

# Moving Forward Together

Bradford Community Visit  
Report and Action Plan ~ October 2021



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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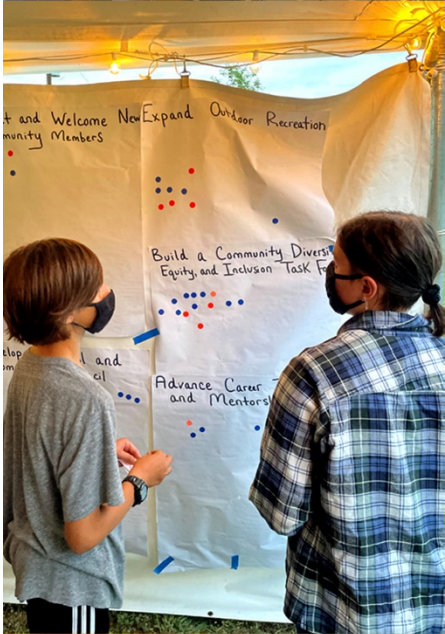
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# I. Introduction

In July 2021, Bradford community members filed into the Bradford Academy meeting halls and the Gathering Room at the Grace United Methodist Church. For some, this was the first time in over 18 months that they had gathered together with their community: an opportunity to come together again to discuss what was possible in the months ahead. After the challenges of the past year and a half, thinking forward about future opportunities and stepping up to take action wasn't easy, but Bradford residents proved that, when it comes to the success of their community, they are willing to put themselves on the line and show up for their town. The "Moving Forward Together" process was, from the beginning, not just about choosing a workplan for the years ahead; it was also an opportunity to reflect on all that makes the Bradford community strong and vibrant and to build unity, trust, and connection as the community advances key priorities for recovery, success, and resilience.

As participants shared over and over again, there is a lot of opportunity in Bradford. A small, cohesive, and scenic community, the town serves as a central hub of the "Upper Upper Valley." With an industrial park, a co-working space, a general store, a new café, and several retail shops, it boasts a downtown center that would make many villages around the state envious. Residents shared a long list of assets that contribute to a vibrant community and a high quality of life: from its scenic beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, recreational facilities, to its schools, community groups, accessible array of services, and strong business leaders - but most of all, Bradford's biggest asset is clearly the people who live there, and their pride in and dedication to their community.

Bradford is a town with a rich history and a long legacy of community leadership. The Moving Forward Together process engaged both long-established leaders who have been working for decades for the good of their community, and also some newer faces — folks eager to step-up and put themselves on the line to help make the Bradford community be the best it can be. This combination of wisdom and energy led to some interesting and nuanced conversations, and helped to generate a list of ideas for action both deeply ambitious and practical. It is not easy to choose priorities, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the 'opportunities' section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces, but in the end, Bradford selected three solid priorities for action that will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community and economy for all including:

- **Boost Town Capacity**
- **Improve and Expand Recreational Facilities and Programming & Build a Skate Park**
- **Advance Resiliency, Sustainability, Alternative Energy, and Agriculture**

These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals. There is a lot of work to do, but task force chairs have already come together to frame a cohesive structure and a path forward. With over 150 people from all parts of the community participating in the process, it is clear that, even in this difficult time, there is energy in Bradford for forward momentum and progress.

The Task Forces advancing these issues are already hard at work — please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report). VCRD is prepared to support the work ahead and we look forward to providing follow up help to the Moving Forward Together Task Forces as needed.

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There are many people to thank for making this Community Visit effort possible.

We would like to thank the Bradford Selectboard who initially invited this process. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning

including: Meroa “Peep” Benjamin, Marcey Carver, Sarah Copeland-Hanzas, Brian Emerson, Kendall Gendron, Travis Gendron, Jenn Grossi, Marvin Harrison, Marla Ianello, Mark Johnson, Ryan Lockwood, Carol Metayer, Patrick Peters, Cody Plante, Monique Priestley, Scott Sargeant, Senayit Tomlinson, Gail Trede, and Steve Williams. Thank you also to all of the community leaders, groups, and organizations who worked to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

Thanks also to the Northern Border Regional Commission, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the members and donors of the Vermont Council on Rural Development who all contributed funding to make this process possible.

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with — and especially the Moving Forward Together Visiting and Resource Teams (listed in the back of this report) — they are the best of Vermont’s public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Bradford should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Ben Rubinfeld: Resiliency and Sustainability; Gary Moore: Boost Town Capacity; and Michael Wright: Recreation and Skate Park.

VCRD especially wants to thank Peter Mallery and Karen Danforth who stepped forward to serve as Community Visit Co-chairs for this process. Community members pointed to them again and again as balanced center-points in town who could help us connect across the community and make sure the process works for Bradford every step of the way. Peter and Karen played a critical role in grounding this effort and making sure that community members of all ages, background, experiences, and interests were invited throughout. We deeply appreciate their leadership and their ongoing commitment to local task forces in the work ahead!

At VCRD, we are so proud to work in places where community is real and strong, where local residents work together to get things done and make their communities the best they can possibly be. It was a great pleasure to work with the residents of Bradford, who stand up for the town and who are lined up for the common good and best future for this wonderful community. We are eager to follow your progress and support your success!



## II. Vision for Bradford's Future

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

### **Bradford residents look to a future Bradford:**

- ❖ with a thriving and vibrant downtown.
- ❖ where new residents are welcome.
- ❖ where new leadership is cultivated and encouraged.
- ❖ that showcases the scenic views along the back-side of Main St.
- ❖ where diversity, equity and inclusion are woven into everything that happens in town.
- ❖ where local schools, businesses, and the community are well-integrated.
- ❖ with thriving young families.
- ❖ where youth know that they matter.
- ❖ with vibrant and robust community communications.
- ❖ that is a hub for commerce and recreation in the “upper Upper Valley” and is connected to its surrounding communities.
- ❖ that prioritizes food security, renewable energy, agriculture and soil health.
- ❖ that is safe for all residents and where people look out for one another.
- ❖ where there is a sense of progress.
- ❖ where the village and the outskirts share a sense of community connection.

### III. The “Moving Forward Together” Community Visit Process

VCRD’s Community Visit program is a way for towns to engage and bring together their residents, set common goals and directions in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals. **Here is a snapshot of the 5-month process in Bradford:**



#### Planning Committee Meeting: June 29, 2021

On June 29, 2021, 19 local residents met to plan for the launch of the Bradford Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – Moving Forward Together – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, and flyers, this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Planning Committee included Peep Benjamin, Marcey Carver, Sarah Copeland-Hanzas, Brian Emerson, Kendall Gendron, Travis “Ravi” Gendron, Jenn Grossi, Marvin Harrison, Marla Ianello, Mark Johnson, Ryan Lockwood, Carol Metayer, Patrick Peters, Cody Plante, Monique Priestley, Scott Sargeant, Senayit Tomlinson, Gail Trede, and Steve Williams.

#### Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: July 28, 2021

Moving Forward Together kicked off with 7 brainstorming forums – 6 in person held at the Bradford Academy and 1 on Zoom – and a community dinner at the Grace United Methodist Church. Over 80 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in the following forum topics chosen by the planning team: Creative Economy: Arts & Entertainment; Infrastructure & Connectivity; Youth & Recreation; Housing & Lodging; Inclusivity & Welcoming; and Economic Development, Workforce, & Jobs. 19 visiting team members participated, learning more about Bradford and providing reflections to the community. Special thanks to Peep Benjamin for organizing the dinner and the many volunteers – including a local boy scout troop – who helped setup, cook, serve, and cleanup making it a success. The dinner also featured live music by local musicians Jim Musty, Don Sinclair & Toby Summerfield!

Visiting Team members included: Richard Amore, *Planning & Project Manager*, VT Dept of Housing and Community Development; Beth Awhaitey, *Outreach Specialist*, Office of Senator Bernie Sanders; Nick Bennette, *Executive Director*, Vermont Mountain Bike Association; Tayt Brooks, *Deputy Secretary*, VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development; Katie Buckley, *Director, ARPA Assistance & Coordination*, Vermont League of Cities & Towns; Amy Cunningham, *Deputy Director*, Vermont Arts Council; Xusana Davis, *Executive Director of Racial Equity*, State of Vermont; Rebecca Ellis, *State Director*, Office of Congressman Peter Welch; Peter Gregory, *Executive Director*, Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission; Erika Hoffman-Keiss, *Executive Director*, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation; Sarah Jackson, *Executive Director*, Vital Communities; Michelle Kersey, *Donor Relations Manager*, Downstreet Housing & Community Development; Kate McCarthy, *Program Officer*, Vermont Community Foundation; and Misty Sinsigalli, *Area Director*, USDA Rural Development; John Tracy, *State Director*, Office of Senator Patrick Leahy.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Paul Costello, *Executive Director*; Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Operations and Communications*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Associate*; Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*; Nick Kramer, *Community and Policy Associate*.

## Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: August 23, 2021

After the kick-off, all of the brainstormed ideas were distilled into 21 key areas of action. Over 60 community members joined in an outdoor tent on August 23<sup>rd</sup> to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 3 action ideas emerged as key priorities: Boost Town Capacity; Advance Resiliency, Sustainability, Alternative Energy, & Agriculture; and Expand & Improve Recreation Facilities & Build a Skate Park. Participants then signed up for task forces that will convene to move these priorities forward.

## Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: September 20, 2021

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, community members, facilitators, and resource team members came together virtually to develop action plans, identify resources, and form task force groups that will work in the months ahead to implement the priorities. From here forward, all action of “Moving Forward Together” is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team Members included: Sarah Brock, Vital Communities; Katie Buckley, VT League of Cities & Towns; Paul Chambers, Brighton Recreation; Sarah Danly, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund; Laurel Green, Sustainable Rockingham; Erika Hoffman Kiess, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation; Geoff Martin, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission; and Casey Romero, Town of Johnson Skate Park.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Jon Copans, *Climate Economy Model Communities Program Director*; Paul Costello, *Executive Director*; Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*; Nick Kramer, *Community and Policy Associate*.



*Community dinner volunteers serving drinks and cake!*



## IV. Moving Forward Together Priorities

Determined by Bradford residents at the Moving Forward Together Community Meeting  
August 23, 2021

*Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, 60 Bradford community members whittled down a list of 21 action ideas to 3 priorities that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.*

### **Bradford residents selected three priorities for future action:**

#### **✓ Advance Resiliency, Sustainability, Alternative Energy, and Agriculture**

A task force could form to identify and implement initiatives to improve Bradford resiliency. The group could identify strategies to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and support the adoption of alternative, and local, energy sources. Additionally, the group could focus on strategies to improve food access, soil health, and agriculture in the community.

#### **✓ Improve and Expand Recreational Facilities and Programming – and Build a Skate Park**

A Task Force could form, with representation from Bradford recreation and youth committees, to inventory recreation needs and develop a strategy to improve current facilities as well as expand recreation opportunities that could include a recreational center, an indoor pool, youth and adult sports leagues, a dog park or other facility needs. With this initiative, the community could look for funding that would support a full-time recreation director to lead facility improvements and programming and build unity between groups focused on recreation. The task force could partner with local youth, recreation leaders, and the schools to initiative the design and building of a skate park that would create a safe, fun, and welcoming “hang out spot” for youth in the community.

#### **✓ Boost Town Capacity**

A task force could come together to evaluate models for building Town staffing capacity to drive community and economic development, housing, communications and other initiatives. This could include evaluating a Town Manager model, planning for a full time Town Administrator, or finding resources to hire an Economic Development Officer who could help to build unity, support Select Board leadership, and pro-actively help to advance Town and community projects and initiatives. ARPA funds could be a starting point, and building this capacity could help Bradford capture its share of state and federal recovery dollars in the pipeline.

## **Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:**

*Along with the three chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared on Community Visit Day. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.*

### **Improve Internet and Cell Connection**

A Task Force could form to improve internet service and cellular coverage by collecting data on existing coverage, connecting with resources and providers to explore possibilities, and accessing funding and support to improve broadband and cellular connections in the Bradford area.

### **Improve Public Transportation**

A Task Force could identify and promote ways to increase public transportation options such as partnering with Tri-Valley Transit to expand routes and frequency. The group could also explore and develop creative alternatives such as a local ride sharing model. In addition to considering the needs of seniors, and the workforce, the group could focus on transportation for youth to activities, facilities, and programming in town.

### **Develop Creative Housing Solutions**

Many residents see a crucial need for more affordable, safe, and quality housing for people of all ages and income levels. A Housing Committee has taken the lead on a variety of housing strategies. Community members could sign on in support of this work or could form a sub-committee that would explore specific strategies around creative housing solutions such as matching developers with potential properties that are in need of repair or redevelopment, or connecting with regional and state housing developers to explore development opportunities. The group could also work with existing property owners and landlords to connect to state and non-profit resources available for property improvement and repair.

### **Improve and Expand Pedestrian and Bike Infrastructure**

A task force could form to expand and improve the infrastructure to make downtown Bradford safe, accessible, and enjoyable for pedestrians and bikers with bike lanes and paths, bike racks, a walking trail by the river, sidewalk improvements and potentially a public bathroom that would encourage regional biking tourists to stop and visit the town.

### **Promote Bradford as a Destination**

A Task Force could form to identify and implement strategies to document, showcase, and market Bradford assets, amenities, and attractions to draw visitors and potential residents to the area. The group could develop a brand and marketing materials, curate visitor information, improve signage, and look toward the potential of attracting a hotel to Bradford.

### **Support and Attract Local Business and Economic Development**

A Task Force could form to identify and implement ways to attract, boost, and support local businesses and a strong downtown. Residents shared ideas for attracting businesses to town including outreach to large employers, restaurants, a breakfast spot, and more.

### **Redevelop the Old Church Theater**

A Task Force could create and implement a plan to support existing efforts to renovate and redevelop the Old Church Theater as a community space for year-round gatherings, an art hub for the community, and a center for events, programs and community meetings.

### **Improve Community Communications and Unity**

Bradford residents expressed a need to better connect with neighbors, bridge divides, and improve communication among different groups in the community. A Task Force could form to create a communications strategy to share community events information and improve connection and unity. The group could explore strategies from physical kiosks and print newsletters to a central website, an online calendar, or other local news and communications platforms. The work could include a partnership with the school, Town, and other key organizations to ensure coordination and connection across the community.

### **Expand Community Events**

A Community Events Task Force could come together to help to promote current event offerings in a central place and plan an annual series of local events that could help to unify and connect the community. Events could include food festivals, holiday gatherings, community dinners, a revamped Midnight Madness, and a diverse variety of concerts.

### **Start an Arts Council**

A local Arts Council could form to build connections among artists and boost attention for and investment in the arts and artists in the community. The Council could create a network of artists and hold a series of arts events throughout the year. The group could also lead on community art projects such as murals or community infrastructure that features local art. The Council could also explore the possibility of an “arts center” or physical hub for the arts in the community.

### **Advance Downtown Beautification and Vitality**

A task force could focus on improving the aesthetics of downtown Bradford and initiate downtown vitality projects to improve an inviting, welcoming, and fun Main Street. Initiatives could include flower and tree planting, creatively designed trash cans and bike racks, improved lighting, improvements to downtown building facades, benches, or pocket parks and other amenities that would appeal to residents and tourists alike.

### **Attract and Welcome New Community Members**

A task force could create a Bradford “Welcome Wagon” to include and welcome new community members and share critical information for new residents. The group could create informational materials that orient new folks to the town and build a list of locals who are willing to match with new residents and be a liaison as they settle in the community.

### **Develop a School and Community Council**

A group could form with representatives from the community, local groups and organizations, the school, and youth to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community. The group could work to coordinate and boost communications, expand programming and activities for youth including supporting expanded offerings at the Hub, and address challenges that face youth in the community.

## **Expand Outdoor Recreation**

Bradford's wonderful assets, from Wrights Mountain Trails to Connecticut River access, if tied together could provide tremendous opportunities for local enjoyment, but also for tourism in the regional outdoor recreation economy. A task force could form to connect and advance outdoor recreation opportunities in the community. The group could focus on the development of a river walking path, improvement for access to local, safe swimming holes, improving access to the "Low-St. John" town forest, improving boat launches, and other initiatives to expand opportunities to enjoy the natural and recreational assets in Bradford. The group could also improve amenities for outdoor recreation including public bathrooms, signage, and maps.

## **Build a Community Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force**

A task force could form to advance justice, diversity, anti-racism, equity and inclusion, and build a more safe and welcoming Bradford. The group could offer community education on equity and inclusion, hold cultural and arts events, and identify concrete strategies to reduce barriers to community participation and leadership. The task force could also form a team of allies who could offer open and safe support in the community.

## **Advance Career Training and Mentorship**

A group could form to identify opportunities for career advancement for youth and adults. This could include a mentorship program that matches local youth with local businesses for on-site career training and education opportunities with local employers.

## **Expand Child Care**

A task force could form to expand safe and affordable child care options.





# V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, September 20 2021

*Bradford Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day 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. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.*

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## ► Advance Resiliency, Sustainability, Alternative Energy, and Agriculture

Community Chair: **Ben Rubinfeld**

Facilitator: **Jon Copans, VCRD**

Resource Team Members: **Sarah Brock, Vital Communities**

**Sarah Danly, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund**

**Laurel Green, Sustainable Rockingham**

**Geoff Martin, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission**

A task force could form to identify and implement initiatives to improve Bradford resiliency. The group could identify strategies to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and support the adoption of alternative, and local, energy sources. Additionally, the group could focus on strategies to improve food access, soil health, and agriculture in the community.

### Lay of the land – what is going on in this area already?

- Community Garden going strong or 6 – 7 years – 22 beds.
- Composting program participants, including at the trash and recycling depot. Operates at the Sandburg farm in Corinth.
- Farms going out of business. Concentration of dairy farms. No actual working dairy farms in the Town of Bradford. Lots of farmable land.
- Small vegetable farms have cropped up in the area. Newcastle. Cross Molina. Rte 5 Farm. Piersons Farm.
- Bradford has a couple awesome awesome town forests.
- Lots of wood comes through Bradford.
- Natural Resources at Riverbend Technology Center
- Amazing climate here. You can really grow.
- Connecticut River till (growing.
- Energy Committee.
- Geoff Martin – supporting 7 towns energy work including Bradford at TRORC.
- Vital communities.
- Biking and greater pedestrian access.
- We are lucky to have Upper Valley Transit facility. Bus route could be expanded.
- Waits and Connecticut Rivers.
- Larger older housing stock that feels under-utilized.
- Mix of old and new housing.
- Solar array that is serving the schools.
- Town of Bradford participates in a solar array.
- Copelands and Farmway have solar arrays.
- Things are clustered. Industrial Area. Bradford Elem. cluster. Downtown cluster. Tying them together somehow.
- Window Dresser.

### Action Steps

1. Bring together stakeholders to create a shared vision around youth and how we utilize our environmental education programs, forests, schools, farm to school, etc. to raise environmentally conscious Vermonters who are connected to this place.

- a. Identify/brainstorm a list of stakeholders in Bradford and surrounding towns who are or would be interested in contributing to this vision.
  - b. Reach out to stakeholders to gauge interest in a meeting to develop a common vision and/or identify opportunities to collaborate.
  - c. School Board is already supportive. Keep them engaged.
  - d. Inventory and possibly develop youth and community-oriented programs.
  - e. Find funding to support the process.
2. Research and set a community-wide goal for % of food that comes from local sources.
  3. Strengthen local markets for local food and other agricultural and forest products.
    - a. Evaluate different models for achieving greater demand for local food.
    - b. Develop connections with Hannaford's in order to increase local foods available there.
  4. Evaluate land use opportunities and limitations in Bradford.
    - a. What % of farm and forest land already is conserved
    - b. Evaluate and/or create policies to retain farm and forest lands.

**Other Possible Action Steps:**

- Promote more electric cars and provide more charging stations. Sign that says 24 diesel, but no sign for EV charging.
- Protect forest parcels. Avoid fragmentation.
- Conservation Fund to avoid fragmentation.
- Hazard mitigation plan – moving towards forest conservation particularly at the top of the watershed.
- Use tax policy tax stabilization agreements.
- Open farmland conservation – always eligible for growing food.
- Look into your soil types.
- Make sure that farms stay farms, especially at points of transition (succession).
- Make sure the farm is economically viable. What are the market opportunities for farmers? Figure out the market channels.
- No farmers market. Roadside stands. A CSA movement on the farms surrounding Bradford. Garlic – we have people buying it out of our garage.
- Tap into the potential of people's desire to have local food.
- Other bigger markets in the area.
- Em – used to run a mkt in Piermont. Really is around building the demand.
- Work that we can do to build demand for local produce.
- 7 day a week market with Piersons.
- Emerging models different from the traditional farmers market.
- Poultney example.
- Newbury Elementary School – Farm to School Farm Raiser. Parents can put in orders. Serves as a fundraiser.
- Farm to Plate context. Brand new Ag and Food Systems strategic plan. 54 topics briefs as part of this plan.
- Get the town buildings off of oil. Heat them with woodchips.
- Smaller and larger scale of systems. Possible district heating opportunities.
- Town Energy Committee – How does that integrate?
- Look at the municipal buildings – happening with the energy committee already.
- Industrial buildings as an opportunity.
- Weatherization – as an opportunity.
- Residential? Button Up.

- Window Dressers.
- Energy savings outreach campaign. (Vital Communities). Pulling together in one place all of the programs that can be helpful.
- I think farm to institution (including school) is the place to start to establish steady demand for producers and grow demand through exposure to local food.
- A renewable energy program at the tech center. Need more contractors doing this work.
- Electricians is a bottleneck. Erica Hoffman-Keiss – with GMEDC.
- Select Board could pass declaration of climate emergency. “Symbolic in many ways, but also has led to more action.”
- Value of forests.

## Resources

- VT Farm to Plate Network - <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/network>.
- VT Forest Products Industry Network - <https://www.vsif.org/vermont-forest-product-network-signup/>.
- Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021-2030 <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/plan/>.
- Webinar overviewing the plan: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/resources/putting-the-plan-to-use-overview-for-communities>.
- Using the plan for grant applications: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/resources/putting-the-plan-to-use-grant-applications>.
- VT Farm to School Network - <https://vermontfarmtoschool.org/>.
- New England Farm to Institution Network - <https://www.farmtoinstitution.org/>.
- REKO example from Poultney (alternative to a farmers market) - <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1653bd8d31554ef69dc302d5e46e480c?item=5>.
- Solar to help with farm viability: Norwich Technologies (<https://norwichsolar.com/>) and Vermont Law School Center For Agriculture and Food Systems - (<https://www.vermontlaw.edu/academics/centers-and-programs/center-for-agriculture-and-food-systems>).
- Northern Forest Center <https://northernforest.org/>.
- Lyme Green Heat (<https://lymegreenheat.com/>) and Tarm Biomass (<https://woodboilers.com/>).
- VECAN Communications Toolkit for energy committees and others. A toolkit to facilitate effective local communications campaigns. – Talk to Jon Copans – [jon@vtrural.org](mailto:jon@vtrural.org).
- Geoff Martin, Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator, Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission, [gmartin@trorc.org](mailto:gmartin@trorc.org).
- Methodology for calculating statewide figure for local food consumption: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/resources/counting-local-food-consumption-longitudinal-data-and-lessons-from-vermont>.
- Sarah Brock, Program Director, Climate, Energy, Transportation, Vital Communities, [sarah@vitalcommunities.org](mailto:sarah@vitalcommunities.org).



## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

### Action Step Recommendations

Develop a town sustainability plan that boosts the town's resilience, improve food access, and renewable energy options in the town. This could be woven into a larger downtown master planning effort.

Explore and reach out to other towns that have developed local energy committees and learn about their process, work, and impact.

If you haven't already, engage with the Bradford Energy Committee.

If the town has not yet drafted/adopted an energy plan, then they could do this to address the concerns and present actionable recommendations. Perhaps the plan could be dual purpose to focus on sustainable energy and food systems.

Look at under-utilized funding resources (Revolving Loan Funds) and management structures (Development Corporation) that are held within the community to better understand current status and how it can be changed if so desired.

Annually budget local funds on implementing energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction projects.

Just Transition: As these conversations shape up, utilize best practices in community engagement and ecological planning to ensure "just transition," which means the benefits and burdens of green initiatives are fairly distributed among the people. Two examples, (1) ensure that infrastructural grants aren't just going to affluent people who could afford to do the work without the grants, or (2) plan spaces that will be open and accessible to low-income residents, residents living with disabilities, etc.

A win-win for energy and housing would be to look at whether there are opportunities for infill housing near the village. It would provide more housing, and save energy since people would be better able to walk instead of drive. One way to start this would be to make sure the zoning in your village area accommodates infill.

### Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Learn more through VT Sustainable Jobs Fund Farm to Plate Investment Program - the goals/outcomes of the program are exactly what Bradford has identified above. Visit <https://www.vsif.org/programs/vermont-farm-to-plate-investment-program/>.

Consider a model like the 4 Town Coalition in the Royalton-Sharon-Strafford-Tunbridge area, with committees that represent each of the strategies identified; would not need to make new groups, but see how existing groups might fit into this type of structure.

The Sustainable Montpelier Coalition is a community organization with a holistic approach to resiliency and sustainability and cohesively approach this work around energy, health, food access, sustainable agriculture, etc. - avoiding the silos of many separate groups.

Connect with Efficiency VT and see if Bradford would be a good fit for their Target Communities program that offers local technical assistance and incentives to spur renewable energy, efficiency and weatherization improvements, and energy audits. Contact Michelle McCutcheon-Schour at [mmschour@veic.org](mailto:mmschour@veic.org).

Reach out to Mindy Blank at Community Resilience Organizations. According to their website, “CROs will meet you where you’re at and help you assess vulnerabilities, determine priorities, implement projects that build local and regional resilience, and celebrate successes.” They have a basic assessment tool and can help you think through the range of what it means to be resilient, and where to get started! It looks like the town Resilience Committee has already established/reinforced some important relationships; maybe CROs could help advise on a next step? Visit <https://gocros.org/>.

Community Resilience Organizations: <https://gocros.org/contact>.

Reach out to Alissa Mathews with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (AAFM) and learn about their grant programs to support food access and local agriculture. Email: [alissa.matthews@vermont.gov](mailto:alissa.matthews@vermont.gov).

See the work of the Vermont Climate Council, which is working hard to incorporate principles of just transition into its work. The Council’s meetings and materials are open to the public. Visit <https://climatechange.vermont.gov/resources>.

Zoning for Great Neighborhoods - by Vermont’s Department of Housing and Community Development: <https://accd.vermont.gov/content/zoning-for-great-neighborhoods>.

Connect with local energy organizations, Capstone Community Action, as well and develop actionable strategies what residents are comfortable and willing to adapt to.

Use state programs and the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator to identify project ideas.

## **Potential Funding Sources**

ACCD’s Municipal Planning Grant program could help the town with developing a sustainability plan. Visit <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant> and contact Jenni Lavoie, 802-828-1948, [jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov](mailto:jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov) or Jacob Hemmerick, 802-828-5249, [jacob.hemmerick@vermont.gov](mailto:jacob.hemmerick@vermont.gov).

AOT/ACCD’s Better Connections plan may be a good fit. Visit <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections> and contact Richard Amore, 802-585-0061 and [richard.amore@vermont.gov](mailto:richard.amore@vermont.gov).

VTrans Transportation Alternative Program. Website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>. Contact: Scott Robertson, (802) 793-2395, [scott.robertson@vermont.gov](mailto:scott.robertson@vermont.gov).

VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. Website: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped> Contact: Jon Kaplan, (802) 498-4742, [jon.kaplan@vermont.gov](mailto:jon.kaplan@vermont.gov).

Work with the RPC to learn more and get started TRORPC.

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund Farm2Plate – <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com>.

Vital Communities - <https://vitalcommunities.org/energy/>.

Efficiency Vermont may also be a funding resource – <https://www.encyvermont.com/>.

Elizabeth Towle is listed on the VECAN.net website as the contact for the Energy Committee. [revelizst@yahoo.com](mailto:revelizst@yahoo.com).

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## ► Improve and Expand Recreational Facilities and Programming – and Build a Skate Park

Community Chair: **Michael Wright**

Facilitator: **Jenna Koloski**, *Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)*

Resource Team Members: **Paul Chambers**, *Brighton Recreation*

**Alyssa Johnson**, *VCRD*

**Casey Romero**, *Johnson Skate Park*

Participants: Michael Wright, Jean Carlan, Megan Carlan, Paul Hunt, Don Sinclair, Patrick Peters, Christiane Carroll, Brian Carroll, Jill Baron

A task force could form, with representation from Bradford recreation and youth committees, to inventory recreation needs and develop a strategy to improve current facilities as well as expand recreation opportunities that could include a recreational center, an indoor pool, youth and adult sports leagues, a dog park or other facility needs. With this initiative, the community could look for funding that would support a full-time recreation director to lead facility improvements and programming and build unity between groups focused on recreation. The task force could partner with local youth, recreation leaders, and the schools to initiate the design and building of a skate park that would create a safe, fun, and welcoming “hang out spot” for youth in the community.

### Work already happening in this area

- Current Bradford Rec Committee Work
  - Expand walking, hiking, and biking trails – Bugbee landing, parcel owned by school and parcel owned by the country club for hiking and parcels downstream from Bugbee Landing owned by Gladstone’s for biking.
  - Pavilion going up in Elizabeth’s Park – break ground October 11<sup>th</sup>.
  - Memorial Field concept drawing was done up 5 years ago – want to put in new ball fields, dog park, and other ideas – maybe another pavilion?
  - Skip talking to the school about turning the building into a rec building behind BA.
  - Talking about horseshoe pits in Elizabeth’s Park.
  - Rec Director working on pickup basketball.
- Current update on the Skate Park idea – Mike has talked with the builder who did the Lebanon NH Skate Park and one in Burlington. The estimated cost is \$50 per square foot to build a skate park. Mike would like to form a committee and get started.
- Rec center current states – Mike has had a rough sketch done of costs of some kind of rec center - \$15-16M depending on what we want to do with it.
- There is a struggle connecting with leadership in the schools and trying to promote with the schools and get youth out is a challenge. How do we get kids engaged in the work?
- We see the most enthusiasm around the skate park, but getting them to come out to discuss has been a challenge.
- We should be sure that we are spending money on both “masculine” things and more “feminine” – activities for all.
- Transportation around different pockets of places to hang out in Bradford – how we connect downtown with popular trails ex. Wrights Mountain.
- Tri-valley transit is an asset – maybe they could make a loop to connect to popular rec opportunities
- What would the rec committee need?

- Mike – focus on the skate park and help with youth engagement.
- A group to reach out to the community and engage folks around what they would want to see in a rec center?
- A group that could help with public and community engagement.
- Jean – want to avoid overlapping and have both groups do good work.
- Memorial field project is in the phase of taking a concept drawing and get with the community to gather input and then redoing the concept, connecting with SB, and moving forward.
- A town survey has not been done.
- Town owns Memorial Field – then there is room for other trail and skate park projects...a rec center is trickier but there are some options.
- Want to think about other forms of recreation as well – theater and dance. Bradford Youth Theater was run out of the elementary school at BA. Old Church Theater does 1 show a year primarily geared towards kids. Old Church Theater is very open, but we do find people aren't eager to get engaged in something they don't know about. Tends to be people already plugged in and engaged. People see them as closed when they're not. VERY open to any way to plug in.
- Rec director working to get back afterschool programming.
- Applied for VOREC grant for trails along the “backside” of the community.

This group could be a “special projects” group – a group that could work to rally community engagement (especially youth engagement) and support, gather community input and help to identify and access funds for these projects.

## Action Steps

- Come together as a team and connect with the Bradford recreation committee and the Rec Director to narrow in on key focus areas to bring to the community for review. Set an internal priority list as a “menu” of options to run by the community for input. Options may include a skate park, recreation center, horseshoes, memorial field, or Elizabeth’s Park improvements, shorter-term projects and events, and more.
- Conduct a survey to gather community input on where, among the key areas identified, the task force and rec committee should focus their energy and time.
  - The survey should reach out to Bradford but also neighboring towns.
  - Reach out to VCRD for survey and outreach advice – they may be able to share similar surveys.
  - Utilize preexisting networks for outreach – ex. Northeast slopes.
  - Find the right questions to ask and what technology to use for the survey.
  - Craft the survey the right way to have people voting on options that can be realistically accomplished and/or where the group is interested in moving forward.
  - Design a digital survey specifically for youth and work with the school to gather input.
- The group could also conduct events and meetings to gather input and reach people in creative ways. For example – bringing in the person from Rye NH that does visitation to schools in an effort to get more kids on boards and incorporated skating into education curricula.
- Once a priority is identified the group can:
  - Develop a clearer concept and plan.
  - Research grant funding sources.
  - Apply to access funding and implement a project plan.
- Meanwhile, the group could also work to:
  - Increase public awareness about recreation and the work that is going on – blast it out to the community and beyond to create buzz.
  - Organizing smaller events and projects that get people interested and engaged – this could be sports nights, events, moveable, and temporary skating infrastructure, and hold an event.

- Develop a list of volunteers to be called on.
- Work to build a connection with the schools and trust with youth – maybe engage youth through creative strategies like asking for video testimonials or other ways to engage in the project.
- Ensure that our outreach is equitable and inclusive.

## Resources

- **Local Motion** is a bike and pedestrian advocacy organization that could provide technical assistance around bike lanes, safety, and trail development. Visit [localmotion.org](http://localmotion.org) or contact Jonathon Weber, Program Manager, at [jonathon@localmotion.org](mailto:jonathon@localmotion.org), or 861-2700.
- The **Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)** has a bicycle and pedestrian program to help provide safe and convenient facilities for Vermonters who desire alternative transportation opportunities. Visit [vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped](http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped) and contact Jon Kaplan at [jon.kaplan@vermont.gov](mailto:jon.kaplan@vermont.gov), or 828-0059.
- The **Better Connections Grant program** provides funding to help communities develop plans that align land use, transportation, and community revitalization with transportation investments. Contact Jacki Cassino at [Jackie.cassino@vermont.gov](mailto:Jackie.cassino@vermont.gov), or 272-2368. Visit [vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections](http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections).
- Surveys from other communities about recreation can be used as models.
- Existing community networks (Northeast Slopes, Theater, etc.) can be resources for distributing surveys and encouraging participation.
- The **Vermont Community Foundation** has a variety of grant programs: <https://www.vermontcf.org/nonprofits-and-grantseekers/available-grants/> They also host a Grantmaker Database: <https://fdovermont.foundationcenter.org/>.
- **Tobacco Control and Prevention Task Force** was a funding resource for the Johnson Skate Park. <https://www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/tobacco/state-and-community-partners>.
- **People for Bikes** is a national nonprofit that also provides funding.
- **Upper Valley Youth in Action** could be a partner for funding and outreach.
- The **Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC)** has a community grant program that can provide funding for a variety of recreation and economy based projects.
- **Building Communities Grant Program** through the Department of Buildings and General Services has a **Recreational Facilities Grant Program** that provides matching funding for shovel-ready projects: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>.
- **USDA Rural Development** offers many grants for infrastructure, community facilities, and economic and community development. Visit [rd.usda.gov/vt](http://rd.usda.gov/vt) for grant information, and find contacts here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices/vt> or 802-828-6000. VCRD can also offer ongoing support for this funding. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 978-760-1238.
- **Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)** offers grants to support marketing, economic development, workforce development, infrastructure, etc. Visit [nbrc.gov](http://nbrc.gov).
- Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB) has funding to help local groups hire grant writers to fund community and economic development projects. Visit [vhcb.org/redi](http://vhcb.org/redi). Contact Mariah Noth at [Mariah@vhcb.org](mailto:Mariah@vhcb.org) or 802 828-1098.
- **Tri-Valley Transit** could be a partner for transportation options.

- **AARP** has done great work supporting walkable communities and developing toolkits (see below) to point communities in the right direction to get started. Contact Kelly Stoddard Poor at [kstoddardpoor@aarp.org](mailto:kstoddardpoor@aarp.org), or 951-1313. Visit [aarp.org/vermont](http://aarp.org/vermont).
- **VCRD Community Leadership Guide** <https://www.vtrural.org/leadership/guide> has many more resources on specific topics, depending on what areas of need the group identifies.
- Vermont's Village Greens Initiative has a funding directory: <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/CPR-VG-Funding-Directory.pdf>.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

## Action Step Recommendations

Develop a recreation facilities master plan to develop strategies to create, improve, or expand existing and new recreation facilities and connections.

Reach out to other towns who have develop recreation master plans and hired recreation directors to lead recreation and programming efforts. Island Pond, Swanton, Enosburg, and Bethel have all done great work in recreation and could offers advice and approaches to move forward. Bethel recently created/improved a skate park in town. Here's some information on Enosburg's efforts – <https://sites.google.com/view/recfieldsproject/home?authuser=0>.

Go big! Pool resources and communities work together (led by Bradford) to create a regional recreation center vs. just Bradford.

Begin work towards a feasibility study on sites, costs, and potential support for the various possibilities.

Use the task force to create a detailed SWOT analysis focused on recreation.

Be sure to include youth in this work.

Consider all available resources - not just funding and human power; sometimes finding the right model is all that is needed to keep the momentum going.

Ensure that all recreational facilities, events, initiatives, funding, etc. is not just accessible to all, but truly welcoming to all. This means taking it seriously when signage is vandalized with hate symbols. It means physically building spaces that can be accessed by seniors, small children, and people who use mobility aids like wheelchairs. It means fairly issuing permits and allocating event space for events celebrating various communities, not just the mainstream or dominant ones.

At the Community Visit someone mentioned a funding source, the Walter Lee Funds, that is available to support improvements to facilities for youth activities, but is underutilized. What might be a first step that could be taken to understand what opportunities this fund could provide? Does the committee need to be reinvigorated? Should it include one or two youth members? Planning and community agreement on needs is a first step, of course, but it seems like getting more people involved in understanding this resource could be useful, and could build enthusiasm.

## Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

The Town of Brandon has a staff person that leads economic development and recreation in town and could offer an integrated approach.

Look at other communities with successful recreation facilities to understand scale, scope, programming, and financial models. Find out more about how other small towns handle risk management and insurance so that you have a clear picture of resources that will be needed.

The Vermont Recreation and Parks Association could be an important resource and partner.

<https://www.vrpa.org/>.

Local Motion provides statewide support and advocacy for bike and pedestrian transportation. Contact: Karen Yacos, [info@localmotion.org](mailto:info@localmotion.org) or (802) 861-2700. Website: <https://www.localmotion.org>.

## Potential Funding Sources

ACCD's municipal planning grant program could offer resources to develop a recreation master plan and develop concept plan for the skate park with lots of community engagement support.

ACCD's forthcoming (January 2022) Better Places placemaking grants could offer resources to develop new or improve existing public spaces, including a skate park or other youth hang out spots in or near the designate village center. Better Places grants could also help activate existing public spaces through creative and cultural programming, recreation programming, and events.

ACCD's Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit program could offer funds to help rehab historic buildings in the designated village center to create third places and gathering areas in the village. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>.

Apply for a grant to fund a feasibility study - Vermont Community Development Program CDBG: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>).

If the project were to occur in north of Bradford center, it would bump into a New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) district making the project eligible for this funding - look for a site in this area and start a conversation with NMTC consultant (M&S Development).

Partner with NH to attract funding, donors, support for a regional location.

Several grant opportunities available for outdoor rec via VT Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Visit <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants>.

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC), which works to support the outdoor recreation sector, has recently been appropriated a considerable amount of funding, and could be a resource in furthering this work. Community Grant Program. Visit <https://fpr.vermont.gov/VOREC> Contact the new VOREC program Director Jackie Dagger at [jackie.dagger@vermont.gov](mailto:jackie.dagger@vermont.gov).

The State of Vermont Buildings and General Service (BGS) Recreational Facilities Grants Program provides matching grant funding for shovel-ready projects. Applications are available in the summer. Learn more at <http://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants> and contact Judy Bruneau at (802) 828-3519 or [judy.bruneau@vermont.gov](mailto:judy.bruneau@vermont.gov).

Federal money would be well-spent here, particularly on the accessibility front. A DEI employee would be able to help with the diversity and inclusion piece.

USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Development Grants could possibly be a resource for funding some of these items. Contact Susan Poland, Business Programs Specialist 802-828-6002 or email [susan.poland@usda.gov](mailto:susan.poland@usda.gov).

See VCRD Community Leadership Guide pages 101 to 103 for more resources on developing outdoor recreation <https://www.vtrural.org/leadership/guide>.

USDA Rural Development has a community facilities program that may be able to support recreation opportunities as part of a larger economic development strategy. VCRD can also provide grant writing and assistance. Visit <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/vt> and contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 978-760-1238.





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## ► Boost Town Capacity

Community Chair: **Gary Moore**

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

Resource Team Members: **Katie Buckley**, *Vermont League of Cities & Towns*

**Ericka Hoffman-Keiss**, *Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation*

**Nick Kramer**, *Vermont Council on Rural Development*

Community participants: **Peep Benjamin, Ashleen Buchanan, Linda Duxbury, Will Giblin, Brian Horbal, Jenn Grossi, Ryan Lockwood, Peter Mallary, Gary Moore, Don-Petit Homme, Jared Pendak, Monique Priestly, Ted Unkles**

A task force could come together to evaluate models for building Town staffing capacity to drive community and economic development, housing, communications and other initiatives. This could include evaluating a Town Manager model, planning for a full time Town Administrator, or finding resources to hire an Economic Development Officer who could help to build unity, support Select Board leadership, and pro-actively help to advance Town and community projects and initiatives. ARPA funds could be a starting point, and building this capacity could help Bradford capture its share of state and federal recovery dollars in the pipeline.

### What is the current status?

- The Select Board and existing town staff do a great job and work really hard, and often have limited capacity to implement long-term projects.
- There are a variety of different volunteer efforts in the town.
- There's a lack of clear communications channels, there's not always great public understanding about what's going on in town government.
- There are also human resources strains in emergency management, town fire department, etc.
- There are a number of town-level infrastructure assessments that have already been done, and a number that could be updated or have missing information.
- TRORC, GMEDC, and VLCT currently provide a lot of support capacity for short-term projects.

### Action Steps

1. Build a concrete survey to help gauge the town's existing economic and community resources and to identify gaps and / or opportunities.
2. Look at the Town Plan & Moving Forward Together ideas to help refine the understanding of existing needs.
3. Connect with other towns with similar circumstances – what has been successful elsewhere? (Thetford)
4. Build a statement of things that could be done to boost capacity and help address gaps identified.
5. Line up definitions of different roles (e.g. town manager, administrator), and other ways to boost town capacity.
6. Based on the assessment, conduct a community-wide survey and focus groups to explore public opinion of the issue. Important to reach specifically to business owners and youth.
7. Connect to neighboring towns that may be in similar circumstances to explore pooling resources. Could fund a joint position.
8. Break this task force into smaller working groups. Assign homework (i.e. smaller tasks to be completed between regular monthly meetings) that aligns with members interests.

## Resources

- **Katie Buckley**, VT League of Cities & Towns (VLCT), [kbuckley@vlct.org](mailto:kbuckley@vlct.org).
- **Erika Hoffman-Keiss**, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC) [erika@gmedc.com](mailto:erika@gmedc.com). Erika can follow-up with contact info for Thetford leadership that recently underwent a similar process.
- **Peter Gregory**, Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC), [pgregory@trorc.org](mailto:pgregory@trorc.org). TRORC has funding to support municipalities in deciding what to do with ARPA funding. May be able to expand to support this conversation.
- **Gary Holloway**, Department of Housing & Community Development, [gary.holloway@vermont.gov](mailto:gary.holloway@vermont.gov). Could be of help support issues related to downtown designation program.
- **ARPA** funding might be able to support temporary components of this work. Connect with Katie Buckley.
- **Oxbow, Riverbend, NVU, UVM**—schools and training programs could be a helpful avenue to connect to youth and bring in new energy.
- **International City / County Manager Association** may have helpful resources. <https://icma.org/>.
- **VCRD Community Leadership Guide** <https://www.vtrural.org/leadership/guide> The guide has many more resources on specific topics, depending on what areas of need the group identifies.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

### Action Step Recommendations:

Explore and reach out to other towns that have recently brought on economic development staff at the town to lead and support local economic development efforts. The towns of Enosburg and Northfield recently brought on Economic Development coordinator positions and could offer some local insights. Other towns like Dover, Wilmington, or Waterbury have had ED coordinators for several years.

Explore the possibility of developing a Bradford downtown master plan that looks at the economic opportunities (along with public space, streetscape, building improvements) and assets to capitalize on and develop an economic development strategy for the town. This could include a market study, marketing and wayfinding plan, and physical plan for infrastructure improvements.

Talk to other VT towns that have gone through the review process for shifting to Town Manager / Administrator models or Economic Development Officers.

Begin 5- and 10-year visioning on how this increased capacity will advance community goals. This will help with casemaking to the community and help refine the kind of staffing you might need.

Build agreement within the current Town governance structures that they want to do this. Ensure that the existing Selectboard is strongly behind the exploration of these options.

Identify similar sized towns in your region for info on their staffing structures - perhaps there is a mentor or sister town that is a few steps further along on community initiatives and staffing that you might build a relationship with.

Explore the avenues for ARPA fund use by municipalities.

Engage with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to explain the different governance models and their potential costs and how the role of the Selectboard would change.

A Town Manager model comes with hurdles, possibly including a charter change that involves multiple public hearings, a town meeting or special town meeting vote, and approval by the legislature. This would mean the town could be years away from accomplishing its goals. A Town Administrator (TA) model is more flexible and nimble, requires no voter approval and could be implemented quickly, to start making real change happen sooner. Timing is crucial considering the funding opportunities that exist now - ex. ARPA funding - with schedules that have deadlines (ARPA - committed by 12/31/24; spent by 12/31/26).

Consider hiring a person to focus on Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. This person's role would include revising policies at the town level to ensure they're inclusive, arranging for training and other resources on Inclusion, and ensuring all residents are being heard in this process as it advances. Inclusion should touch on race, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual identity, religion, and other factors. If not hiring a person who is solely focused on this, then make this work an explicit part of another person's job, and attach meaningful accountability measures to it so that it isn't left by the wayside or done in a "just checking the box" fashion. Account for this in the budgeting – equity demands tangible investment, which includes paying people fairly for their labor (avoid the pitfall of expecting people – especially people from marginalized groups – to do this work on a volunteer basis).

Establish a local housing task force or commission that could serve in an advisory role to the planning commission and/or select board. While this relies on volunteers and would not increase town staffing capacity, it could be a way to engage people and generate information that helps Bradford shape its community development and housing goals. This 2007 handout from the Vermont Planning Information Center has info about Housing Commissions and Task forces:

<http://vpic.info/Publications/Reports/Implementation/HousingPrograms.pdf>.

Consider looking into a position that works jointly on economic and community development. This could help organize the housing task force (or other projects around housing, like a housing inventory or needs assessment).

Consider whether any staff could be shared between towns. Communities often do this with a zoning administrator, for example; for a while around 2010, the towns of Dover and Wilmington shared the cost of an economic development professional. The TA position could be shared between other neighboring towns in a contract for services model to help fund the position. Other towns could contribute/transfer some of their ARPA funds to seed the position as a 2-year test run.

Creating a community and economic development position to focus on town capacity in specific areas is a good start. Being open to welcoming resettled immigrants/ refugees is another way to increase capacity. This builds economic development only when the town is prepared to receive them with the proper and necessary resources.

### **Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations**

Connect with other communities that have explored and/or pursued additional staff capacity.

Connect with Thetford town offices and learn about the process they went through to assess the possibility of moving to a Town Manager structure. It was an exhaustive process and I am certain that their committee members would be willing to share their knowledge. It has not been a smooth road since, so they would also be able to share lessons learned.

Randolph hired their Director of Economic Development not that long ago and would also be a good resource from that perspective. Consider a shared resource along the lines of the shared energy coordinator that serves Thetford, Strafford and several other towns.

Winooski and Brattleboro have Diversity, Equity and Inclusion roles.

Connect with Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission and Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation for guidance. As your regional planning commission and regional development corporation, they likely have knowledge about surrounding towns' interests and needs, and might be able to help advise on whether there are opportunities for collaboration. They could help determine regional needs/priorities (supported by data) that could be included in the TA job description.

## **Potential Funding Sources**

Explore USDA- Rural Development's Rural Business Development Grants and ARPA funding to support bringing on an economic development coordinator to the town.

USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Development Grants could possibly be a resource for funding some of these items. Contact Susan Poland, Business Programs Specialist 802-828-6002 or email [susan.poland@usda.gov](mailto:susan.poland@usda.gov).

Explore ACCD/AOT's Better Connections Plan to develop a downtown master plan. Visit <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections> and contact Richard Amore, 802-585-0061 and [richard.amore@vermont.gov](mailto:richard.amore@vermont.gov).

Explore ACCD's Municipal Planning Grant Program to develop a downtown master plan. Visit <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-9grant> and contact Jenni Lavoie, 802-828-1948, [jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov](mailto:jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov) or Jacob Hemmerick, 802-828-5249, [jacob.hemmerick@vermont.gov](mailto:jacob.hemmerick@vermont.gov).

Explore ACCD's Vermont Community Development Program planning grants to develop an economic development study. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>.

Reach out to the VT Town & City Management Association to network and learn more. They also host a conference that could be a networking opportunity <https://www.vtcma.org/>.

Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC) may have funding resources. Contact Erika Hoffman-Kiess, who was in attendance at the Community Visit. [erika@gmedc.com](mailto:erika@gmedc.com).

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission is tasked with supporting municipalities in handling the influx of ARPA funding. Kevin Geiger was in attendance at the Community Visit: [kgeiger@trorc.org](mailto:kgeiger@trorc.org).

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission also has a specific EDA grant project how to help lift up the creative economy in the region.

Work with Vermont League of Cities and Towns and/or Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation to see if they can help with recruitment.

Consider reaching out to the UVM MPA program to see if they have any students who might be good candidates, or any other colleges/universities in VT with promising political science major graduates.

Include remote work as a part of the offer. Consider including housing (a local apartment/house rental) for the chosen candidate to help sweeten deal, especially since housing is such an issue.

Consider the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI)- I know much of their work is national, but is they are focused on tech workforce development and capacity building in rural communities. Visit <https://ruralinnovation.us/>.

VLCT is a great resource for ARPA funding assistance and in identifying other funding sources and models for increasing staff capacity. Connect with VLCT about possible facilitation resources and models to develop/lead this internal conversation. Contact Katie Buckley at [kbuckley@vlct.org](mailto:kbuckley@vlct.org).

Northern Borders Regional Commission could be a potential funding source. Visit <https://www.nbrc.gov/>.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) through VHCB helps small communities with grant writing assistance to help advance local economic development projects. This would likely be a resource once some projects are identified, but it would be good to reach out and understand what they have to offer. They've been very helpful in helping communities access funding opportunities for projects. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at [mariah@vhcb.org](mailto:mariah@vhcb.org).



# Moving Forward Together Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 85 Bradford community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on July 28th 2021, and through a paper and online survey.

*Although the prioritization work of the Moving Forward Together 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.*

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## Creative Economy

Visiting Team: Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Nick Kramer (scribe), Richard Amore, Beth Awaithey, Nick Bennette, Amy Cunningham, Xusana Davis, Kate McCarthy

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Old Church Theater has put on 5-6 shows a year since 1984, which draw visitors from the whole Upper Valley.
- Bradford's geography, setting & traditional built environment
- Downtown business work hard to maintain their charm.
- Tremendous amount of local talent in Bradford and surrounding towns.
- The Bradford Academy building.
- The public Library and its programs.
- The Hometown poetry series. Poems about place up all around downtown businesses.
- There are 4 great playgrounds in town.
- The waterfall draws many visitors.
- The gazebo and teen-led mural.
- Vermont North By Hand group of local artisans.
- 48-hr film slam held in the BA.
- There is a cooperative, rather than competitive, spirit among most local artists.
- There are two restaurants in town that offer live music.
- The golf course, tennis courts & boat landing.
- The Space on Main, its director, and all of its programs.
- The regional chamber appreciates the importance of the Creative Economy.
- The railroad that runs through town periodically offers scenic tours.
- Trivia night at the Colatina.
- There are several destination businesses in town that draw visitors from afar.
- There are currently a number of younger business owners on Main St.

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### What are the Challenges?

- An intergenerational disconnect.
- Lack of a centralized information hub.
- The Old Church Theater is facing steep renovation costs.
- It's difficult to find support for artists and their spaces.
- Hard for musicians to make a living.
- Fear of rising taxes leads to a resistance to change & new initiatives.
- Lack of flexibility in the permitting of businesses and events.
- Culture of apathy and pessimism.
- Not everyone feels welcome in the community. Many feel excluded.
- Hard for artists to connect with one another.
- How do you gauge local appetite for particular genres / styles / media?
- The town doesn't sell itself very well.
- Little signage to draw folks off the interstate.
- Lack of a draw for younger people.
- Lack of consensus on the importance of aesthetics.
- Perception that art is a "hobby."
- Lack of an Art Center that could serve as a funding hub.

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Bradford is the home of the first globe produced in North America. Can we capitalize on that history and incorporate into our brand?
- Revive "Midnight Madness" or some new version to draw more people to the downtown.
- Establish a local Arts Council that could advocate for artists and help drive forward work in this arena.
- Foster deeper connections to businesses and individuals that have the capacity to help fundamentally support the arts.
- Turn trash cans and bike racks on Main St. into art pieces.
- Connect with and learn from other communities that have had success in this arena. Fairlee has a community arts board. Catamount Arts could be a support / fiscal sponsor.
- Increased signage to draw visitors from the interstate.
- Community-drive full building mural downtown.
- Redevelop the vacant parcel across from the library into a downtown public hub.
- The Old Church Theater has had plans to become an art center.

- Increase public transportation access for folks living in neighboring towns, and walkability / bikeability downtown.
- Increase the diversity and variety of the entertainment offered in town.
- People with privilege could help support those without in positions of leadership.
- Create a line-item in the town budget to support the arts.

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This has been an incredible conversation, and inspiring to see that the folks in this room all totally appreciate and want to underscore the importance / value of the arts.
- It's all about having a varied and diverse artistic ecosystem.
- It's clear that Bradford is a major hub for surrounding towns. That seems important to capitalize on, moving forward.
- Heard many times and want to reinforce the shifting narrative from art being a hobby to being a livelihood. Important to center dignity. Artists should not have to beg for funding.
- Focusing on the municipal budget can be powerful. I often say "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value."
- Important to recognize when one person is carrying too much burden / work. How can community members help share the load?
- Bradford has the best "backside" of any town in Vermont. Are there ways to capitalize on the view and setting behind Main Street?
- It's imperative to get youth involved in leadership positions.
- Bradford is a tremendous town with so many assets. Toot your own horns!
- Want to underscore the value of connecting with nearby towns and sharing resources and ideas. This can be mutually really beneficial.
- There is a real value in putting energy into structures that carry some accountability like an arts council.
- It's wonderful to see such a collaborative spirit among local artists, and also such a broad definition of the arts.
- It sounds like this is a community with a course that you're all ready to chart. You're already partway down the path to success.

## Youth & Recreation

Visiting Team: Nick Kramer (facilitator), Jenna Koloski (scribe), Richard Amore, Beth Awaithey, Nick Bennette, Xusana Davis, Kate McCarthy

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- A business community supportive of youth orgs.
- Parks and rec, youth sports, library – many organizations that support youth.
- A lot of motivation in town and people putting together opportunities for youth and recreation.
- Wide variety of outdoor spaces available – fields, parks in town, 517 acres at Elizabeth park with 10+ miles of trails – many outdoor activities.
- School has an 80-acre forested area and working on an outdoor classroom building.
- The natural setting is an asset – river, hills.
- We have straight flat roads where people could bike.
- Old Church Theater produces at least one youth acted and oriented show per year.
- Golf course right in town.
- Soccer golf course.
- Disk golf course at Oxbow.
- Town has set aside money for swimming lessons (haven't been able to use that for the last couple of years) .
- Bradford resident donated over \$300K 20 years ago to use the interest for youth orgs to approve facilities for children in Bradford. Was generating over \$10K a year that was handed out. That has accumulated to over \$80K due to lack of projects coming forward.
- Blue Wave Taekwondo.
- Library has youth programming.
- Dirt track at Oxbow as a "qualified" asset for those that like to run.
- We have a good sidewalk in town – other towns don't have that.
- Great deal of collaboration between Clara Martin, schools, mentoring, youth programs.
- Teen Center is an asset.
- Highly engaged residents and parents (could encourage more engagement) .
- Through COVID – the elementary school hot lunch program provided meals for Bradford, Newbury, and beyond. Have also purchased a van to continue some of that programming in the future.
- The Bradford Academy is an asset.
- After school programs off and on and summer programs serving 60-65 kids – that has been disbanded with COVID.
- Riverbend career and tech program is an asset.
- Youth summertime theater was a month-long theater camp – the theater has taken over but there has not been the leadership to continue that program
- We have a tennis court with pickle ball.
- We have bear ridge.
- Fairgrounds.
- The Space on Main will start hosting more kid-oriented events – gaming and D & D.
- Elizabeth Park is a huge draw – people come from all over to use it.
- Baldwins Bridge – potential future swimming hole.
- Businesses host interns and hands on learning.
- Childcare programs and preschools as assets and home daycares.
- There are several adult sports leagues (challenge is many have not heard of this) .
- New auditorium at Oxbow – nice screen and sound system.

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## What are the Challenges?

- We need more sports or activities for adults in town.
- Transportation – getting kids and adults to places
- They're not here.
- A lot of people don't know about some of these things.
- Bradford doesn't do a good job of promoting itself – we could be bringing in more people and having organizations work at cross promotion.
- There are a lot of skateboarders but no skate park.
- Lack of leadership to take a look at facilities - now one school board covers area schools so there is better central leadership.
- Lack of indoor spaces for recreation – particularly challenging in the winter – nowhere to burn off energy.
- Finding enough people with the energy, enthusiasm, and time for new projects – it is hard to find people who can fit this work in after the rest of their lives.
- We lost our rec director during COVID but are in the process now of hiring for that role – it is only part time so don't have a lot of capacity. They are also having to start programming from scratch. It will take more than that one person.
- Town doesn't have a dedicated grant manager.
- We need to better fund the recreation assets – the track, youth programming, etc. More town support or connecting them better with grants.
- We need to include youth in planning and programming. The most attended events by youth are ones that are collaborative with youth. But those are a hard sell to the "powers that be."
- We need equipment available for people to use recreation assets.
- What do kids want to do? What are things kids can do independently...not sponsored by an adult? Clubs that don't have to do with athletics.
- We need to create opportunities for youth to be leaders.
- There are some great spaces in town that feel abandoned and forgotten – like the space across from the library (it is privately owned).
- We need to improve maintenance of our sidewalks. Especially in the winter. In the summer you have the vines and branches in the way.
- Businesses are out shoveling their own sidewalks in a snow storm.
- 15 years ago had a community forum about safe spaces for kids – but there was no follow through. Nowhere to go from there. Have tried initiatives that have fallen flat.
- We need bike lanes – have tried before but gone now.
- Challenge of finding the intersection between town activities and school activities and how to merge the 2 – as a community member I don't know what is happening at the school.
- There is no sidewalk to connect lower plain, where there is development potential, to downtown.
- We have many organizations with similar missions – need to improve efficiency.
- If we have a space for teens – we need to think about safety and insurance.
- Who takes the lead on communication and coordination? Who is the facilitator and funnel for communication and promotion?
- Flood zone compliance is a challenge.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- We need a full-time recreation director. Part time isn't enough. And that person is going to work full time anyhow but not get paid.
- We need a dedicated grants manager in town.
- Build a skate park. We shouldn't limit kids abilities to do something they love. The interest is there. Where towns have skate parks – you see so much vibrancy and opportunities for connection. Great for kids locally and surrounding areas.
- Hang out/chill zones for youth in town. Independent of parents.
- We need bike lanes to help people get around in town.
- Pump track – mountain biking is becoming huge and its an opportunity for kids to learn.
- PR person that covers the schools and community – we struggle with that at the school. School knows what we're up to but don't have time to share.
- Starts a youth council with students and representatives from community orgs and groups.
- Create and better promote current adult sports leagues.
- Swimming holes – work with the town and property around Baldwin Bridge to be a swimming hole.
- Task for new rec director – create a central place to share rec opportunities.
- Improve basketball courts – have been some challenges doing that work in the past related to it being in a flood zone – major challenge in memorial field.
- There is work going on around a new facility – planning through BCDC – playing facilities not in a flood plain. They could probably use input and help. "5 to 25" area.
- Build a dog park. An opportunity for recreation and connectivity.
- Would love to see a youth hangout/skate/whatever area at the Elizabeth Park zone. Good opportunity for families with multi-age kids.
- Opportunity to get together with community gatherings – block picnics, super welcoming.
- Sign in the center of town to share what activities are going on in town. Our new sign is underutilized.
- I would like to see non-sports things for youth. There are some but it's tricky to find and connect to.
- Brainstorming sessions with youth to offer opportunities and guide us.
- Teen center has a youth leadership component. Have seen that teens feel empowered and will be the people who take it on in the future. It's their teen center. Could see that happening with more projects in town. It helps to incubate future leaders.



- With a youth council – need to focus on diversity and inclusivity. Not just the kids “earmarked” as leaders. Also should do visioning in schools or other settings.
- Increase indoor activities for teens and kids.
- Family movie nights at Oxbow with the new auditorium.
- Create a shared unit of decision makers that can build that connection between the school and community.
- For screen time – we need internet. It is very frustrating for kids. The teen center needs new equipment – video games at the hub are popular and we need to get the latest equipment so teens can play.
- Bus route the pick up kids and get them to places like the hub, library, and other places in town and get them back home.
- It would be nice to make the river more of a spot to go and hang out.
- Walking path along the river with picnic tables.
- If we focus on skate parks and pump tracks – we need to focus on elements to bring in people that aren’t into that also – tends to be male dominated.
- Develop a rec center.
- Indoor pool/Town pool.

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Bradford has a huge variety of spaces – many of the assets described could also be used for non-sports activities. Another asset I heard mentioned was sidewalks. Then heard the need for spaces for kids to hang out. Could you consider whether sidewalks or other public spaces could become youth-friendly spaces for kids to hang out safely? Can help connect generations and help connect the youth to the community. Improve safety and belonging.
  - Heard challenges with capacity – hard to have great ideas but not have the capacity to participate. But I also heard that this is a hub for the region – when it comes to capacity, is there opportunities for regional coordination? Maybe even a rec director funded by multiple communities...or cross promotion. Also goats eat poison ivy! (could tackle ivy at Baldwin bridge).
  - There is so much stuff here! Everyone doesn’t even know about it. You have a lot going on for you. Some places want to do initiatives – you have the will, the people, and the space – often space is a challenge. Space is a real asset. Wherever youth are that they aren’t here – let’s go there. Let’s marry what we hear today with what we hear in the youth forum. I didn’t hear a lot about accessibility – that is a big topic with an aging population. It is about the changing needs of our life and is always relevant. Might be something to consider in planning.
  - There are so many resources already here and an opportunity to stitch and link them together and promote those things.
- Youth as stakeholders – creating and supporting youth agency. Creating things that allow them to move freely around town. Resources and capacity – all of these things have a cost and how to embed that into the planning and support. Critical links to key resources such as transportation, internet, etc. Where will those pieces come in to enable these ideas to happen.
- We have a community with many missions – would be great to be on one page and work collectively. Broadband is not just an issue here – something that needs to be improved across Vermont. Tying in internships and skills based learning – could do that with summer camps. Also get the arts involved – great to connect that to youth. Transportation also an issue across the state – would be great to bring resources to that.
  - Commend you on the assets and sounds like communications is a real challenge. How can you use those assets and open up to the community and give a sense of ownership and empower people to use it. Also love the idea of partnering with neighboring towns.
  - There is so much programming going on – all of these are key elements of social infrastructure that bring people together that may never cross paths. That helps build social cohesion which is key to lifting up the community.
  - There has never been a better opportunity to invest in recreation than now. There are many opportunities at the state right now – and many don’t require a match at all.

## Inclusivity & Welcoming

Visiting Team: Xusana Davis (facilitator), Nick Kramer (scribe), Richard Amore, Beth Awaithey, Nick Bennette, Jenna Koloski, Kate McCarthy

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is a church in town that is open & affirming.
- There is a library that is open & welcoming.
- New school superintendent and district with an explicit focus on diversity.
- School meals continue to be delivered to families throughout the summer. There have been positive lessons learned through the pandemic.
- There are a number of regional supporting organizations in town that can offer valuable support / capacity.
- Tri-valley Transit.
- Active Food Shelf.
- Some handicap accessible infrastructure.
- Orange County Senior Center.
- There is a diversity of people from Bradford and its surrounding towns who come together in Bradford as a hub.
- The town’s location & built environment.
- Upcoming music series centered around black musicians
- This forum.
- Despite initial frostiness, generally folks form long-standing loyal friendships.
- The Bradford Resilience group can be a help in spreading messaging around critical issues.
- Pervasive signs expressing welcoming & anti-hate messaging.

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## What are the Challenges?

- There is no “welcome wagon” for folks moving to town. No centralized information hub to share local knowledge.
- The town is ill-equipped to provide any sort of translation services, despite foreign language speakers being present in the community.
- Downtown sidewalks can be difficult to navigate. Crosswalks are currently pretty dangerous.
- People of color feel uncertain of their community status & personal safety in the community.
- There is little to attract prospective visitors of color.
- Racial and homophobic slurs in public spaces are not at all uncommon.
- Some people support tourists for the economic activity they bring, but not the tourists themselves.
- Localism & rudeness to newcomers.
- Small town mindset.
- Problematic narrative about affordable housing. Lots of “Not in My Back Yard”ism.
- Small towns in the south are more welcoming than here.
- Newcomers feel they have to “borrow street cred” to be accepted and / or safe.
- The recent intensity of the conversations about virtual access to public meetings demonstrate the hesitancy of leadership to change.
- Families of color have had their property destroyed or vandalized.
- A common reaction to acts of hate is “oh that could never happen in this town.”
- The pandemic has exacerbated social isolation.
- Transportation barriers also serve to isolate many folks in the community.
- There are no community-based solutions for emergency housing needs.
- “Take Back Vermont” sentiment remains strong among some members of the community.
- People of Color often feel they have to “shrink” themselves or be overly friendly to stay safe.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- An ally group that could help to report acts of hate and support victims.
- Different & welcoming events.
- Need to move forward even if we make mistakes along the way.
- More events centered around marginalized cultures.
- Public conversations about Abenaki land and heritage.
- Bradford Pride Parade.
- ASL classes exist locally. These could be better marketed.
- Activism is important to discuss in the school system. How are we ensuring all history is taught?
- “Welcome to Bradford” pamphlet.
- Have speakers of certain linguistic & cultural minorities come speak in schools. This can be really impactful.
- DEI training for municipal leaders.
- Culture change is an important foundation for all of this work.
- Town, municipal & community trainings about gender & gender identity.
- How can Bradford become more welcoming to international immigrants, and also support & celebrate the unseen people already living here with diverse backgrounds?
- Budget priorities should reflect inclusivity. Sidewalk plowing, for instance.
- Better transparency in town government and decision-making.
- Continue the pandemic expansions of access to public processes, virtual meeting options, mail-in voting, etc.
- Treat isolation as a public health concern.
- If you help with downtown infrastructure maintenance, you get to be part of creating a downtown mural.
- A long-term plan that helps guarantee continuity of this work.
- Zoom sessions of municipal electoral candidates.
- Leverage local artistic talent to help change culture.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This topic is coming up more & more across the state, which means there are continually increasing opportunities for mutual learning and idea sharing.
- It is imperative for communities to address this issue head on, and to make space for conversations like this.
- Other communities have seen great success in centering events around food. Maybe an international food fest could be an avenue to help celebrate the diversity already here.
- Important also to examine what employment opportunities exist in town to attract a diverse group of potential residents.
- There are lots of translation services available in the online space. Happy to help connect to some of those.
- Is there a nearby restorative justice center and is restorative justice a model that community members might be interested in exploring?
- It’s great to hear about the events and series happening that highlight artists of color, and the prevalence of welcoming signage.
- It’s great to see conversations like this one happening, and to acknowledge all the work still to do. Who isn’t in the room? How do you keep the conversation going and spread across the community? Partnering with certain groups / individuals in town to reach broader audiences can be effective.
- I’m hearing an openness to do this work across a variety of sectors, which is great.
- Want to thank everyone who shared something personal tonight. Takes a real courage.
- Lots of strength in this room.

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## Infrastructure & Connectivity

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Alyssa Johnson (scribe), Tayt Brooks, Katie Buckley, Rebecca Ellis, Peter Gregory, Erika Hoffman-Keiss, Sarah Jackson, Michelle Kersey, Misty Sinsigalli

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- “There is none” – have to go down the street to take calls – no cell coverage in the Village center.
- On the hills we have reasonable reception – in the Valley it’s been very poor.
- Verizon put a tower on a hilltop two years ago – you can be standing on Main Street looking at the tower and they have one bar.
- Every visitor that comes in my shop- no service – gaps in Village Center.
- Pleasant Street – fine reception 20’ feet up.
- Hole for cell service in the Village Center.
- Accessibility to the interstate is an advantage.
- Municipal water and sewer – adequate and ability to expand – expanded to the lower plain for a grocery store.
- Independently elected water and sewer commission.
- Adequate, meeting state standards, built in 1974 and will need updates.
- Plant was upgraded in late 1990s.
- Railroad track that comes through town.
- River through town.
- Bus service, well served North and South from town (but no west or east service).
- High school and a tech center.
- We don’t have internet widely available – some guest networks downtown – in front of Space on Main for access.
- Most businesses don’t let you access wifi.
- Library has wifi.
- Spectrum, Topsham Telephone as providers – Topsham too slow for pictures? Topsham is DSL >> parts of town that are just dial up.
- Bradford became a member of the EC Fiber network – coming later this year or realistically later.
- EC Fiber has a rollout plan.
- Library as a central hub, even during COVID – could use libraries outside that people could borrow – anything people do, events to attend with or without children.
- Shipping is easy – post office is open 40 hours a week, and FedEx is often available.
- Commercial rail? DO they deliver to Farmway? Twice or three times a year.
- Public boat launch on the river.
- Beautiful river – doesn’t have a bike trail – unfortunate.
- There was an attempt at a bike trail several years ago – there is an easement around the trail but a challenge.
- 10 miles of pedestrian trails
- 517 acres preserved.
- Waits River.
- Dam.
- Lot of affordable housing.
- Centralized fire station – response time is quicker.
- Farmway.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Sidewalks and connectivity – built out
- No sidewalks to the lower plain, even though there is a lot of pedestrian traffic there. People going to Hannaford’s walk in the breakdown lane.
- Bridge by the breakdown lane – dangerous with logging trucks and iced over in the winter.
- Difficult to get to the library because the sidewalk is rough – and a lot of people walk to the library.
- TRORC did a sidewalk assessment a few years/decade ago.
- Planning Commission applied for a study.
- School > Low forest – did a feasibility study to determine what it would take to get a pedestrian connection to the low forest – did a study under TRORC and VT Department of Ed.
- We need streetlights – especially for coming down from the interstate.
- A lot of the town doesn’t have streetlights.
- Bradford has accepted that the state will control Main Street/South Main Street/Route 5 – speed limits are too high, gets plowed by the state – town does not have direct control.
- Folks ride bikes on the sidewalk because the road is too fast – not a good situation for children.
- Frost heaves in the sidewalks – gaps of an inch or inch and a half.
- The cost of replacing sidewalks is astronomical – but perhaps even leveling some out would be helpful.
- On Pleasant Street the road bed is collapsing into the actual street – retaining wall itself is starting to swell out – millions of dollars – next year’s budget – problem that will need to be addressed.
- Little Rivers healthcare – South Main Street.
- Assisted living community.
- Mental health clinic.
- Veteran’s housing.
- Way we promote the town – golf course, Wright’s Mountain.
- Every entity has their own Facebook page/communication – is there a way to promote the town collectively – how are we promoting to outsiders or other things collectively.
- Library. Parks and Recs – each group is individual.
- Town website as an asset – could that infrastructure be created?
- Town website but it also inadequate.
- As someone who came into town during COVID – moved here, wanted to become part of the community, connecting with

real estate agents about some of the things that are happening – feel like you are out in Timbuktu.

- Bus Service – Tri Valley Transit – commuter service is wonderful to Lebanon and White River Junction. Weaknesses is circulator service/in town transportation – Fairlee and Wells River is a long way to go for a bus so service isn't.
- Keeping businesses here and in business – don't make enough money to save in business.
- No real place for visitors to stay – no local place where I would comfortably send folks.
- There are Airbnbs and Bradford Motel...not a place to stay.
- Limited resources for overnight visits.
- Spend a lot of time giving directions because they can't get anything on the phone – Verizon one way, AT&T another, T-Mobile forget it.
- Fire and rescue squad (FAST) – all volunteer – the way the town has changed, few people work here. Formerly a lot of

farmer's – like many other areas, response time is not good. This time of day in the middle of the day – only 2 or 3 people – surrounding mutual aid have the same issue. Will send a lot of mutual aid, but other have the same amount.

- On average 4 calls a day for ambulance – FAST squad can make very few of those – tough to leave during the day.
- 2 big dairy farms.
- Given climate and COVID brings high winds. Lack of water, drought, - how well is Bradford prepared given the experience in the past year? Especially with people coming here after the past years?
- Washington Electric lost power for DAYS in Bradford – outside of water sewer, no water. Cell service at the tower also went down once their generator went out – power will go out for days with high winds.
- Washington Electric Coop mostly uses cow power/Coventry – stations are linked to GMP which has caused problems.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- Only one convenience store – would like another.
- Update the town's website – soon! Website serves a municipal function – town government type things – communication part of it is no one's part?
- Connecting Bradford and Bradford listserv are assets >> Connecting Bradford is a Facebook page managed by an individual > integrate events on the website >> Is there a way to combine those > a Bradford page that is easy to find your way around.
- Something that attracts people to come to town – biking and walking trails – something that attracts people – right now if you can't hike a mountain you can't come.
- Some high-end restaurants from White River to bring people.
- No municipal bathroom – Hannaford and Bradford Academy have bathrooms.
- Older businesses have restrooms in the basement.
- Slowing down the traffic in the town is critical. Trucks and cars coming through prevent sense of community – trucks go 40-50 MPH. Speed limit is 25 but no one follows it.
- Trucks haul logs and chips – legislature has acquiesced to pressure but can't be on the interstate because they are too heavy – but max weight limit >> If it matched Federal limits.
- Newbury has a booster in the church tower – has Bradford looked at boosting a signal? Communication between the towns and providers? There isn't a current working group and communications.
- Verizon/AT&T boosters – folks might switch – form a group to reach out to someone.
- Booster on 113 to Vershire for internet.
- Lives right outside of town – towers are far from town. Cell reception is far. I use a VP/video phone – I get the little dots where you have no service. I live 15-20 minutes out of town. Can FCC be involved? Can we ask them questions – increase cost. It's an internet wiring issue- there is a cost related to this – I would really like to see this problem solved.
- Could EC Fiber be the answer this? EC Fiber won't help because Topsham has a monopoly for farther out areas.
- We just got a communication from Topsham Telephone because they have a fabulous plan that won't help – they will

expand on roads with no service vs. those that already have DSL.

- Get a group of people together to specifically address Topsham Telephone to address their service in town – 135 people have the service.
- Bradford used to have a full-time manager who would coordinate these issues – consider having a full-time professional town manager. Currently have a part time admin who is not professional trained. Formerly had someone with a background in municipal planning.
- Well trained professional moved on to another job – select board have had several folks – some folks work best than other.
- Economic development – have someone reach out for the town proactively – nervous about places with low inventory – no one from the town proactively reaching out. Place that is only open until noon.
- Town administration – ought to consider town manager form of government. Select board is very busy. Town manager can oversee and support SB. Hard for select board members to pay attention to the minutia- instead they are just putting out fires. Town manager has a lot of authority. Issues with fire apparatus, public safety admin etc.
- Update town webpage – affiliate groups so information is not spread in a million different places – bring everything together on one page – would need to coordinate with a lot of folks.
- At one time Bradford was very busy. There was a lot of pretty buildings, now gone, vacant storefronts. Trees downtown.
- Enhancing the aesthetics - no trees on Main Street. Took away all of the trash containers – tourists are not happy. Adds to the beauty.
- Newbury has beautiful trees, Woodbury has poles with vets. Get a group together – Beautification committees? Dress the downtown – lights across Main Street.
- Assets of small-town living – there isn't a hotel.
- A lot of elderly people – would be great to have younger people in town – we want people growing up and being educated – we don't want people leaving the state – we want

- them to say – not the same over and over again – want people to stay in the town.
- Select board keeps appointing the same people to commitments and responsibilities in town – same people going older. Zoning administrator and other roles are the same people. Select board should take proactive action to find younger people – younger people on the library board and coffee shop. Has to be affirmative action to get people involved in local government.
  - Add the Perce Industrial park as an asset – has room for expansion.
  - Parks and Rec director – consider a full-time position in park and rec – considers youth, and also is a more broad wellness person – looking at the wellness of people as a whole, trails.
  - Looking for a person right now. Looking at a walking trail – memorial field, red tape bc floodplain (8 years ago). Fars looks at a wellness center. Hard to find someone part time right now – Skip Barrett and others. Takes a lot of time and the select board also full time. A lot of committees – takes a lot of time – people that are willing to commit time.
  - Hanover, Norwich, Thetford have taken sections of the Main Street for jersey barriers and outside seating/vignettes that people can decorate.
  - Town has Village designation for the downtown that can provide funding for façade enhancement, grants etc.
  - Redid Barton Street, which has trees- idea was to come around. Grant supported with a match from the town.
  - Water is the most valuable asset in the world. It's an asset Bradford has a lot of – good groundwater, springs, fill 3500 gallon swimming pool.
  - Parking has been a challenge – with empty storefronts less of a big deal. Lost 15 spaces with redid. Tennis in Aubuchon building – underground vault os on progress. Parking may become an issue again with success of Space on Main and restaurants.
  - Bradford has developed with its back to the River.
  - Cobblestone/boardwalk on the side of the golf course with historic lamppost, hanging baskets - working with Dan Smith at the golf course – up to the falls/boat launch. With sitting boxes – sign me up to help.
  - Re-approach the railroad about access to the railroad – have to go across the railroad to get to the river. Absolutely no easement – huge liability for the railroad.
  - Can't make a path unless we have a legal easement.
  - Walking to Hannaford's- restriping of crosswalks, bike paths.
  - Are there committees working on these things?
  - Field at river confluence is conserved – sold to another farmer – is it a conservation and recreation.
  - Need to know who is doing what >> legal right of way across.
  - Three senior Federal representatives with a lot of power > need the reps to get over it.
  - Group coordinating with Federal agencies?.
  - Get a tunnel under the interstate >> A school board subcommittee did that work – they have money.
  - Transportation – connecting folks who take Amtrak or Dartmouth coach because Tri-Valley doesn't have that type of thing – geared more towards commuters than a one-off trip.
  - Can't get to Manchester or Burlington – East-west is challenging.
  - Ex-train stations in town – both limited >> how fast can the train go.
  - Affordability for taxpayer for hiring contractors for infrastructure.
  - Have a local newspaper – Journal Opinion – resource to use more to have people post things.
  - Issue of parking at the library.
  - Part time taxi service run by someone on limited hours – plan to get to the bus station “kind of futuristic.”
  - One piece of a study from the planning commission – people in the survey really wanted a community center with a pool and other types of facilities in the town.
  - Developable land close to downtown that is not currently used (in private ownership).
  - Long term and short-term planning group and prioritize low hanging vs. longer period of time – sometimes short term and easy to accomplish can have a lot of benefit to the town.
  - When we think about the aging population here. Not a lot of activities for young people and teenagers, especially in the winter time – something like a pool that would give them something to do, especially in the winter would be well worth considering.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Dollars don't follow ideas, they follow people that are working.
- Beautiful downtown, great architecture downtown, work to enhance that.
- Journal Opinion – old way of communicating – way to opinion.
- Great to hear a lot of people working on people.
- All the things that make great communities – you are checking the list.
- Amazing the resources that are here – coordination is a solvable issue.
- Broadband and infrastructure are the focus of attention at a statewide and national scale – this is the right moment – exciting to watch Bradford succeed.
- What has been said in the room shows the love of community – shows what you want for yourselves and future generations – a lot of group and things – looking at a person to organize and coordinate.
- A lot of funding – if we plan it, a lot of resources to do it. Nothing is off the table – keep forging ahead.
- Historic Village -water and wastewater is an issue in a lot of places.
- Energy and people here – transformational dollars. Communicating with each other – opportunity to assist.
- Struck by all of the assets – many more assets and problems. It can be really frustrating to hear the same changes – in Randolph we made a lot of progress as a result of the visit.
- Randolph – downtown wifi, full time economic development director, getting childcare.

- Keep meeting and coordinating and building on resources.
- Water, sewer, rail, interstate are the most expensive assets and infrastructure for a community to develop and out of reach for most communities. Smaller changes that impact quality of life, population, and health improvements are easier to do.
- Loved to hear the pride in the community and energy about capitalizing on it.
- Some nice low hanging fruit that you can tackle and make small progress towards these things.
- I was struck by the need and opportunity confluence for cell phones – might be short term and easy fixes – right now there is money for this.
- A lot is already helping here – communication seems like a thing to focus on – assets to start with. Don't need to look at doing all the work – sharing it in a different way.
- Coordination and resources – attendance shows levels of commitment and energy. A lot of committees doing things – how to more effectively share time and resources.
- Small impact can have outsized impact on moving the community forward – lots to choose from.
- Need for vision – how do we use our human assets.
- Select board – can't be proactive on things. Good people all around.
- Bradford hasn't added up all of its rec resources – Kingdom Trails and Burke weren't rocket science – Vermont is a destination for the country – there isn't a committee that has pulled the threads of the story together from a scatter ideas to a vision/platform that resources can follow.
- Narrative and capacity challenge with incredible opportunities – connect to economic development as well.
- ROI is important > want to do it because useful and important, not just because. Don't worry about cost now.
- Non-profit Bradford Community Development Corp.

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## Housing & Lodging

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Alyssa Johnson (scribe), Tayt Brooks, Katie Buckley, Rebecca Ellis, Peter Gregory, Erika Hoffman-Keiss, Sarah Jackson, Michelle Kersey, Misty Sinsigalli

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Affordable housing on the plain – opposed at first by the town, but now great resources.
- Great community partner in Downstreet – manages some 50sih units in town – replaced substandard housing units.
- Beautiful architecture.
- Fair amount of building lots that could be developed – several on municipal water and sewer.
- Planning commission worked to change zoning to reduce lot size, allow multi-family housing, and encourage accessory dwelling unit.
- Upper Valley – not such a long distance from Lebanon – more affordable, but still commutable.
- Transportation – greater commuter service to Lebanon area. Regular buses 3 times morning/afternoon from Wells River to Hanover/Lebanon – one of the stronger routes.
- Comparatively more affordable assisted living facilities.
- Veteran's home at North end of Main Street.
- therapy housing at old nursing home (Valley Vista?).
- Assisted living.
- Motel, which is there.
- Residential treatment and mental health.
- Walking distance grocery store downtown.
- Apartment space across the street at the bricks – Richardson and Perry block. Two of them are pretty full. Perry's is underdeveloped.
- Mobile home park – just expanded by having modular houses – didn't conform to mobile homes, but wasn't allowed. On 25 on the way to Farmway. Resident owned – has 3 Vermods.
- Planning Commission likes to do that.
- Older buildings – low hanging fruit for energy upgrades and rehab.
- Energy committee – newly formed.
- Housing – TRORC study 30 years ago? And 15 years ago someone read it – “back pocket asset.”
- Energy coordinator.
- Single family homes now used as several units.
- Young energetic fellows who have invested in some older units in town and made them into nicer units.
- Local employers – ARC [mechanical plumbing, heating], Copelands, Farmway.

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### What are the Challenges?

- 5 empty houses in the downtown – two downtown, one on Wright's Avenue, on Pleasant Street.
- Are they derelict? Define derelict... Appear abandoned. See no motion – but beautiful housing.
- Taxes are paid every year – tied up in estates.
- Cost of building – can't get a bank loan for something to build because will be worth let when it's done.
- Financing – have a bond I can turn into 3-4 units. For individuals, hard to do. Downstreet has an advantage.
- Interest rate is too high to meet the rents you get in Bradford.
- Everyone on the street is over 60 – parents want to move to town. Houses are selling within 3-5 days.
- No houses or even rooms to rent.
- Houses sell in minutes!
- Bradford relative to other communities have a lot of affordable housing – communities are.
- 25-75 rental to ownership – most rentals in the Village.
- Encourage people to have an ADU easily to help pay a mortgage!

- 10-20 year unknown on heat, wind, water, prices – may be a huge flow of people coming our way.
- We have land – need to figure out how to get some housing developed in Bradford.
- COVID wave of pressure on the marketplace.
- There is no real lodging – maybe a handful of Airbnb's.
- We have an interstate Exit – St. Johnsbury thought the Comfort Inn was ridiculous but has been golden.
- Music groups have to say in White River of Lake Morey.
- We're the only stop with groceries between White River and St. Johnsbury.
- The one traffic light – auction repair place and lot > don't want a Motel 8 eyesore.
- Bradford has the Cohase regional chamber.
- Need a town person focusing on economic development.
- People who come into the area tend to come in the summer and not the winter – small ski place, but not a lot to do in the summer other than snowmobiles – and summer is 9 months of the year.
- Motel – has been used for homeless folks during COVID > homeless family – both the motel here and in Fairlee are still full from COVID.
- Appear to be doing a lot of painting and refurbishing.
- For sale for well over a million dollars – too much for even the state to buy.
- 45% renting residents.
- Short term rentals Airbnb and VBRO > 20 listings.
- Crossroads – St. Johnsbury and St. J, Montpelier.
- Brick building across from library.
- Create arts place as a reason to come here – BnBs – place for flatlanders to come up to enjoy – arts could happen all year if there was collective will.
- Lack of/limited childcare in the area – if both people are working, limited childcare here.
- 1-2 at home daycares, plus one at Riverbend.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- The town ADUs – real opportunity for basement, garage, etc. who may support the additional source of income – need to educate people – there will be an opportunity there.
- There has been a housing group meeting in town, just getting started.
- More than 20 on the list – pulls from all over Vital Communities as an asset.
- Could there be a non-profit group that helps with ADU development.
- Bradford Community Development Corp as an existing 501c3 in the community – who is taking it over – developing the athletic field? – not housing.
- PC tried to form a housing task force but didn't have select board support.
- Is the project in Thetford ADU? Effort to turn barns into housing? Project where there is funding.
- Brattleboro has had a project for 15 years – Vermont State Housing Authority is doing a pilot project.
- Keys to Valley – utility > a la carta > I don't want to be a general contractor, manage tenants without HUD and the like.
- Role of the private sector?
- I developed one of the big houses from 2 to 4 units – it was painful. Had to fight a neighbor who opposed it and took me to environmental court. Expensive even being a general contractor.
- Rehabbed a 4-unit house.
- Reached out to some developers who have done work in the Upper Valley but wasn't internet, but could be worth doing it again.
- Nice piece of land that wraps onto Route 25 – very interested in partnering with someone to do housing units.
- Putting a bunch of smaller houses > cabins across from Hannaford, on water and sewer, affordable.
- BCDC owns the old Carson Farm from 25 to??? Motel at the end of the driveway – only 1 access – never came to Planning Commission and they never showed.
- Look at the planning and zoning regulations – thinking outside the box – loft, small houses – need more alternatives. More things to make it easier.
- Made the zoning more accommodating so there would be less regulations.
- Capacity study of Misty and BCDC properties to build multi-story buildings more similar to the Village – folks would like to see the downtown expanded vs. other types of home. Was done 5-6 years ago and has driven zoning.
- Aging population – what will happen to folks who don't want to run a household but don't want assisted living – nothing for the aging community aside from the nursing home. Folks might consider selling houses if there was a one-story condo type of situation.
- Catholic Church has a huge L that used to housing for nuns/priests – space is a drain financially. Have made some initial contact from the church – potential for project development.
- Housing committee needs to find their focus - what are the 3 things happening?
- In tandem with the committees, there needs to be education – small housing and affordable shuts down some people need education that this is a fear of folks who have come here from other people. People think it will be the projects.
- Low rent housing.
- Holzers – bought condos on lower plain – converted into wonderful apartments. Willing to take on another project in Bradford, but would have to be another existing structure.
- Could new construction be a possibility with lower costs in the future?
- Potential for state support for private developers in the future
- Subsidized housing – there isn't a lot available.
- Income guidelines for certain projects can be challenging.
- VERA subsidies to help folks go into housing to help make transition from Bradford motel into a better situation, but that support needs to continue.
- Section 8 needs to be revitalized.

- Somehow figure out who the heck is responsible for the 5 derelict houses and figure out who is responsible for them – folks here who would invest in the properties.
- Dangerous building ordinance – nothing to do about loss of paint or not cutting grass.
- Group of people working on housing – where does the responsibility lie? Group of people. Non-profit, select board? Should there be a paid person in town?
- Someone from Capstone helps folks with fuel assistance and finding housing.
- When I have a vacancy, I'm on my own to find someone – no resource besides Craigslist – not a waiting list for housing – no vehicle or point of contact.
- In St. Johnsbury there's someone who brings the housing people together – St. J also has prisoner population. Nothing like that here.
- Housing committee and expertise and resources is a huge asset.
- A lot of partners – state is investing a lot in VHCB.
- How do you digest and have a concrete plan that is ready?
- Why doesn't the town/municipality just build housing?
- Thetford/Norwich >> buy and explore development of property. Folks saw the need, but decided it was not a town function
- Hanover used to own senior housing in town >> Didn't want to be in the property ownership business, so turned it over to Twin Pines housing – made sense from an affordability perspective.
- ARPA funding – two payments >> have until 2024 to obligate and then 2026 to expend.
- How Bradford does or does not market itself.
- No sign at the intersection about what is here – make more people want to come here and want to engage – no one is gathering together the story about Bradford.
- Run down property – how might folks find out about how funds are available.
- Pilot program for grant money for private property owners to make \$\$ to private owners improve them – there is money available.
- Though ACCD >> VHIP >> Up to 30k to grants to bring vacant units online.
- 5-year limit on who rents it >> through homeownership centers.
- USDA Rural Development – grant program for elderly individuals 62+ to upgrade your home for health and sanitary.
- Weatherization in Vermont – opportunity to upgrade roof, windows, ramps.
- Bradford – one of the 10 best Main Streets by travel and leisure – “So ordinary it's extraordinary.”
- Bradford is a really sensible place for a recovery residence – could give 5-6 folks a chance for recovery.
- Homeownership programs that give up the equity for homeownership – help folks to get into the program, especially for young families.
- USDA also has programs- issue is there isn't housing.
- Looking at a program with AARP and worked with Keys to the Valley on how to make their zoning more accessible.
- Downtown – historic district review – geared toward preserving historic facades of front of buildings, but does irritate people/impact affordability – bigger burden is state regulations on licensed electrician and plumber and state fire marshal – bigger than any state regulation.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Huge amount of assets >> Planning Commission chair that has been working for 4 years to redo zoning requirements.
- Kudos for the community for recognizing the issue and having folks involved – key to have folks involved, so happy to see that.
- Katie was so excited to hear folk talks about ADUs – they are protected in state statute – there are programs to support that – like in Brattleboro – other folks who have done that successfully.
- More housing dollars that are going to flow.
- A lot of communities are having municipalities acquire the land at tax sale or otherwise – permitting, brownfields, and then hand off to a private developer.
- Education is a key component to demonstrate who lives in affordable housing and who lives there! “Branding: and shifting the narrative.
- A ton of assets – available land, good zoning, land, people interested in developing housing. Everything is so close, final spark is needed to get things going.
- Bradford Development Corp – curious about it a 501c3.
- GMEDC also fills the role of managing brownfield remediating and assessing properties and has exemptions in that regards and can help take properties through the properties.
- Adding up the assets and collective narrative – for housing, there needs to be something around why Bradford and why it is the place to invest your energy and being.
- PLANNING, PLANNING, PLANNING for actionable tasks.
- The best thing that a municipality can do for itself is housing! Have the top 3 projects ready to go, have funding resources ready, folks in town and involved “like measuring ingredients in the kitchen.”
- Incredible opportunity because you have already created your housing group.
- Keys to the Valley – looking elsewhere so you don't have to go back to square one – a very exciting time.
- Use what you have! Reach out to property owners of buildings, catholic church, etc. people who with a little bit of support or nudge from people asking might do a lot – very helpful.
- Beautiful downtown community, developable land on water and sewer is so rare in Vermont, join the housing committee, get things shovel ready.
- The planning piece is so key! Shovel worthy – it's got to be shovel worthy – what makes your project stand out in comparison to others.
- Great to hear the affordable piece as a part of the conversation – so important!
- Eliminating stigma so important.



- Planning – good employers, not a bedroom community, people can commute to other areas. A lot of interest – VHCB is doing a project with the old Brattleboro High School.
- A lot of weatherization money from the state and feds that can take pressure off financially.
- Lodging is a real opportunity – folks want to stay the night.
- I have never heard anyone say planning so many times.
- Planning involves deciding – we wish someone would save us! Is not a plan- not inappropriate to share.
- It's okay for town to do things that cost money.
- Zoning is very good and you can do 20 units easily – some things around the edges – work united program in the upper valley with employers that fund a person to help folks with housing situations that helps folk go a long way. Homeshare flyers downtown. Zoning for great neighborhoods. Education – Keys to the Valley site has pictures of existing homes.
- Taxable dollars per acre – tiny houses on rundown lot have very high taxable dollars for acres.
- Tiny houses right in the village.
- Give the Planning Commission kudos for their work.
- Without dealing with housing you can't attract young people.
- Need to make welcoming communities.
- No more planning - action, action, action, seize the day, two things to do this year.
- The power in this room – you can do anything you want to.

## Economic Development, Workforce & Jobs

Visiting Team: Rebecca Ellis (facilitator), Alyssa Johnson (scribe), Tayt Brooks, Katie Buckley, Paul Costello, Peter Gregory, Erika Hoffman-Keiss, Sarah Jackson, Michelle Kersey, Misty Sinsigalli

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Bradford is incredibly centrally located – 15 minutes from a lot of small towns and hubs.
- Folks can work out of Bradford and service a variety of areas.
- Bradford is the market center for the area – not competing with towns on the other side of the river.
- Really nice Main Street – quintessential downtown.
- Reasonable economic base – need more jobs in the company.
- Tim's company employs 95.
- ARC.
- Floors.
- School district has offices here.
- More jobs is always better, but has a better vase than other.
- Vibrant industrial park with water and sewer – also some room for new businesses to come in.
- Room for new retail on Main Street.
- Have a lot of restaurants – selling point for the school district.
- Good distance from Hanover/Lebanon – nice excursion to go to Farmway and Colatina.
- Wright's Mountain, Bugby boat launch – drive folks into the area.
- 2019 – 59 visitors on the trail – 5 or 6 different states represented >> hiking, biking, horse – majority hiking. National recreation trail as of 2018.
- High school has a technical component which draws folks from neighboring town.
- Tech center also have co-op programs.
- Carpentry/mechanics are outside of town.
- Tried twice to get students from tech school – couldn't get anyone over.
- Internships – opportunity and challenge.
- Accessibility off the interstate.

### What are the Challenges?

- Aging workforce – I have a lot of friends in the trades, almost impossible to find help for carpenters, plumbers and electricians – enormous need to find folks under 60.
- Could increase workforce by 10 but no one to hire – dovetails with affordable housing >> places for people making 60-90k.
- Job training program – work with someone to get them the skill.
- Housing – will attract more skilled workers.
- Not job training for the specific jobs in Bradford.
- Some community members do housekeeping and other jobs, but would be capable of doing more with additional training.
- Someone who goes from high school but didn't pursue any training after high school.
- Chamber of Commerce – doing a better job connecting businesses and educational opportunities – want mentoring opportunities, etc. Challenging to get schools to engage – plead that they don't have enough time for them to do.
- Schools strongly push for kids to 4 year college and not going anywhere.
- “and most debt without a degree – o I also made that one up” “he was a banker he knows how to do that.”
- Getting people to fill jobs!
- Vibrant jobs – but not getting people to fill jobs
- The smartest people I went to high school with are not sitting in this room.
- Retaining young people.
- Tech is the big thing now – how do you get a tech force to set up in town – it's a huge way to get a young workforce in town (in the old Aubuchon space).
- Not a lot of jobs geared towards college professionals – young people who have degrees tend to go away and then come back when they have a family.
- Working remotely works, but only if connectivity is available.
- Skills that folks have are not necessarily in demand.
- “We don't have a complete community for work.”
- Restaurants are also looking for staff.
- Do you have data on workforce participation right now – how many people still haven't gotten back into the workforce.

- Incredible opportunity to expand business but can't hire – significant backlog of work.
- Great opportunities for folks to develop and get into a job – need to do a better job of that.
- Been aggressive hiring and got a lot of recent high school graduates.
- In the evening they used to have a furniture building class to get people trained.
- Director of manufacturing – manufacturing not woodworking.
- Operating high tech equipment – CNC 5 axis machines.
- Trying for years to get things that have spun off of Hypertherm or thermodynamics >> we have an industrial park that had 4 new buildings >> couldn't get any.
- Scott Sargent now owns 4 buildings in the industrial park.
- Mobile virtual player makes high technical virtual dummies.
- High tech companies out of Dartmouth – R&D is done here, manufacturing elsewhere.
- Has then been looked at.
- Tax incentives require a vote of the full town at town meeting – some folks don't want to stand up before town meeting and ask for a tax break, but has been done in the past.
- We want to see more businesses and more jobs, but we also have businesses desperate for workers, and workers desperate for housing.
- Affordable – people are not coming for White River Junction to Bradford.
- HOUSING is the core issue.
- Previously businesses built for workers >> opportunities to leverage funding.
- Water and sewer is needed for residential density, and what is it zoned for.
- Lower plain is zoned mixed use Tractor supply was allowed to come in because of zoning changes.
- Promote the land to potential developers.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- Specific areas of town where building could happen – promote it.
- Study was done 5-6 years ago – capacity build out study for the lower plain.
- A lot of the studies out of it have been implemented.
- It allows retail (fought with TRORC) and a lot of other types of development.
- Lot size reduced in the village with water sewer – most lots could now allow another house.
- Slightly different if just water because need septic.
- Aligns with Smart Growth!
- Economic development person or team – doesn't seem like a lot of issues come to the select board.
- Is there a person that drives that and can be the glue between people.
- Different towns tend to do economic development in different ways.
- Chamber of commerce – 6 different towns > regional economy.
- Fought really hard to keep the post office downtown.
- Losing Aubuchon hard on the town.
- No one from the town with credentials checking in with businesses (Oakes) asking them to stay open later.
- VCRD process led to a dedicated economic developer in Randolph.
- Sometimes someone in the town takes point on different things – could be someone designated on a board.
- Economic development coordinator also helped with grants with CORI and WCC and digital economy.
- A lot of recreation trails and recreation economy action in Randolph.
- Relying on volunteers to put things together can be tough.
- Town manager is another potential model.
- Promoting what we have in town >> promote it to make it a destination.
- HP Cummings weekly posts.
- Put something in the JO.
- Speedway – brings things in – spend gas at other stores in town.
- Brochure at visitors center would be great – tourism is our second largest driver after maple syrup – regional tourism is also at an all-time high “Destination Bradford” pamphlet – great road trip from a number of paces in Vermont.
- Southbound rest area being taken away hurt Bradford.
- Randolph in Motion twice yearly publication.
- Interest in creating more capacity at the town level.
- Need for communication.
- A lot of artisans and restaurants here as well – not just recreation – so many things that can be promoted.
- Candy shop on industrial park.
- HOUSING is key to jobs.
- Understanding how you behave in the store- Vermont Adult Learning – Economic Service Division – telling folks how to behave, how to interview – community or employer-based training on employee expectations.
- Businesses in town rely on high schoolers in town – then they move away.
- People don't know how to write a resume or write a check.
- Barely active PTA – folks are too busy.
- Tech center gets pounded all the time that the students they are sending are not appropriate – the director of the tech center is aware – high schools – middle group without parental support or tech skills training are the ones most important to reach.
- Mentoring and connecting and exposure are really important.
- “Kids don't know these businesses exist.”
- Matching kids up with machines >> technology focused.
- What is the population of the high school? 87 kids > now 34 kids.
- Workforce is actively shrinking and there is still too many jobs.
- How do you get young families to move here.
- You need to have kids “Working on it” “practice makes perfect.”
- You don't necessarily want huge development.

- Vermont aesthetics applying to housing – mission for housing that makes sense.
- Zoning development has design review.
- Vermont planning law – Act 250?
- Rutland – welcoming folks into the community and matching them with folks already there – learn from something going on there.
- Vital Communities – want to do a welcome wagon hub – Monique with a northern hub.
- Stay to stay ACCD – welcome folks for a short period of time
- Introducing people to more and different Vermont communities.
- Monique was point person for a high school input process – 400 people completed a very in-depth survey.
- Folks leaving the workforce because of childcare.
- Enough folks staying out that it is more competitive otherwise?
- Have folks found other remote work – DHMC folks now working remotely.
- Working remotely – huge opportunity.
- Childcare is an issue.
- 1 meal a month for the church > current town ordinance?
- Would like to do meals once week in the summer? Just apply for a permit.
- Zillow – 5 homes listed in Bradford – 100% more than 2 year ago tax appraisal but homes on Main Street that haven't been touched in 25 years – get life back into those structures.
- No rentals available – and same cost of what you can get in Lebanon.
- Economic development officer or town manager – reach out to developers.
- Need a plan for what the town wants >> committee structure to figure out what a town wants >> Do a master plan for what you want to see.
- Community development board and Scott Sargent as an unofficial economic development people – how MVP and REAT got that.
- Community Development Corporation? Who are they in sync with? There are some very prickly personalities.
- Tangible list of potential workforce housing solutions that size of Bradford have done – other places on the 89 corridor (Windsor) etc.

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Having infrastructure also space in industrial park) already in place is a huge advantage over other historic villages.
- Housing is an important tie in, and great to have folks involved – record amount of involvement.
- Housing – Bennington – southwestern medical center sold formerly distressed housing to employees. Employers were able to help support.
- Housing – you have to have people who live >> Everything else rests on it. Drive is key to making idea to action.
- Capacity – you all have some amazing plans, looking to your future with so much on it. Identifying capacity as a challenge is key. Not faulting a community to not be able to do it alone.
- Bradford has a revolving loan fund – under-utilized resource within a community's control.
- It is important to demystifying work. Parents and students might not actually understand what the workplace looks like today – furniture looks today – entrepreneur in residence – this is what it looks like then – this is what it looks like now – technology enabled – furniture is now a tech business.
- Doing things after school to avoid fighting with the teacher.
- Resource rich community – great recreational resources, water and sewer, PC work.
- These aren't normal times – this is an extraordinary moment in American and Vermont history. COVID, racial reckoning, climate change. Once in a generation time for investment. Didn't talk about the natural resource economy at all.
- Increased density and housing.
- Can't explore forever – can't have a circular conversation – PICK TWO and move forward with practical steps. Particularly identify who is going to lead.
- Coherent, half time person, grants >> 3-year pattern of work that could perhaps be externally funded.
- How does Bradford tell the story >> Someone has to do the draft declaration.
- On August 23rd come to prioritize what you want.
- Prioritization creates momentum.

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### Zoom Forum July 28 7:00pm.

Facilitator: Jon Copans, VCRD

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#### What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have a huge asset in Farmway, being sort of a draw for local people and around the region.
- Our new coffee shop vittles is a cool spot. I think that's going to be really exciting for the community and I think they're going to start doing some programming on the weekends and even, you know, having some like bar hours which will be kind of cool at a little variety to some of the like food and entertainment options in that arena.
- The space on Main our local co working hub is very cool and brings a lot of people together, there are a lot of remote workers in this area that have access to that. It's a total gem to have a place like that in such a small town.
- We have very good schools. I have three kids that are in the elementary school right now we're really happy with that.
- The library is an asset.
- That's a very happening place, you know the programming that comes out of the library is really relevant and progressive and cool and interesting.
- So those are some, some, the Sports Scene amongst the younger people. I mean like the upper valley Little League

- softball team just made it to regionals they were on ESPN plus like that was very exciting and cool to watch.
- There's a lot of energy around the kids in this community. When it comes to things like that so I think that's a big asset.
  - A lot of related to that, you know, similar to the kids Sports Scene, there's the ball fields in town and, and there's a tennis court and play golf course down there, and the boat launch all that areas.
  - It's a I think a big asset for the town as well.
  - Yeah, those are some pretty good recreation resources for a town of Bradford size, like is that boat launch on to sorry I don't know this is it right now, Connecticut.
  - Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. Beautiful golf course right down there too.
  - Elizabeth's park is an amazing park for kids. I think that's a big asset as well.

- Wrights mountain, as a great town owned hiking system trail system right in town, it's beautiful every time we go it's just stunning.
- And it's right there in town. It's pretty cool. Super accessible, like for folks who live right in town doesn't take them, not a long trip to get away.
- Yeah, yeah there's, there's a few trail heads and a surprising number of trails, on there. It's pretty well maintained.
- The Facebook page for the community of Bradford, that's been really instrumental for me to try to keep on top of some of this stuff and just awareness of things going on in town and in the surrounding areas. Helps to build community.
- Coming out of this like extreme period of isolation and people really are craving human connection. I think the town could really capitalize on that and use this time to really solidify a sense of community. On a larger scale than probably, maybe than it's ever seen.

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### What are the Challenges?

- There's a number of spots on Main Street that are consistently empty or, you know, businesses that cycle through frequently.
- There are a number of mainstay businesses that have been here a long time, which is great but then it's sort of been hard to fill it out completely.
- There's sort of a general state of disrepair. Some houses that are just crumbling.
- Sidewalk infrastructure is pretty unsightly. It's a beautiful town but it has some pretty big issues right along Main Street, when you're driving along that are hard to ignore.
- Lack of any sort of PR for the town of Bradford. It's the main stop off right off the interstate. There's no signage or anything that would attract people that don't know about Bradford to take that exit and explore. Building the brand and telling

people, all the great things that they can, they can find if they come to bread.

- Shortage of housing. In general, so new houses for, you know, being built, and Apartments for Rent it I think it's, you know, it's kind of been a crazy market in general for the whole state, but Bradford has suffered that as well.
- General bandwidth that people have to really tackle some of these community issues is much lower than it probably was historically.
- It can be really hard to find the energy to really commit to the level that it would take to, you know, see some major gains in a lot of these areas so I think that's certainly not specific to Bradford that's a challenge everywhere.

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Improve communication channels.
- Have somebody dedicated to communications and that person should probably be a paid individual.
- The Facebook page is really helpful but that's, you know, relying on the community to sort of input on to that page so, it's probably not super comprehensive.
- Signs on the interstate to highlight assets in town.
- There was an idea to or a project in underway to get a to get access to the Low-St. John Town Forest for elementary school and just in general. There's a section of the road that you have to take to get there that's not really easily walkable. Giant timber frame outdoor learning Pavilion. Embarking on a project to make the whole path walkable from the elementary school, and figure out that one little section of the road that's that makes it so dangerous so.
- The problem was when they built the interstate that access got cut off. And that's why we're having to go through all the rigmarole on how can we get the elementary school kids from the school to the forest, which is owned by the school, by the way. And we'll figure it out but it's gonna mean getting every private home to allow the kids to walk through their backyard.

- I've always wished that we had something like a community or a rec center with an indoor pool, racquetball courts, fitness classes. Bradford has explored this idea in the past.
- More focus on community events like Midnight Madness. All the like local sports teams and like the Boy Scouts like everybody's out and they have their little tables and they're trying to fundraise and there was so much energy.
- Community events are a great way to engage, especially for families with young children, if the timing is right. Especially events with music.
- As far as events, you know, there is one upcoming that actually surprised me in a good way for Bradford that little says hosting I think it's a drag show and then there's an after party after it at the space on Main. I don't know if we'll be able to attend, again, young children and the timing, but, um, you know, my husband and I were especially excited about that because it feels like a more diverse event for our small town, you know, as opposed to something like live music, but, you know, again, the black musicians matter thing that's also happening this year so those like kind of more diverse events are also super exciting to see and I would love to see more of those types of things happening.
- Expanding fast internet outside of the main Bradford town.

- So we have one option for internet and it's Consolidated Communications and our internet actually has been so slow at times that they had technicians come out and just turn it off because they thought there was no way we could possibly be using it.
- Coming up with different ways such that everyone really feels like they have the opportunity to participate, sort of making sure that everyone can engage.
- You know I look at all the exciting things that are happening in our neighbor town fairly right now and I think a lot of that seems to be coming out of an Arts Council that they have down there that seems to be pretty, pretty energetic and obviously they're making things happen. We should start an Arts Council here.
- Fairlee and West Fairlee also have had a lot of success with their community dinners. People bring potluck and they share and this is a beta to the community center we don't know if you are familiar with the base, it's a pretty big building, and they seem to be pretty popular.
- Maybe once a month or, or for special occasions we could have a community dinner.
- Hold an annual flea market.
- Town wide yard sale - publish a map. Similar to the crafts weekend in October when our crafts people get a lot of business and tourists count on it and they travel around.
- The town that I grew up in is like Elmore in Vermont, and I was a member of the volunteer fire department there for many years, and the fire department would hold to community meals. People pay per plate and the funds go to the fire department and in one case, the funds are also shared with a community block party to get fireworks so that's another idea.
- Community dinners that bring people together and can raise money for a good cause – spring dinner, harvest dinner, etc.
- For the Vermont Bicentennial we had a huge event where we shut down Route 5 and had a huge block party. Everybody came out of the woodwork for that one. The place was packed with people and kids running around and each of the restaurants. It was great fun, but a heck of a lot of work. The merchant Association, did that one. And I don't know if they have enough merchants now, to be able to pull that off again.
- More updated website for knowing what resources we already do have. Like the example for me in our family was the Low St John forest, and somebody had posted that there was a story walk out there, and I don't know that the library did that. I'm not sure who put up the stories but the library is pretty good at, sharing what they're doing so I was like whoa what yeah cause that's the perfect type of thing that we look to do with our children.
- And we have this community Facebook group, you know, it's a great tool but there have been concerns about it not being the official town account. We need an easy place to, to see events and what's going on in town.
- I don't know how anyone else feels but the thought crossed my mind when I was doing tours before I came down here that we've had some big box stores coming in. And while some people like it other people do not but it also affects the downtown of Bradford, a lot, and there's a lot of people that don't drive or they walk or they you know they don't like the bigger stores because it's confusing to them.
- Big box stores and not to mention the boxes that show up in our houses I don't know about you. I live on a little dead end street and the number of times I see the UPS and FedEx truck come up our street on in a single day. I'm a little blown away by it but say, I think we are live on a dirt road and they were, they go up and down that road.
- I would like to see an expansion of the stagecoach bus and a schedule that I know when it's coming in order to run to town or the store when I need to.
- It would be great to expand our current small bike lane strip to offer more bike safety and opportunity.
- Expand and improve sidewalks.
- Improve parking at the library.
- And honestly, a recent thing that came in front of the Select Board of controversially was the removal of trash bins downtown which to be honest we had kind of taken for granted but as we have gone visiting other communities that not only have trash receptacles but recycling receptacles. It's funny how such a seemingly small thing can really change how accessible and welcoming a community feels.

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## Additional Action Ideas

Here are the ideas residents contributed through a paper and online form

- Make Baldwin Bridge a swimming area for the town and do what needs to be done to dig it out so it is deep enough for swimming, fix the bridge by the Mill.
- Help Vermont make new laws that make renting fair for landlords and tenants, which includes a no pay or abuse of property provision.
- In the discussion group I attended, we listed cultural assets in Bradford, but no one mentioned Bear Ridge Speedway, which is the fastest 1/4 mile dirt track in Vermont.
- Self-storage and car wash renovation needs to improve. Self-storage has incorrect price on sizes. Or new builders are needed by new management or investment. To get more activities for children in the community. The community needs diversity ethics and disabilities together and support education for any ages. The environment is clean important.
- To work together instead of dividing the town leadership. Stop the negative attitudes and try to find common ground.
- I have several ideas, around music, the railroad as an asset, cleanup projects.
- Make Bradford safe for BIPOC people to do ANYTHING in this town without repercussions.
- More outdoor seating / cafe areas.
- Repair blight - buildings with broken windows & trash (see Steven's block for example). Offer incentives for historic buildings.
- Farmer's market.
- Breakfast place.
- Festivals in town - arts & crafts show.
- Attract employers.
- Fix parking on Main Street. People can't see oncoming traffic pulling out.
- For profit convenience stores.
- Coed sports league and pickup games for adults.
- recreation facilitates for kids and adults.
- fossil fuels a part of Bradford's energy source.
- baseball, floor hockey, soccer and other sports leagues.
- for profit businesses.
- movie video store.

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## Ideas from Bradford Teens

As shared in a group conversation at the Hub on July 29th.

### REFLECTIONS

- Bradford is a place to be "from," not to "go to." People who stay in town long term do so mostly because it's the easy thing to do.
- School is a hard place to talk about things you're interested in. There are a lot of toxic personalities that are hard to navigate.
- If you're going to engage teens in talking about community issues, it needs to be clear what the payoff is to them to participating.
- Not as many teens are on social media as many adults seem to think.

### IDEAS

- Build a skate park to give teens an outdoor space to congregate. This could be centrally located, walkable from school and downtown.
- Host a regular movie night for teens, showing a mix of popular and thought-provoking movies. Food could be served afterwards, and teens could discuss the movie.
- The Hub is a great existing resource. It would be great to see expanded programming there.
- Geology, biology, local botany and other science-related trips outside of school to learn more about the local natural world.
- An afternoon / evening DnD league would draw a lot of teens, and create a good space to socialize outside of school.

## VII. Moving Forward Together Community Visit Participants

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and many more...



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