

ReNewport Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 180 Newport residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on December 13 2017

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

Public Transportation

Visiting Team: Tom Berry, Ted Brady, Jon Copans (scribe), Paul Costello, Gary Holloway, Dave Pelletier, Nick Richardson, Katherine Sims (scribe), Dave Snedeker, George Twigg, Kevin Wiberg

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There are local buses.
- The roads are plowed well.
- RCT gets people to the doctors with a free shuttle service every 1-2 hours, a van to Burlington twice a month, a handicap equipped vans, and has new app to see and call for rides for the general public with fee for service.
- We have limited taxi service.
- There is a train (but no passenger service).
- Airport.
- Newport is on the highway corridor.
- Van pooling is available (ex. bringing employees to Jay Peak).
- Informal friend networks help with ride sharing.
- School buses are an asset.
- Students walk to school via the safe routes to school hospital initiative.
- There is a mobile bike rack and bus shelters.
- We have a bike path and designated bike lane.
- The bike path is used in winter for x-country skiing.
- Snow machines.
- We did have the Northern Star tour boat.
- Jay Peak sends a shuttle bus to Newport once a week.
- Jay peak picks up guests in Montreal and Burlington.
- Transportation studies have been conducted by NVDA.

What are the Challenges?

- Cabs cost \$90 to go to Burlington. It's too much.
- No greyhound service.
- We used to have passenger rail service.
- The customs process is a cumbersome barrier for airport and boating.
- If you don't get your timing right and miss the last RCT bus you can get stuck somewhere.
- There is a lack of funding and lack of people to support services.
- We lack coordination for van pooling for commuters driving to Waterbury or Montpelier or St. Johnsbury.
- There is a geographic challenge as all of the surrounding towns are far away and so small.
- The idea of the border is intimidating, especially if you're trying to bring stuff back.
- There are barriers to enhanced drivers license for people that want to travel north.
- Wait times at border can be a barrier (esp. on the holidays).
- Snow plowing on sidewalks into huge walls.
- Cross walks aren't as safe as they could be and lighting at night is very bad and very dangerous.
- There is only one way through town. Traffic can get backed up at certain times.
- Lack of downtown parking.
- Lack of funding for transportation studies projects.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need buses that serve not only the immediate area, but also connect Newport to non-local destinations (like Burlington).
- We need to connect to longer haul transportation.
- Create a commuter train from Newport to White River.
- We should have a transportation hub downtown with a railroad and bus station all together in one place.
- We need to develop new technology to get rides and to connect to RCT and Uber.
- Ride share or van pooling to move people to Waterbury, Montpelier, or St. J
- More attention and funding should be focused on public transportation.
- We should put in a roundabout at little g's and cow palace.
- Ask Walmart to fund RCT busing from downtown to Walmart.
- Cultivate a stronger connection to Sherbrooke.
- Implement Complete Streets principals in Newport.
- Build out scenic driving tours.
- Put up signs in French to help visitors get around.
- Work to resolve customs challenges to support airport and boating on the lake.
- Improve the lighting on Main Street for cross walks.
- Improve signage at the dock about "know before you go" information for customs and distribute information proactively.

- Improve the lights downtown.
- Improve signage for the bike trail and other transportation assets.
- Create a place for people from Montreal to load their cars onto a train and go to Florida.
- Get MBI trash trucks to use train.
- Develop more bike rentals and boat rental options and guided tours.
- Install an EV charging station for Newport.
- Extend the bike network.
- Build a map of bike and other trails.
- Tie into VAST trail network and ATV network.
- Create a taxi or RCT resource for new years and after hours service.
- Develop biking programs for school kids.
- We should have a designated biking route to connect Newport and Derby and Jay.
- Newport should have a bike event to attract folks to the area.
- Strengthen connections to Jay peak guests and develop a regular shuttle service.
- Improve access to the water for boating and kayaks (ex. Take over ownership from state of access point) reach out to Siskin Coutts or Memphremagog watershed association.
- Repair dock facilities and fencing.
- Allow charter or small carrier service to the airport.
- Utilize the waterfront to its full potential.
- Create parking spaces for boats for a nominal fee like Magog.
- We need more resources and access on South Bay.
- We should have a seaplane dock and rides.
- We could do drag racing at the airport.
- Implement 1-day free ridership day on RCT for folks to experience.
- Explore models of public private investment. For example, develop the Renaissance Block with a two-tier parking garage. A developer could then add stories on top, reducing the overall cost of development.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- NVDA can help look into the existing transportation studies and pull out the ideas that relate to this work. We would also be willing to help look into the dock to help find funding for the repairs at the dock. We can help with the customs and border at water and airport and help connect to the outdoor center for rowing programs.
- RCT is a huge asset in what they offer the community. But it seems that there needs to also be connection to other areas for more frequent access and long range trips as well as a need for more access like bike and kayak rentals to enjoy the natural resources. There is funding coming from the VW Settlement funds that may be able to help address the EV charging idea.
- There are some exciting ideas here to connect transportation with health and community development. For example, the waterfront as a “go to” destination. It’s great to be thinking out of the box around transportation.
- You have great assets and are ramping up around getting workers to jobs, health care appointments etc. things are in place but there is a need for more communication about them. Maybe a comprehensive assessment is needed around the downtown to review current access and opportunities.
- I was excited by the opportunity around bike transportation. VLT is working on a new extension on Bluff side to connect to the existing bike path. There is a nice familiarity in the conversation – people know each other and there is a lot of depth in conversation. What is the organizing capacity and who’s going to take it to the next level?
- It is great to see NVDA offering to help with waterfront and Tom Berry saying Federal resources will follow if there is a coherent strategy. How do you get city council activated? You could build a public transportation committee to build more ridership and market resources. How do you get a link bus going? How get energy from the public to move the lake opportunity forward?
- You have a diversity of existing resources – RCT, bike path, bike racks, safe routes to school, airport, van pools, waterfront, interstate, mountains, cohesive walkable downtown. You have a great location! The connection to Jay could be valuable and seems similar to challenges/opportunities faced in Killington. Maybe there is a chance for a peer exchange to learn more.
- Magog could also be a peer resources to discover what works and doesn’t work.

Downtown

Visiting Team: Tom Berry, Ted Brady, Paul Costello (facilitator), Gary Holloway, Dave Pelletier, Katherine Sims, Nick Richardson, Dave Snedeker, George Twigg, Kevin Wiberg (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- It is great to ride bike with kids to go downtown. Access to downtown is good on bikes.
- We have a wonderful library.
- Proximity to lake is an asset.
- Newport has at least 6 restaurants.
- It’s not Burlington.
- There are Pickle ball games 2-4 times each week with 12 to 24 adults.
- Social services are in walking distance.
- We have natural beauty - forest, streams, mountains and the lake.
- The hole in the ground is an asset. It is an opportunity for growth.
- Sports are held in memorial park.
- The State building has nice public restrooms.
- There is a nice photographic history in state building.
- There are about 40 Airbnb offerings in the area.
- Local churches are socially aware.

- We have an exceptional parks and rec department.
- We have municipal services downtown.
- A fine fire department.
- Walkability of the downtown.
- Wednesdays on the waterfront.
- The RV Park is full all summer.
- The hospital is award winning. We have a strong medical community.
- Newport has CCV, Northcountry Career Center, and adult learning services.
- We have a nice Farmers market by Gardeners Park.
- Bike path.
- Great golf course.
- Schools are really good.
- Location to the border.
- RTC.
- We are the best kept secret in Vermont.
- The waterfront is a drawing card.
- The People are friendly. People wave at each other.

- Amazing fireworks.
- Great newly improved airport.
- Beautiful Architecture and nice buildings.
- The Gateway Center.
- The Board walk gazebo.
- Jazz festival.
- The Northern Star boat.
- Tim and Doug's ice cream.
- A strong arts community.
- The Land Trust buying the farm for redevelopment.
- The Poulin Grain complex maintains a connection to the ag community.
- The Railroad.
- We have a good movie theater.
- MAC art center.
- Annual events, like the car show in August.
- We have a rich history and heritage. There is no place like Newport.

What are the Challenges?

- There has been a decline in the growth of Newport.
- The more Jay Peak grows the less visitors come to downtown Newport.
- We want to draw tourists to Newport.
- We are a designated downtown, but the downtown organization needs to build capacity.
- Nobody can get here. There is no bus or train service out of here.
- Parking is an issue.
- Large retail stores are a national concern.
- Internet shopping and buying online pose challenges to small downtown retail.
- There is only one main road through town which creates traffic challenges. The Maplefields corner is scary.
- Little Gs parking lot can be dangerous to exit at peak traffic hours.
- It can be hard to find a nice place to stay downtown.
- There is no large hotel or conference place.
- The hole in the ground should be the state building with a parking garage.

- The City is built with its backside oriented to the lake.
- The Railroad limits access to the lake.
- Traffic through the city. Not a lot of room for increasing the road network.
- Without parking spaces people won't stop.
- We don't have economic drivers to attract national chains downtown
- People won't pay the prices retailers need to thrive.
- There is a Lack of symmetry between Newport and Derby. We need a more regional strategy and more Newport/Derby collaboration.
- Lack of trees and greenery in the downtown.
- Proximity to Canada can be a challenge. We need to make it simpler to cross the border.
- Size of parking spaces.
- Lack of events in the downtown.
- Walking to visit is only feasible 4 months out of the year.
- We lack park benches.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Develop a large dance hall.
- Hold more events downtown.
- Lower the speed limit on Main Street to 15 mph for pedestrian safety.
- Advertise Newport's assets more.
- Install a speed bump to calm traffic at the top of Main and Central Streets.
- Develop interest in home grocery delivery work with VISTA.
- Attract small boutique restaurants.
- Boost artisan activities. Create a central location where you have multiple shared studio spaces.
- Host craft brewery tours. Build the next fabulous Heady Topper for Newport – a unique product.
- Bring people down from Jay.

- A lot of businesses are closed on Sundays
- These are all great projects for a robust downtown organization.
- Get brewery tours to stop downtown.
- Install a downtown skating rink.
- The block after Needleman's needs revitalization. This could be a possible shared space for artisans.
- The Tasting Center is at the Hub of Main Street – this could be a possibility for artisans.
- The old jail and holding cell could be an opportunity for brewery development. It is an historic structure.
- The old Newport Plastics building is being considered as a mixed use space.
- Gardner Park is underutilized in the winter.

- Host a Christmas market at the park with artisans, food, music, skating, and a bonfire.
- Hold a Lakefront night walk.
- Develop a community events group.
- Develop a YMCA type of organization with a pool, stage, gym, etc. It could be located where the hole in the ground is.
- Create a railroad museum with a couple of locomotives.
- Utilize the history of rum running on the lake.
- Open a Bowling alley to bring families out.
- Develop a Fall foliage train along the shoreline.
- Install a sign, maybe by the Walmart, that says “historic waterfront Newport this way”.
- We need to draw kids downtown. Get kids more involved in the planning and taking pride in our town.
- Develop a theater and performance space.
- Host an American Idol contest.
- We need a performance venue for 800 to 1000 seats.
- Encourage Young Newporters to explore the world and return with their young friends.
- Develop recreation programs for young kids.
- Take advantage of snow machiners, boaters, bikers, xc skiers, etc. Newport is a dynamic center of the NEK.
- Create more slips and dock space.
- Support the hospital and health services.
- Work together with surrounding communities for shared success.
- Revitalize the North Country Chamber.
- Develop a presence on Bluffside for a UVM satellite campus, forestry, water resources, alternative energy, connecting with the natural working space.
- Make the bluffs a history and science center.
- Build strategy to be intentionally Family Friendly and age friendly.
- Create groups made by kids for kids. Give youth a place to make and sell their own products.
- Build a hotel on the lake with a small conference center.
- Install an electric vehicle powering station.
- Acquire City ownership of boardwalk, waterfront and gazebo.
- City ownership could result in 500K to 600K in deferred maintenance and repair.
- Improve internet Wi-Fi and better connectivity. Install public Wi-Fi downtown.
- Install welcoming signs around town and in stores for our Franco-Canadian visitors.
- Newport could be a nice wedding destination.
- Develop an arcade area for kids as part of the hotel and conference center.
- Review the hotel feasibility study.
- Work with media to share something positive to talk about for Newport.
- Latitude 45 places have more participation.
- Brattleboro could be a model for redeveloping the hole.
- We need measured, incremental growth in redeveloping the hole.
- \$1M worth of asbestos removal was completed at the Hole. This is an opportunity to attract a developer.
- Plan downtown events that attract people who wouldn't otherwise come to downtown. This brings in dollars and supports all the small businesses in the downtown. We should be a destination location and a four-season event destination. The community needs to be supportive.
- Find opportunities to have places face forward toward the lake.
- Host masters competitions (swimming, etc.).
- Focus on the asset of the south bay. It is a bird flyway. It should be more accessible for kayaking, canoeing, and birding.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The community has a lot of assets. The desire to see more events downtown could support a hotel over time. There seems to be a real need right now to staff downtown and chamber organizations that are currently leaderless.
- It seems important in Newport to focus on maximizing community assets. There was a common theme around needing to have someone do what's being said. Engaging new volunteers and energy will be important.
- It seems that there needs to be a strategic and coordinated vision for Newport. Events is an emerging themes as well as having the right physical space to draw people. NEK Collaborative can help facilitate and support the work forward.
- There is a lot of pride and deep connection to the Newport community in the room. I was hearing a lot in this discussion about turning to the lake in a bunch of different ways. St. Alban's redevelopment could be a model for next steps in Newport.
- Sell what you have. There are amazing assets in place and an opportunity to build on your assets and your natural and unique advantages, but more capacity and more engagement may be required. Identify and build the driving group of local engagement. Success breeds success.
- There are great opportunities that require little capital but require people power. Low capital people driven events can build momentum and attract capital.
- Draw a critical mass to assets you have. One asset is your World class blue ribbon fishery!

Economic Development

Visiting Team: Tom Berry, Ted Brady (facilitator), Jon Copans, Paul Costello, Gary Holloway, Dave Pelletier, Nick Richardson, Katherine Sims, Dave Snedeker, George Twigg, Kevin Wiberg (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Available waste water allocation.
- We have career and technical education for students and adults.
- Plenty of space to build if people want to come.
- People in the city who know wealthy business owners.
- The people are hardworking and family centered and caring.
- People do whatever it takes to make a living.
- The lake.
- We have a tax stabilization policy.
- Infrastructure.
- Newly improved airport.
- Golf course.
- We are a natural crossroads and market town.
- Access to an international border.
- VELCO has some of the lowest industrial electric rates.
- Fantastic volunteers who put on some incredible events. We host international swimming events that go all the way up to Magog in both the summer and winter.
- The summer music festival.
- We have a lady who cleans the streets for free.
- Our Businesses are great.
- Columbia forest products.
- Poulin Grain.
- The hospital.
- Poulin Lumber.
- Ethan Allen (in Orleans).
- Proximity to the interstate.
- We have Rail lines from Canada and from the south.
- Well paid federal jobs at the border crossing.
- Department of Health and County Court employees.
- Our schools. The High School and elementary schools are award winning. We have creative inspiring teachers.
- CCV is located downtown.
- Our financial institutions including Community Bank and Passumpsic Bank.
- Wireless match funding low cost high speed internet. Access hosted by the United Church.
- Promise Community child care hosted by the United Church.
- We have long-standing businesses such as the funeral home.
- The exchange rate is a challenge to attract Canadian businesses.
- We have ski areas, outdoor recreation, and hiking.
- We have several excellent restaurants.
- Retirees.
- We are the only city in state designated as age friendly by AARP.
- We have a nice bike path that is being extended.
- Good city services.
- Natural wildlife refuge.
- We have good fishing opportunities.
- Newport is a designated downtown.
- Prouty Beach.
- The Gateway Center.

What are the Challenges?

- High taxes.
- Population loss.
- We are losing our youth.
- Parking is a problem.
- Losing the Scott property was a loss of developable lakefront property.
- Preserving natural resources are critical to our financial future.
- The NEK is becoming the bread basket due to Climate Change.
- Community vision is a challenge.
- Prouty beach water quality is not great and the location is not the best.
- Bike path access is still a problem. There are no good places to park.
- Employers are challenged to find qualified workforce.
- Underemployment.
- Low wages.
- It is challenging to find access to good benefits, or even benefits at all.
- The opiate problem that is not being adequately addressed. Potential employees can't pass drug tests.
- Illegal immigrants are working on farms and sending their earnings out of the country.
- The State permitting process through ACT 250 can be onerous and time consuming.
- Being remote and rural makes it a challenge to attract investors.
- We don't have a cohesive plan or vision for economic development.
- There is a culture here that "It's somebody else's job to do economic development."
- Lack of affordable and accessible child care.
- There is a tension between economic development and protection of our natural resources.
- The border and federal border policy. The border gets in the way.
- Customs won't serve the airport which is challenging.
- We have a lot of empty buildings. And The Hole in the ground.
- Loss of Scott Farm.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Scott Farm could be a better location for a community beach.
- We can all do better together.
- There is a lot of potential to attract small entrepreneurs.
- We need jobs and people that have and will spend money.
- We need to support our small businesses and bring an infusion of technology up here to Newport.
- Develop a makers space.
- Open a ReStore.
- Build a shared garage so that mechanics can share computers.
- Build a shared repair service spaces.
- Develop an incubator space.
- Remove impediments to small businesses.
- Create an exemption for small businesses regarding minimum wages.
- Improve access to higher education right in our back yard. People have to travel too far to get trained for a better job. We should improve access to training for better paying technical fields.
- Unite surrounding communities to share service burdens.
- There are exciting community college opportunities on the horizon to support workforce development.
- Create VTC satellite programming in the Newport area with auto technology as a pilot program.
- The School is a community building that can be used after hours for adult education and training.
- A Technical school presence can spur economic development.
- Get the state to maintain the waterfront property that it owns.
- It is a challenge finding adequate nursing and nursing home care.
- There are empty industrial buildings around town that are ready to use.
- Start an airplane mechanics school.
- Move the state office and make the current space more usable for retail tenants.
- Convince the state to lease rather own property.
- Take empty buildings, like the Old Convent Building, and make multi use spaces such as shared space for seniors, shared work space, and connections with career centers.
- Create a shared ambulance service. The Hospital should own it and communities should support it.
- Keep services we have but get our costs down.
- Build a Multi-phase Retirement community with extended care.
- Develop a committee to “knock on doors” and look for businesses to come here. The committee can work to attract businesses to buildings that are empty where rents are low.
- Support the small businesses that are here. Develop from within. We have the assets here.
- Create shared services for small businesses.
- Offer Tax breaks for small businesses.
- Develop a pitch packet that identifies all of our assets to present to potential businesses.
- Create a committee that could listen to ideas.
- Small businesses need more than just local patronage.
- Attract residents from surrounding communities to come and discover Newport.
- People who come here need a place to stay.
- Create Technical center programming around sustainable agriculture and food system jobs. Boost the food system based economy.
- Enhance the use of our waterfront.
- Form committees addressing different sector opportunities.
- Develop something for youth to do that is Entertainment-related.
- Attract tourists from the mountain.
- Challenge assumptions about night life impacts, the use of alternative transport snow machines and ATVs.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Infrastructure is essential. It sounds like buildings and infrastructure are available.
- Difficulty in attracting skilled workforce is a common theme that has come up. That’s a real challenge.
- Recruiting new businesses and look to the Quebec market.
- Maker spaces and shared coworking spaces are a great way to boost entrepreneurship and build connections.
- Events for downtown are a way to improve economic development.
- It was great to hear support for boosting local entrepreneurs and businesses.
- People are one the best assets in Newport.
- Attracting more college and career training was a common theme and an idea that stood out in this discussion.
- It is important to create a vision for the community around economic development rather than a scattered shot approach.
- Consolidation of services is an interesting strategy.
- I liked the ideas of shared spaces and equipment for people with certain skills that lack the resources they need to do it on their own. Many communities are looking at ways to build shared spaces and tools/services.
- Newport has some big ticket items, infrastructure empty buildings, in place. Creative thinking is needed to take advantage of these assets and leverage them for the future.
- It may be useful to find out more specifics on why people have left to learn where to focus efforts.
- Newport is a downtown and hub in a rural area – this is a key asset, as well as the ample recreation opportunities.

Health & Wellness

Visiting Team: Phil Fiermonte, Jody Fried, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Pollaidh Major, Karen Mittelman, Nick Richardson, Gus Seelig, Joe Short, Misty Sinsigalli (scribe), Tim Tierney, Philip Tortora, Tracy Zschau

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Memphremagog Ski Touring Association brings more awareness to the area and provides mountain biking, cross country running, and cross country ski trails.
- The Wellness Center serves 12,000 visits a year. It is a non-profit and provides health and wellness services and programs to everyone.
- The lake is an asset. You can kayak, swim, and sail. It provides spectacular views.
- Inspired Yoga has recently opened a school of yoga and will be offering offers and discount with a lot of different businesses and organizations.
- Pride Fitness Performance offers group training as well as ninja kids to inspire the youth towards health and wellness.
- The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps has provided services under local sponsorship from the hospital through the health care share.
- There is a lot of good work going on in the community in prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.
- Jay Peak is an asset to the community.
- The Encore After School Program.
- The NEK Council on Aging offers free programs for seniors.
- There is a good network of sidewalks and walking paths that are going to be extended.
- Green Mountain Farm to School build sustainable gardens and work with local schools to integrate it into the school.
- The Summer Meal program as part of Green Mountain Farm to School is an asset.
- The VT Department of Health is looking at the impact of toxic stress on health and future health. It is not just about physical health. Nutrition and mental health are all connected.
- There is a Diabetes Prevention Program provided by the hospital.
- Great Recreation Department.
- Kingdom Games.

What are the Challenges?

- Mental Health services are not available. There are not enough providers who can diagnosis and treat.
- Children's Mental Health Services are particularly challenging.
- NEK Human Services is an asset but there is not enough funding to provide the amount of services that are needed.
- Schools need to recognize importance of health and wellness.
- Communication and follow through is a huge challenge.
- We need to build buy in from the community. Programs are offered but people don't come. How do you get people to engage and buy-in?
- We lack of funding and capacity for community nutrition education.
- We need parking availability, signage, brochures, and rentals to be able to access the waterfront and the lake.
- We need a community wide mentoring system for youth.
- Opioid challenge and lack of resources to help them.
- We lost our teen center.
- Transportation is a challenge.
- Meals on Wheels needs volunteers to help deliver food.
- We have tremendous facilities and capabilities for those that want to do things, we just need to incorporate more people and get them involved.
- We need more community buy in and city support.
- How do you support the community when poverty is really hard to address since benefits from government are not increasing even as costs everywhere else are increasing?

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We should get more people signed up and active on Front Porch Forum. It would be a good forum to see and share what is going on.
- We should have a full-time coordinator to address communication issues so that the whole community is aware of what our community has to offer.
- We should develop a forum or media space where it could be highlighted what some volunteers are already doing. This may bring to light what others are already doing and may spark others to do more.
- Facebook could be another tool that people are already using and may be a quick and easy way to access those people that aren't reached in other media outlets.
- We should create a community calendar.
- Develop a community mentorship program.
- Conduct a resource inventory to better understand what our resources are before we can connect them.
- Newport City Afterschool Program should partner more with outreach organizations in the community.
- We need more people leading and volunteering in mentoring, mental health and DCF. Capacity is limited.
- Catalogue resources that are available and break them down by category to improve accessibility.
- Increase funding for NEK Human Services to hire at least one pediatric mental health nurse practitioner.
- Start an annual Wellness Week to raise awareness. Everyone can be a part of it.
- Build community buy-in in community as well as local government. Support development of activity all the way through execution.
- Healthy communities are prosperous communities. Health and economic development are not separate.

- Identify and address underlying reasons for these needs and challenges.
- Local businesses could donate money towards buying hats and gloves for local ski programs.
- We need someone to coordinate the needs of kids in local schools so that these needs are met. The Supervisory Union may be able to take the lead.
- We should improve availability of transportation. We could link people so they could ride share and possibly get volunteers to offer rides.
- Build a community pool.
- Advocate at the state level for the community's needs.
- Develop a hotel which may be able have pool and gym facilities open to the public.
- Provide incentives for someone to bring business in.
- Capitalize on the lake by making it accessible for all. Develop and improve access to recreation trails, skating, and rowing.
- Encourage more civic engagement.
- Take a more comprehensive approach to substance abuse prevention. Conduct a systems mapping of every service for the Newport health department district.
- Get more substance abuse care within primary care. Have current location BAART be hub and primary care be spokes.
- Start with parents when getting to the kids.
- Take a more holistic approach to substance abuse versus a prescription to prescription strategy.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are so many assets in Newport, it's just a matter of sharing and marketing those with the community and beyond. It would also be great to include and engage youth in the work ahead.
- Boosting volunteerism seems like a critical task as well as boosting and celebrating the pride of what you have.
- This community is rich in physical and human capital. It seems that communication is an important aspect of the work to build collaboration.
- It felt like there is a growing awareness of what you have. Events can be positive a unifier to show what's possible. Bethel Maine has been working on the same problem and could be a good place to learn from and strategize with. The Tillotson fund is a resource to help providers provide the services that are really needed.
- There was a great deal of passion in this room, but a clear need for coordination and collaboration. Collaboration can impact funding. Collective impact, working toward a common shared goal will allow you to reach out to funders that will help you address underlying issues like poverty. Unite and move forward versus being in silos. Celebrate victories and celebrate yourselves. In St. Johnsbury we have built a committee to develop press releases and celebrate ourselves. People like to be a part of a party as long as the party holders are feeling pride.
- It sounds like there is a real need to connect people to resources and to build access and communication.
- I loved the idea of building community capacity and mentoring from what you already have. Maximize your assets to rebuild the economy.
- The local level and around the dinner table is how you're going to reach low-income individuals.

Arts, Entertainment & the Outdoors

Visiting Team: Jon Copans (facilitator), Phil Fiermonte, Jody Fried, Jenna Koloski, Pollaidh Major (scribe), Karen Mittelman, Nick Richardson, Gus Seelig, Joe Short, Misty Sinsigalli, Tim Tierney, Philip Tortora, Tracy Zschau

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Derby Line International Theatre Company.
- MAC Center for the Arts.
- Talented performers and visual artists living in the community.
- The Choral groups and community orchestra.
- We have a Local dance school.
- We had four Wednesdays on the Waterfront events this past summer using the waterfront as a venue.
- The Newport Jazz Festival was a weeklong festival last held two years ago.
- St. Mark's Church concert series.
- Restaurants welcome performers and host performances.
- Jay Peak hosts live shows.
- The high school theatre.
- We had a Garlic Festival this year.
- Newport has Arts Organizers who appreciate the arts to the extent that they are willing to organize gatherings and events.
- Arts Education at the North Country High School's Arts Academy.
- We have afterschool arts education programing.
- The Memphremagog ski trails is now adding Scott Farm which will be groomed. They will be creating a celebratory event.
- We have a bike path on the lake.
- Kingdom Games includes: swimming, running, biking, winter swim, skating, a marathon and a distance skate to Magog.
- We have VAST trails and are working on access to downtown.
- Fishing.
- Hiking.
- The Newport Country Club Golf Course.
- The Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
- We have a bike path to Canada.
- Gardner Park has ice skating in the winter.
- The lake is an asset.
- Bluff Farm is now owned by the Vermont Land Trust which is working on extending public access through a trail network.
- Eagle Point.
- Prouty Beach.

- We are close to metro centers including: Montreal, Quebec, Sherbrook and Boston.
- The Gateway Center.
- The Yacht Club (Private)/ City docks.
- The airport with hot air balloon rides and small plane capacity.
- Surrounding town have low or no zoning that enables large concerts.
- The United Christian Academy's stage is a venue available for use.
- The Memphremagog Community Maritime group is a non-profit originally organized to save the lake boat "the North Star" but is now looking to expand its mission.
- Visitors to Jay Peak could be an asset if we could figure out how to get them into the community. As the mountain focuses on extending visit time the challenge is to entertain people. The Newport Downtown can play a role in this.
- Newport City Parks and Recreation Department.
- Newport City Kayak rentals.
- We have excellent restaurants.
- The "Newport VT Rocks" Facebook page offers a communication venue.

What are the Challenges?

- Jay is putting in a movie theatre which provides one less reason for visitors to travel into Newport from the mountain.
- It is difficult to draw people to downtown.
- The exchange rate between USD and CAD makes Newport expensive for Canadian tourists.
- We have a weak Chamber of Commerce.
- The Chamber needs to clarify its mission. Does it seek to attract businesses and tourists or support its local base?
- The Chamber is being run by volunteers who are experiencing burn out. Businesses struggle to feel a 'part' of it while they are being asked to support the Chamber and many other local activities.
- Border control is unwelcoming, making it difficult for French speakers and inefficient which deters Canadian tourists.
- Parking is a challenge downtown.
- There is a perceived lack of downtown parking.
- Lack of public transportation.
- The traffic flow from Main St. into causeway can be backed up.
- The selection of films at the movie cinema isn't comprehensive. It would be great to have more European Movies and other choices.
- There are no places for people to launch, dock, store or moor boats.
- There is no place to rent boats, other than kayaks.
- The City's requirements and regulations make staging public events costly and challenging. For example, the City would not shut off streets for the parade. The City is not an engaged partner in community events.
- There is a lack of awareness of all activities.
- It is hard to find Newport businesses online.
- There is a lot of negative press from the EB5 scandal that has led to a tarnished reputation and a branding challenge.
- We lack a forum to build connections between the business community and the community at large.
- How do we connect people to Newport VT Rocks Facebook group?
- It is hard for new people in the community to tap into the arts scene. There needs to be more diversity of genres.
- It is H=hard to find affordable performance spaces. There are some, but it is hard to find winter venues.
- There is a lack of bigger venues, even for outdoor events.
- There are not a lot of local places to ask for resources. Where can we look outside or for a sustainable source?
- There is limited funding for festivals. The Jazz Festival was funded by its founders which was not sustainable.
- Volunteers experience burnout and there is a small pool of volunteers available.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Create a marketing committee.
- Host wintertime events.
- The city should allow busker permits to liven downtown streets.
- Hire an Arts and Entertainment Coordinator to bring in larger events to Newport.
- Build ties between community and Newport United Christian Academy.
- Create a Link to Newport VT Rocks on Jay Peak's community page.
- Host an Arts on Main event. Close streets occasionally for arts events.
- Establish an Escape Room as a local attraction, like the one in Littleton, NH or Burlington.
- Show European films.
- Use North Country High as a venue, there is plenty of parking.
- Host larger, more diverse events at Scott Farm.
- Create a local festival that will help brand the town and attract visitors year after year.
- Maintain momentum from arts events into the winter.
- Identify funding sources to support community events.
- Ensure events are aligned with other, well known events. For example, the Jazz Festival would fall right before the Montreal Jazz Festival.
- Use Catamount Art's mobile stage to host performances.
- Improve the relationship between arts community and city.
- Use NEK Travel and Tourism's website to increase discoverability of Newport events and businesses.
- Develop a one-stop-shop for information on activities
- Restart the shuttle from Jay to downtown Newport. Coordinate with Newport businesses to ensure that they are open when the shuttle arrives.
- Establish ATV and Snowmobile rentals.

- Use the city website to list resources, have the city host a “Things to do” page.
- Bring Scott Farm into active use— VLT bought the farm which is the viewshed for the city. VLT is looking to build a bridge and

bike path to link the downtown, the beach, the bluff and the border. Encourage community input into the property.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Look to the example of Burke where the community shared a passion and that attracted visitors and new residents. One thing Burke did was to create a destination development committee. Newport has amenities and facilities for festivals. The Lake is an amazing asset, just needs to be better organized and it will grow.
- Volunteer capacity is a common struggle. How do you get to a point of creativity with recruiting volunteers? Johnson had a concert, they made it community owned and had different groups own it each month and that built the network.
- Focus on digital marketing. Everyone likes arts, entertainment and outdoors. Make sure you amplify it on social media. Create Facebook events for everything that takes place. Click that you are interested or share it, that amplifies the message. Vermont Vacation.com is something to use. If you need help with publicity reach out to the State.
- There are so many assets in Newport. Look at Brattleboro’s Arts Fridays where businesses become art galleries.
- Newport has many physical assets including the lake. The community should focus on how to build the economy and address the lack of capacity. Help the community celebrate itself.
- There is a broad array of things to get excited about. Identify what is at the heart of a core group of people. Drawing people to downtown – look at Bethel Better Blocks as an example.
- The downtown of the future is going to be experiential – good restaurants, tasting centers, artist studios, arts centers, entertainment. Downtown needs to be based in experience. The lake creates experience. Think of the few things you have that are working and build onto those events so you are using existing infrastructure. Build up to peak performance for existing events.
- Newport has a unique combination of entertainment and arts and a unique competitive advantage. Develop things that you want for your community and they will draw people. Lure and fulfillment. That is a challenge – a conversation happening with chambers. Collectively the kingdom has everything. Collaborate for the lure, and then connect to the businesses that do the fulfillment.
- It would be so great to solve the coordination problem with the busses from Jay Peak. That feels like a great opportunity. Catamount Arts also needs a local partner for the mobile stage. Newport could unify and serve as that partner.

Tourism & Marketing

Visiting Team: Phil Fiermonte, Jody Fried, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Pollaidh Major (scribe), Karen Mittelman, Nick Richardson, Gus Seelig, Joe Short, Misty Sinsigalli, Tim Tierney, Philip Tortora, Tracy Zschau

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The lake is an asset and a draw.
- The boardwalk.
- We are a rural area. Customers like Newport’s lake, rurality and geographical location.
- We are a beautiful natural area with rivers and ponds and lakes.
- We are a dream area for photography.
- We have a beautiful agricultural landscape.
- Proximity to the Canadian Border.
- I-91 makes the town easy to access.
- Proximity to the Canadian market.
- We have a dam with a hydroplane and fish ladder.
- Kingdom Games.
- The bike path that goes through town and up to Canada.
- Fishing, boating, skiing, snowmobiling, skating.
- There is a history trail through town that is in French and English and includes a museum.
- Hiking.
- Kayaking.
- This is a great motorcycle riding area.
- Authentic attractions such as swimming holes.
- Tour boats on the lake.
- Sleigh Rides.
- Geocaching is fun and it’s a draw for many.
- We have excellent restaurants. Particularly the Thai restaurant is fantastic.
- The Tasting Center.
- We have a Summer Farmers’ Market twice a week.
- Beautiful downtown architecture.
- The hole is a downtown asset. One Airbnb feels they are successful because people can see the town. It has improved the street and provides a point of curiosity.
- CCV.
- The Library.
- Jay Peak.
- North Country High School.
- City Parks and Recreation Department.
- Coventry Farm Alpacas.
- The Hospital.
- The airport.

What are the Challenges?

- There are not enough jobs in the area.
- It is hard for youth to return after college and settle in Newport.
- Newport's has a reputation as low-income which creates an image challenge.
- The Canadian border cuts down on transportation and markets. We need to coordinate with the border patrol to ensure that French speakers can cross and feel welcome.
- Events are not always well marketed.
- We have no local activities pamphlet.
- Jay Peak is becoming self-sustaining. It is hard to draw people off the mountain.
- There is a hole in the middle of Newport.
- We lack a strong chamber of commerce or downtown organization.
- Newport needs a place to go out dancing and see music.
- We need lifestyle amenities and something for people to do.
- The city needs leadership to help with filling the hole.
- We have a limited bed base for tourists.
- We need a hotel on the lake.
- The correctional facility nearby is a challenge.
- The dump. We have all the garbage from the state and other states.
- There is a perception that the water at Prouty Beach isn't clean enough to swim in.
- Water quality is an issue.
- We need to de-weed and clean the beach.
- No boat rental company.
- The State would not let vendors set up at Wednesdays on the Water because it is on state property.
- Events, like the Penguin Plunge, have been cancelled.
- The airport has a restaurant, meals and dancing, but the business failed.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- The director of the Vermont border patrol is a native Vermonter – Greg Star. We should reach out to him and establish an orientation for new patrol agents and border guards as they come in. There is continuous turn-over of border officials and we should build an ongoing connection with border guard professionals.
- Newport should direct the Walmart settlement money towards marketing and events. How can we use this money so in six years from now Newport is vibrant enough to survive a Walmart?
- Coordinate with Jay to launch events that work in tandem with their events.
- Promote and market for ways to draw people.
- Reinvigorate the Chamber of Commerce.
- Build support for a Chamber among Local businesses. Businesses should step up and help themselves. Build a culture of investment in marketing.
- Have a regional Chamber of Commerce that includes Jay and the area.
- Create a list of assets.
- Attract businesses that will provide more lodging.
- The City and Renaissance Corp will hire a marketing person. We need to work with them to highlight the city.
- Focus on the things that work – like Wednesdays on the Waterfront.
- Add to successful events. Tackle barriers to Wednesday on the Waterfront such as negotiating for the State to allow vendors.
- Create a community culture of events. Create a culture in the city of removing barriers for the events.
- Bring back the penguin plunge.
- Publicize the results of lake water tests so people know that it is safe to swim in the lake.
- Identify sources of funding for concerts and events.
- Build community engagement around Scott Farm and the bike path. The Scott Farm is the Key to the Kingdom – maybe turn it into a Billings Farm. Why do people want to come to NEK? The Kingdom's agrarian heritage is part of its allure.
- Establish a living museum at Scott Farm.
- Provide input to the Land Trust around what the community envisions for the Scott Farm.
- There is a non-profit developed around the tour boat on the Lake. Make it an educational boat and something for the community. There is a group on 16 people and there is momentum.
- Have some education about what marketing budgets look like. Bring in a marketing consultant. Improve the scope and scale of marketing Newport.
- Create a committee on marketing Newport.
- Align Newport's marketing plan with the State's efforts.
- Market towards the students in Newport. They need to know that there is a reason to come back.
- Create business connections with students in the school system. Market jobs that will be available.
- Build a sled hill in Newport and revitalize Gardener Park.
- Draw out of the community an impression of its own brand. Reestablish the brand, generate local buy-in and hire a dynamic individual who can reach out to the businesses.
- Market Newport to Newport's next generation. Link students to businesses so they understand the opportunities available to them in Newport.
- Identify the visual representation of our brand.
- Build on the existing brand of "Newport, Genuine by Nature; Newport, Fresh by Nature, Newport, Active by Nature."
- Support young vision.
- Create a school for beer or maple syrup – think King Arthur Flour. Hospitality is not a natural part of this culture. The career center teaches hospitality because they have never experienced it.
- Develop hospitality classes for businesses.
- Create a Newport brochure to share at the Vermont Welcome Centers.
- The Lake was used for rum-running. We should celebrate Newport's heritage.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Newport has a large number of assets. There is an ongoing discussion around the community's capacity to capitalize on those assets and how to tie together assets so there is a multiplier effect. There are a huge number of people who really care about this community and that is a great asset that you can build on.
- There seems to be a lack of leadership in terms of developing a way forward. Newport has these assets but needs leadership to move the community forward in a positive way. Workforce development is key. You can connect with the Department of Labor and VTC. The Border is also important. Feel free to reach out to your congressional delegation if this continues to be a problem.
- Define your brand and character based on existing assets – the lake, the place, the people at the waterfront music events. Take these assets, build on them and amplify them. Those communities that people return to are those that are most genuine. Cross promotion could be helpful merge skiing, tourism, arts, recreation and merging them together for cross promotion.
- There are 11 chambers in the kingdom many of which are facing same challenge. Look at the Destination Organizational model. The Northeast Kingdom Marketing group is an opportunity for Newport. Focus on marketing to Newport alums. Advertise jobs to kids who have left, capitalize on nostalgia.
- A town in Maine used their alums to market elsewhere. There is heritage here, highlight French Canadian culture to create a tie across the border.
- Newport has many assets. Outdoor recreation is a 2 billion dollar industry in Vermont and Newport could be a larger part of that with a little investment. Food and agro-tourism has increased as well. Tie in the food culture, capitalize on the restaurants. Create some food buzz. Free social media marketing. Use social media to market at a low cost. Connect with the Department of Tourism and Marketing.

Housing

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Katie Buckley, Liz Gamache, Martin Hahn, Trisha Ingalls, Suzanne Legare Belcher, Seth Leonard (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Affordable housing does exist here, and the units are actually affordable.
- There are empty buildings and properties that could be redeveloped.
- Physical and natural assets make Newport a nice place to live.
- There are great schools and a hospital.
- We have access to hiking and ski trails.
- Newport is a walkable community with a grocery store, post office, stores, and other amenities.
- Mass transit (RTC).
- Increased entertainment options.
- Restaurants in downtown.
- The State office building.
- The Library is providing free internet.
- CCV makes this an attractive place to live.
- Rural Edge has a homeownership center that helps provide education and assistance around homeownership.
- Rental housing and affordable units are available.
- Not too many blighted properties.

What are the Challenges?

- Single family housing stock availability is limited.
- Income-based rental assistance is difficult to wait for.
- 1-2 bedroom units are available, but you have to wait longer for more bedrooms.
- There are no independent living facilities that are market rate within walking distance of amenities in the downtown.
- Houses for sale have longer market turnaround times.
- Large houses that are easier to "chop up" into multi-family. Existing housing stock does not support modern household trends
- Local incomes do not support housing costs for rental or ownership.
- There is an informal/family connection that leads many to housing. Others can be left out of the loop.
- Weather is a challenge. Weatherization is expensive and it costs a lot to heat and cool older housing stock.
- Property Taxes continue to increase.
- Properties are not up to code which is difficult for lending agencies.
- Units that do not allow pets. This is important to our aging population.
- Housing Support services are not centralized. You have to physically pick up forms from housing providers and supportive housing services.
- There are accessibility issues with current housing stock, including market rentals.
- "Working Poor" cannot cover security deposits.
- State and Federal Programs don't neatly fit our needs. There is a sentiment that Newport is being ignored by programs that create new housing opportunities.
- There are no new buildings. We are having to work with existing stock.
- Tax rate and water/sewer costs are deterrents.
- How do we identify potential development investors? Developers who want to invest in our community.
- There are people who won't move here because of crime issues.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Focus on a blend of both affordable and market housing.
- Ensure NEKCA and other agencies coordinate collection points of resources, forms, and information.
- We should ensure cross pollination of local organizations and agencies. Convene housing partners and entities like the hospital, businesses, and others.
- Utilize existing resources like HomeShare.
- Demolish homes that are too expensive to fix.
- Utilize zoning to attract investment.
- Engage Historic Preservation issues to allow for demo and restoration.
- Ensure designated downtown benefits and access to those financial tools are publicized and increase awareness.
- Reach out to communities that have cultivated private market investment.
- Start a TIF district to invest public investment in infrastructure to reduce costs for making development feasible.
- Create housing focused committee or commission.
- Engage VT State Housing Authority on additional vouchers.
- Streamline access to affordable housing through consolidation of housing resources, applications, information, etc.
- Differentiate between (a)ffordable housing and (A)ffordable housing. What is the definition of affordable housing desired in Newport? Do we want Workforce housing?
- Develop local financial tools for housing development.
- Creative housing solutions around co-housing, collaborative housing, and “outside the box” housing.
- Bring the community together to make decisions around the type of housing opportunities that are needed and feasibility.
- Try to broaden the tax base.
- Increase local community funding to support down payments, housing trust fund, home improvement fund, rental deposits.
- Actively market and educate residents around existing resources for homebuyers and home repairs.
- Improve access to financial literacy, rental tenet education, and homebuyer education.
- Connect with Habitat for Humanity
- Identify buildings that “need to be addressed” for redevelopment or development.
- Utilize planning resources (RPC) or consider a Housing Needs Assessment.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Coordination of resources was a central theme and sounds like a critical step in the work ahead.
- A Housing Commission membership was discussed as potentially having set organizational and community representation slots.
- It sounds like there is an opportunity to build on momentum around TIF and zoning updates.

Caring for Our Children

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Katie Buckley, Liz Gamache, Martin Hahn, Trisha Ingalls, Suzanne Legare Belcher, Seth Leonard (scribe), Reevea Murphy

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have great schools, pre-k programs, and afterschool programs.
- We have a school-based pre-k program.
- There is collaborative leadership across the supervisory union and across the schools. We believe in and work towards continuum of services in a coordinated way.
- We take advantage of the volunteer network and available residents who contribute to and engage with the school.
- Newport afterschool is 5 days a week during school and supports 90 + participants.
- We offer programming 5 weeks during the summer all day.
- There are diverse educational and experiential opportunities.
- We are a part of the race to top/Promise Community program. Investment in childcare opportunities is available to develop high quality childcare.
- We have Regional Prevention Grants for 12-25 year olds addressing substance abuse on lives of residents. Funds, training and education will be provided by the Grant.
- There is a tutorial program that supports students that have any challenges the formal system is not able to focus on.
- Green Mountain Farm to School provides the Lunchbox Truck, which builds connection between food systems and the school.
- The Community genuinely cares. Residents identify when children are not cared for, and also volunteer.
- The Community is paying attention to childcare issues.
- Newport Parks and Recreation offers programming.
- There are offerings for outdoor and non-competitive opportunities.

What are the Challenges?

- There is a lack of access to regulated/licensed child care.
- Parks and Recreation is being scaled back and reducing the programs it offers.
- Some kids “don’t make the team.” How do we address those situations?
- There is a lack of coordination between different school programs and community programs where times don’t align.
- We need support for families in the criminal justice system (re-entry support, parenting skills).

- We need to ensure families are connected to services as they leave prison/criminal justice center.
- Lack of funding for general “citizenry” education resources.
- General lack of service coordination around service providers. Services do not reach families in a coordinated way. Coordination ends up being done by other providers that takes away from their focused work.
- There is no relationship between Corrections and Community Justice Center.
- Service Providers across issues that impact families are difficult to coordinate such as case managers from health, drug abuse, mental health, learning issues.
- There is a high poverty rate and high number of families on free/reduced lunches. Poverty creates a number of challenges.
- We have “Compassion Fatigue”. There is an aggregate need due to poverty/opiate addiction/trauma and mixed with messaging around student:teacher ratio and staffing needs that impact tax rate. It is hard to feel supported.
- Schools are building staffing and capacity and add more people and specialists, but don’t feel like they are achieving the needed outcomes.
- There is a lack of a sense of measureable progress and impact. “How do we change the curve?”
- Health, behavioral, wellness education and initiatives are not being supported at home.
- Limited childcare for non-traditional work schedules.
- Lack of education and focus on issues for younger aged children.
- The opiate issue is negatively impacting children.
- There are concerns about family and child home environment.
- Lack of support and funding for prevention and a need for more education.
- There is a need for a substance abuse and recovery center and/or housing.
- There is a NIMBY attitude where people are not willing to admit there is a community issue and a lack of outreach and education around benefits and impact to community.
- Limited real education about impacts to the community. SAP & SRO play a roll, but we need information in the community.
- We need to identify families that are missing parents due to legal issues.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Coordinate case Management across various issues.
- Develop a comprehensive educational and training program.
- Bring together a team of Subject Matter Experts that provide administration, educational support, and resources around the opiate issue to educate educators and students.
- Try to find success stories.
- Build a stronger community and school resource connection.
- A parent focused investment and approach is important – we can’t just look at kids.
- The Recovery Center is going to add programming for 16-24 year olds and families as well for those struggling with recovery in spring 2018. This is an example of expanding programming capacity and widening the portion of the population treated.
- Develop healthy relationships and internet use.
- Attract parents and community members to hear what is being said to kids so health and well-being information and resources are being reinforced at home. For example, the iPad program where kids could take home a unit for school work, but it required parents to come in and take a safety course around use of the iPad.
- Create common vocabulary around resources around root causes for issues that impact children. Build connections between providers and local communities where the approaches and languages are being reinforced.
- Make science based approaches and childhood development accessible to the general public. Provide parenting education.
- Develop a Community Child Care Center that provides preemptive parenting knowledge and education around what being a parent means.
- Increase access to sex education.
- Implement trauma education for volunteers to prepare for the experience of working with children with trauma.
- Include mentoring in programming that already exists. Use existing extracurricular activity/sports/clubs teams etc. to mentor younger students. Identify strong youth mentors.
- Train the mentors.
- Start Intermural and afterschool sports at the Middle School.
- Start a Mobius mentoring program pilot.
- Voc Rehab is addressing students as young as 8th grade for development of employment and community engagement.
- Include community organizations and faith-based community for sharing programming opportunities. Find ways to get the word out about in a coordinated way.
- Find ways to communicate programming effectively.
- Identify and lift up role models that might not fit the child’s family mold.
- Grow alumni base and connection about examples of success stories from the local community.
- Turn workforce opportunities into “grow your own” community efforts. Professionally successful community members will contribute to the community and be great examples.
- Celebrate positive community successes and promote the successes.
- Expand use of social media and coordinated promotion.
- Celebrate successes outside of typically celebrating sports such as academic success.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There was a lot of “educating” across the room about what programming already exists and what was available. People seemed surprised about what was already offered.
- Coordinated delivery of services seems like a critical goal to work towards.
- Celebrate Local Heroes!
- Creating measurable benchmarks and celebrating each success/step is critical for progress and for celebration.

Connecting Our Community

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Ben Doyle (scribe), Katie Buckley, Liz Gamache, Martin Hahn, Trisha Ingalls, Suzanne Legare Belcher, Seth Leonard, Reeve Murphy

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have music in the summertime. The new summer festival is a big hit.
- The schools are a real asset for connecting people.
- The lake is well-used and it literally connects two countries.
- There are a number of distinct neighborhoods each with it's own character.
- There is human capital—there are a lot of smart people in the community.
- Leadership is very accessible.
- There are good connections between social service providers and police. Newport is participating in an initiative like Project Vision from Rutland.
- There is a common interest in local food.
- Newport Vermont Rocks Facebook page allows people to share positive messages about Newport. It's very widely used as is Front Porch Forum.
- There is a small but very dedicated group of community volunteers. They have led projects like the mural project around the hole.
- The Young professional network is very successful. They recently had an event with over 50 people. Looking to connect with other groups regionally.
- There are a number of professional/fraternal organizations (Lions Club, Shriners, etc.).
- Churches and religious groups are active. There is a local group of pastors that meets regularly.
- The men's league basketball is very popular.
- Longtime residents have connections and history. The sense of identity is very strong.
- The 99 Art Gallery has a popular following. One of its goals is to build community, particularly for vulnerable populations.
- Newport has one of only two curling clubs in Vermont.
- There's a recovery center that provides services for community members and just a place to go to meet people.
- There's a new community engagement specialist starting at Rural Edge.
- There are senior meals sites in town.
- Police and fire stations and the health center work to bring people together.
- There used to be a bowling league (it would be nice to bring that back).
- Maplefields is a central place where people often congregate.

What are the Challenges?

- The community lost the bowling alley which brought people together.
- There are too few places for low-income folks to meet and socialize.
- There is not enough investment in community building or spaces to make it happen.
- Being a young professional is very challenging and isolating. The recently successful convening demonstrates the desire to connect.
- It can be tough to crack the nut of being a part of the community if you're new.
- The rugged individualist approach is too strong. We'd rather build a fire in our woodstoves than meet new people.
- "Building community is a counter culture idea here in Newport."
- It is tough to find out what's happening in the community with no central place for information sharing. There is no mechanism in place to share information about the different groups.
- The chamber isn't really functioning.
- We need more bulletin board space.
- Limited public transportation.
- There is a lot of suspicion of folks in the community because there is a lot of drugs and crime.
- Nothing seems to be moving very fast. Someone who had never been to Newport would be depressed by the hole.
- We don't have connections to money that could make a positive impact in the community.
- We are such a small town that when there are problems people try to avoid each other.
- There is a lack of connection to state organizations. Border communities sometimes fall off the map.
- City government doesn't foster a feeling of trying to build community. There is no support for community building.
- "City government doesn't understand people (they focus on infrastructure)."
- Young people don't feel welcome.
- Politics and class, which are national issues, also influence the local dynamic.
- "If we actually built community, there would be new challenges."
- No one in town government is building community and efforts at Renaissance Corporation have failed.
- The feasibility study for a community center showed that a community center wouldn't work. It would be too challenging to support financially.
- IROC couldn't be sustained.
- The city shuts down events.
- Some east side business worry about events that shutdown community.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Build an information board/kiosk that could share info (99 Gallery is looking into this).
- Increase the kinds of media used to communicate with community.
- Create a physical space, centrally located, where a number of things are happening--a place where activities happen but also can share. It also would be great for tourists and make downtown more vital.
- An electronic kiosk or bulletin board (and electronic ticker tape) could share activities.
- Encourage people to actually talk to each other as opposed to being on the phone.
- Newport Renaissance Corporation and the Chamber could manage a community communication effort.
- Regular potluck suppers could be held (as they were in the past) that could bring people together.
- Host a town gathering before voting (like a positive town meeting).
- Hold more dance events similar to historical events in Newport.
- We need to engage the community around supporting public events.
- The Community Commons project funded by Orton Foundation could be resurrected. It could serve as a listening session for city government.
- Leverage small meetings or events to ensure maximum participation.
- Look into resurrected community center initiative. It could be a physical space where community is built.
- Create a timebank project where people could exchange skills/work. This could help people connect and serve mutual needs (similar to Onion River Exchange in Central Vermont).
- A timebank project would be a great asset for folks with employment challenges who can't be employed fulltime.
- Get the trade programs at the high school and corrections involved in constructing building.
- Increase volunteer opportunities from North Country. It's not mandatory for students to volunteer.
- Challenge people to make more personal connections.
- Community events need more coordination and the city needs to be charged with increasing the importance.
- Create events committee that build events.
- Look to folks who are unemployed and collect unemployment to ask them to volunteer.
- Support Chamber or similar group that could support business community engagement
- Have Rotary look for funding to take over Chamber activities.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- So many great things are happening here. Great success of young professionals and community potlucks. Community service is a graduation requirement in many communities and could be here. I love the idea of the barter economy. Using FPF calendar could be a good way to share events.
- Helping new people in the community could be away to build connection.
- There is a Timebank in Montpelier that you could look at as a model. You could also leverage the Farmers market for community building. The pastors group could be engaged.
- The Public library could be leveraged as a community space and for information sharing. Is there a community newspaper? That could be used to share a lot of information.
- Use your housing community to share resources and information about what's possible.
- A community calendar is a great tool. St. Albans might be able to help share their platform. It is important to develop leadership and find people to run it. Different groups and resources can help prepare the next generation of leadership.
- We have seen similar challenges everywhere. Community capital isn't real until it's engaged. Sometimes people have trouble. Look for the best in each other. Praise everybody.