family-oriented community.
- The Fire Department.
- Our Yard is either an opportunity to merge and boost capacity, or partner.
- The Marble Museum is a key historic resource, a community asset, and a partner in community events.
- Local businesses can support events through sponsorships, raffle donations, and/or volunteers. Potential supporters include Omya, Casella, Green Mountain Power ([Steve Costello](mailto:steve.costello@greenmountainpower.com)) Proctor Gas, Carris Reels, Keyser Energy, and others. These companies could also contribute trucks for a “Touch-a-truck” event!
- The Mortimer Proctor Fund could be a potential source of funding for community events and communications.
- The Vermont Community Foundation has a Spark Connecting Community Grant program that could be a good fit. They also are interested in supporting mergers of groups and organizations to build capacity. Contact Liz Gamache at egamache@vermontcf.org or 388-3355 x283.

- The group could connect with other communities that have community events that unite residents of all ages. The Bethel Better Blocks program put on by the Bethel Revitalization Initiative is pretty neat (<http://bethelrevitalizationinitiative.org/>), Rutland has a Friday Night Concert Series (Steve Costello could likely tell you more about the events and community building going on in Rutland), and Craftsbury has an annual town-wide block party that is HUGE!
- The School could be a key partner in programming and community events.
- The Vermont Arts Council has some grant opportunities for communities that are using the arts to engage and unite the town. Contact Michele Bailey at mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org or 828-3294.

Task Force Members

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✓ Redevelop Historic Buildings (another title suggested “Leverage Proctor’s Historic Buildings”

Chair: **Tom Doty**

Facilitator: **Richard Amore**, *Planning and Project Manager*, VT Department of Housing and Community Development

Resource Team Members: **Paul Bruhn**, *Executive Director*, Preservation Trust of VT
Lyle Jepson, *Executive Director*, Rutland Economic Development

Task Force members shared their reasons and interest in Redeveloping Historic Buildings in Proctor. Common themes included:

- Bring village vitality back to Proctor that includes a diverse array of businesses and services to inhabit the historic buildings, such as general store, café, gas station, additional “new” housing, office space, senior and assisted living, health care, education and tourism.
- Pride and heritage in the community that includes the beautiful historic buildings, marble industry, community members, local schools, local businesses, and their impact and presence of Proctor Marble across the U.S. and the world.
- Town has employed tools to support building redevelopment, including: obtaining [Village Center Designation](#) in June 2015, completed the Proctor Prosperity Plan, participating in the RUVT regional marketing campaign, and recently adopted a tax stabilization program.
- Discussion on “what is Proctor’s hook” - what can Proctor do to pitch itself and catch future investment, businesses and residents.

Action Steps

1. Re-“Define” the vision of Proctor Village through a strategic visioning process and action plan that could include:

- a. Inventory existing buildings in the village, including their history; the current condition – structural, environmental, code concerns, etc.; ownership; the amount of square footage; work completed; work needed to redevelop; and initial redevelopment feasibility.
- b. Inventory existing infrastructure in the village, including examining the condition, capacity, future needs and financing, including, but not limited to, the water and waste water system, broadband, cellular, school facilities, recreation assets, transportation – sidewalks, roads, and transit, stormwater, etc.
- c. Economic, housing and market analysis that examines the demographics, market condition, housing supply and demand, opportunities for senior/assisted living, and market potential in Proctor
- d. Identify community resources, services and business needed in Proctor
- e. Explore “smart communities” and how technology will transform the transportation sector and communities
- f. Develop actionable strategies/tools to expand business opportunity, redevelop vacant historic buildings, draw more visitors and residents to the village, etc.

2. Market Proctor’s assets and Connect to Regional Marketing Initiative “RUVT”

- a. Continue and expand support and engagement with the RUVT regional marketing campaign to market proctor assets.
- b. Market Proctor and its historic buildings through the Rutland Herald (daily) and through targeted social media campaigns.
- c. Expose and market Young Professional to Proctor village, it’s historic buildings and neighborhoods. Convene Young Professional events at the Marble Museum more frequently.
- d. Engage with Alumni from Proctor schools, past residents and visitors to Proctor and market as a place to live.

3. Research, Visit and Learn from other “company towns” and villages that have had success in revitalizing their villages and redeveloping historic buildings.

- a. Connect with other local leaders in VT towns (company towns) who have had success in revitalizing their village or building(s) and visit them to learn directly how they transformed their village through local leadership, tools and resources.
- b. Research other “company towns” revitalization successes in New England and throughout the U.S. to see how they redeveloped historic company buildings, added new housing, business and vitality.
- c. Visit other local cooperative stores/cafes to learn how other VT communities are using community-supported enterprises to redevelop historic buildings and bring back community gathering spaces – [Peacham cafe](#), Bradford, [Putney](#), [Guilford](#), and West Townshend.

Resources

• Local Resources:

- a. Town Staff, Selectboard, Planning Commission, Historical Society, Our Yard committee, Local businesses – Franklin’s, Carris Reels, Proctor Gas, Marble Museum, etc.
- b. Local Funding – Mortimer Proctor fund, tax stabilization, village center designation

• Regional Resources:

- a. [Rutland Economic Development Corporation](#) – Lyle Jepson and Tyler Richardson
- b. [Rutland Regional Planning Commission](#) – Ed Bove
- c. [Rutland Regional Chamber of Commerce](#) – Mary Cohen
- d. [Green Mountain Power](#) – Steve Costello

- **State Resources:**

- a. Agency of Commerce and Community Development
 - [Village Center Designation Program](#) – Richard Amore
 - [Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits](#) – Caitlin Corkins
 - [Department of Economic Development](#) – Brett Long
 - [Historic Preservation Grant Program](#) – Caitlin Corkins
 - [Brownfield Revitalization Fund](#) – Kristie Farnham
 - [Vermont Community Development Program](#) – Nathan Cleveland
 - [Municipal Planning Grant Program](#) – Faith Ingulsrud
 - [Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing](#) – Steve Cook
- b. Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
 - [VHCB Outstanding Historic Building Grants](#) – Karen Freeman
 - [VHCB Housing Programs](#) – Jennifer Hollar
- c. Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
 - [Brownfields Program](#) – Trish Coppolino
- d. Vermont Department of Building and General Services Grants
 - [Human Services and Education Facilities Grants](#) – Judy Bruneau
 - [Regional Economic Development Grants](#) – Judy Bruneau
- e. [Preservation Trust of Vermont](#) – Paul Bruhn
- f. [Vermont Community Foundation](#) – Liz Gamache
- g. [Vermont Arts Council](#)
 - [Cultural Facilities Grants](#) – Michele Bailey
- h. [Efficiency Vermont](#) -Dave Corliss
- i. [AARP Vermont](#) - Kelly Stoddard-Poor
- j. [VTrans/ACCD – Better Connections Grant Program](#) – Jackie Cassino and Richard Amore
- k. [Vermont League of Cities and Towns](#) - Abby Freidman

- **Federal Resources:**

- a. [USDA Rural Development](#) – Ben Doyle
- b. [National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grants](#)
- c. [Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credits](#) – Caitlin Corkins

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IV. Proctor's Future Community Forum Notes

These notes reflect the concerns and ideas expressed in the group discussion of over 50 Proctor residents at the April session. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.

Assets

- Used to have shooting range, but don't anymore.
- Skating rink and pool.
- Library.
- We get a large percent of power from the dam, hydroelectric – a marketable asset for downtown.
- Good reputation in education community, especially how we handle special needs kids.
- Good volunteer fire department.
- Active businesses: Proctor Coal, Proctor Gas, Restaurant that people should be supporting.
- Quiet here, off the beaten path, close enough to Rutland to get what you need.
- 2 great schools and teachers.
- Marble museum.
- Franklin's Restaurant.
- We have a forest and trails that link to Pine Hill Park in Rutland. Allows us to partner with Rutland to do recreational things.
- Recreational opportunities, beaver pond, hiking biking.
- Soccer programs, youth sports programs.
- People are nice here.
- Pretty, scenic.
- Historic architecture.
- Good churches, they look nice and are nice to go to.
- History of Proctor with VT marble company right from the beginning. At one time had the world's largest quarry. Rich history.
- Sidewalks all through town, almost always feel safe.
- Thriving daycare and travel care center in town.
- Wilson Castle – it's a tourist attraction.
- Diversity, people from other countries and backgrounds.
- Affordable housing for the most part.
- Level of people willing to volunteer to make things happen for the town: soccer league, youth league, etc. People volunteer and are willing to step up and do their time.
- H.A.M.M.S. Farm has a CSA and sells blueberries, pork, eggs, veggies, pies, etc.
- Community garden.

Challenges

- We don't have many businesses to help combat the cost of education and taxes – only a handful of tax paying businesses. We do have large spaces available for purchase or rent that businesses could move into.
- Spotty Wi-Fi.
- Spotty cell reception is a challenge (or it's an asset depending on how you look at it!).
- Since we're a quiet community, it's hard to draw businesses here. Proctor is not on a direct route where people drive through. People have to have a reason to come here.
- Infrastructure problems. Water/sewer needs work, bridges need help, road maintenance.
- A number of projects in the hopper which presents a financial challenge in the face of limited tax infrastructure. There are significant physical challenges that make it difficult – mountains on both sides, river through the center, limited land to develop in terms of additional tax base for businesses or housing.
- In process of a change in our education system. Schools will exist under different structure. Have to watch out for the future since the state wants consolidation.
- Need to attract more young families if we want to keep schools open.
- Over past 15 years an overall decline in enrollments.
- Need more housing for young families.
- People are having fewer kids these days.
- Small rental population, lots of people own their properties and aren't moving out with fresh families moving in.
- Property taxes are high as they are everywhere.
- Drug issue is trickling in.
- When Proctor controlled its own power generation, it was reliable. Now GMP controls it and prices are higher.
- Rising utility costs and taxes mean it's hard for businesses to make a profit.
- Volunteers are stretched, small pool of volunteers.
- Need more volunteers for the events committee. "Our Yard" group does beautification, Christmas tree in the gazebo. Needs more volunteers.
- Water quality is an issue.
- Environmental byproducts from infrastructure not up to date. Browns act, waste sites from Proctor Marble not yet mitigated, carcinogenics in the town are a priority for remediation.
- Need more people involved in town that know what's going on.

Action Ideas

- Advance cell phone and Internet connection; need service that is reliable.
- Market Proctor as a place to live, visit, and do business. Market the industrial buildings as spaces that could be filled by businesses. Proctor is a great place to live and do business. Just passed tax stabilization law.
 - Bicyclists tours that go through town
 - Tourism with people that come to the Marble Museum and trail.
 - Branding and social media presence. The Memorial Day parade is so charming. If we marketed it better it may attract young families here.
 - How to differentiate yourself from other towns, how to celebrate all the positive things.
 - Market the school to attract students from other towns.
- Build Community
 - Develop survey for people in town to list their strengths.
 - Get young people involved. Kids need an incentive to buy into it. Town scholarship as incentive to get kids to participate.
 - Utilize library sign with quaint messages. Build positive messages regularly.
- Improve, Expand & Market Proctor Trails. Develop a trail committee: Pittsford trails, figure out how to connect those with those we have and with Rutland. Creative problem solving might be able to solve sidewalk problem at same time. Beautification. Carriage trail is the Proctor side of Pine Hill Park. Need a dog park. Connection to the water that runs through town.
- Redevelop historic buildings and other potential space for development. We have large spaces available for purchase or rent that we need to fill with active businesses. Come up with incentives for people that want to buy or redevelop the buildings. Grants to help with fixes. The Marble building as an affordable housing opportunity.
- Town sustainability committee.
 - Green Mountain College in Poultney right down the road. It's #1 in the country for sustainability. Could have students as interns.

Principles of action

- Partner with Pittsford, Rutland Town, West Rutland.
- Engage youth: Try to get high school students involved. They have a community service requirement. If high school students have opportunity to do service through school and in town that would be great.
- Build volunteerism.
- Embrace change.
- Get grantwriting capacity.

Other ideas

- Skating rink facility could be used for other things in the off season – utilize it rather than having it sit there for large parts of the year. Snack bar for baseball games, could bring in income, kids from high school could run it.
- Infrastructure needs to be addressed. Town is making strides, done water and sewer work. A lot to be done.
- Become more environmentally progressive. School has done a lot, with solar for example, but the town hasn't embraced it. As a community need to be more receptive to it.
- Identify how we can be a sustainable community. Look at what are our natural assets are and show why a visitor would want to come here. Walking tour, historic buildings, etc.
- Could kayak on our river, but town voted against lake access.
- Identify where the town is going and promote the assets we have. Identify shared our values and what we want for the future of our town. The vision becomes part of every action that happens afterwards. People can articulate the direction we're going. It takes time, good leadership.
- More grantwriting. Need new sidewalks. West Rutland did it. We're a walking community, don't have buses for our students.
- Had a grant to do a scoping study. Carriage Trail to Marble Bridge grant didn't get awarded. Saw is as the the town doing a maintenance project on its existing sidewalks, but grantors are looking for new facilities. If we submit a grant this year, will be from Park to Beaver Pond will be a new trail. Sidewalks are already connecting from Carriage Trail to the park.
- Expand the tax base. In order to support the initiatives, need tax base. So need to encourage businesses to be here.

V. Proctor's Future Participants

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